

PINOTREPORT

for people passionate about western pinot noir

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IN THE MARKET

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Happy New Year, 2010...

IT AMAZES ME HOW MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE ONE DIGIT CAN MAKE. The year 2009 will go down in history as one of the toughest years for the wine business and for our country in general. It was also a terrible year for me on many fronts. 2010 is going to be different, mark my words!

As I sat quietly at home New Year's Eve, sipping a glass of Pinot and waiting for the tape-delayed ball to drop, I thought about this cleansing process of showing the door to the old year with all of its baggage and welcoming the new year with renewed energy, and a seriously renewed attitude. Big, positive things are going to happen for us all in 2010, and I for one am never going to take anything for granted ever again.

"Clos Pepe" Book Just Published...

Putting on my book publisher hat for a moment, I'm pleased to announce that my Carneros Press has just published a great new book. "Clos Pepe: A Vigneron's Quest For Great Dirt," by Stephen P. Pepe is a terrific story—at times light-hearted and ironic and at other times deliberative and frustrating—of the creation of the Clos Pepe Vineyard. It's a great read. For informaton on ordering Clos Pepe, please see page 11.

"Field Guide" Update...

For those of you who have very patiently waited for the publication of my long-promised "Field Guide To Western Pinot Noir," I have good news. We are close to completion and expect the book to be ready to ship very soon.

In This Issue...

This issue features some terrific new releases from a wide range of producers including Beauregard, Breggo, Byron, Coastal Ridge, Damian Rae, Grey Stack, Heart O' The Mountain, J Vineyard, Kanzler, Kings Mountain, La Crema, Loma Prieta, MacRostie, Merry Edwards, Road 31, Rockroom, Silver Mountain, Sojourn, Storrs, Three Saints, Twin Oaks and Winter's Hill.

As always, I thank you for your support and hope that you enjoy this latest issue.

-- Gregory S. Walter, editor and publisher



WINNER

James Beard Award For
Newsletter Writing On Food,
Beverage, Restaurants
and Nutrition

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

This Issue's Tasting Notes

All wines were tasted blind and scored before knowing anything other than that the general region they were from. My notes and comments follow.

Beauregard Vineyards

Beauregard Vineyards was established by Ryan Beauregard in 1999, but it is by no means the Beauregard family's first foray into the wine business. Ryan is the fourth generation of growers and vintners in the Santa Cruz Mountains; the first piece of estate land being planted by Amos Beauregard in 1946. Ryan's grandfather and his father, Jim Beauregard, continued the legacy. Jim Beauregard was at one point the owner of Felton-Empire winery and was instrumental in the establishment of the Ben Lomond Mountain AVA where the family's estate vineyards are located. Ryan brought winemaking into the business and today Beauregard Vineyards produces Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Chardonnay and Zinfandel.

Beauregard

Pinot Noir Ben Lomond Mountain Bald Mountain Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; deep red cherry aromas with earthy notes; rich, ripe, stewed red cherry flavors with spicy notes; toasty oak, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy, rich Pinot with layers of flavor and a nice long finish. From the Ben Lomond AVA.

250 cases made \$59 Score: 91

Breggo Cellars

The 203-acre farm that is the location of Breggo Cellars was at one time one of the largest sheep ranches in Anderson Valley.

Breggo means "sheep" in the local Boontling language. Co-founders and husband-wife Douglas Stewart and Ana Lucia Benitez-Stewart purchased the ranch in 2000 and planted seven acres to vineyards. Breggo Cellars was founded in 2005. Douglas Stewart crafts the Breggo wines—Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris—with consulting winemaker Ryan Hodgins. Ryan is a native of the Pacific Northwest and brings to Breggo experience working harvests in Oregon and Napa, as well as a stint as assistant winemaker at Hanzell Vineyards in Sonoma. Ryan splits his time between Boonville and Breggo and Portland, Oregon where his wife Molly is viticulturist and vineyard manager for Chehalem Winery. In late 2009, Breggo was purchased by Napa Valley's Cliff Lede Winery. The purchase included the brand, inventory and grape contracts. Douglas and Ana Lucia retained the vineyard and an equity position in the winery. Douglas and Ryan remain winemakers for Breggo and their Pinot bottlings include an Anderson Valley blend and vineyard designates from Savoy Vineyard, Ferrington Vineyard and Donnelly Creek Vineyard.

Breggo Cellars

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Donnelly Creek Vineyard 2007

Medium ruby color; plum, forest floor and cooking spice aromas; rich, deep creamy plum and cherry flavors; medium bodied with velvety, soft tannins; good structure and balance; long finish. A nicely balanced Pinot with a gentle finish that will work well at the table.

244 cases made \$55 Score: 94

Breggo Cellars

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Ferrington Vineyard 2007

Medium ruby color; earthy, roasted plum aromas; rich, ripe, deft blend of red and black fruit flavors, some earthy notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot has excellent balance and fine acidity. Add to this forward, lush fruit and a gentle finish and you have a truly nice wine.

390 cases made \$55 Score: 92

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Rich, ripe and very complex..."

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2008

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy clove and dark cherry aromas; big, rich, ripe, dark cherry flavors with spicy clove and earthy notes; very silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, ripe and very complex Pinot with an amazing core of fruit; beautiful to drink now but will definitely improve with age. Great Pinot from a great vineyard.

580 cases made \$48 Score: 97

SMART BUY!

"Rich, big style..."

Three Saints

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, dark cherry and plum aromas; big, ripe and rich; dusty cherry and plum flavors, earthy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, big style of Pinot that's perfect for a hearty beef dish.

n/a cases made \$24 Score: 91

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Breggo Cellars

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Savoy Vineyard 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; complex nose of cherry and spicy oak; rich, mouth-coating cherry and plum flavors with spicy notes; full tannins; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy and intense Pinot with solid tannins and structure; powerful finish.

293 cases made \$55 Score: 92

Breggo Cellars

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; complex plum, cherry and sandalwood aromas; rich and full bodied, with precise black cherry and spiced plum flavors; firm silky tannins; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky and deep, this Pinot gains power and depth on the long, spicy finish.

1,291 cases made \$42 Score: 95

Byron Vineyards & Winery

Byron Vineyard and Winery was founded in 1984 by Santa Maria Valley winemaking pioneer Byron Ken Brown. Ken recognized the region's potential for great Pinot Noir (and Chardonnay too) and it didn't take long for his wines to gain the attention of consumers nationwide. In 1990, the Robert Mondavi family purchased Byron, and Ken Brown became winemaker and general manager. Working with the Mondavis allowed Byron to expand into a new state-of-the-art winery and focus even more on quality. In 2004, Ken Brown left Byron to make wine under his own label (Ken Brown Wines) and Jonathan Nagy took over the winemaking reins. Mere months later, Constellation Brands purchased the Robert Mondavi Corp. Constellation quickly sold Byron to Legacy Estates, a St. Helena-based investment group and just as quickly Legacy Estates filed for bankruptcy protection. Jess Jackson and Barbara Banke purchased Byron in 2006 and the future looks very bright for Byron. The Byron Pinots have always been terrific expressions of Santa Maria Valley—lots of plush cherry fruit, good structure and terrific balance.

Byron Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley 2007

Medium ruby color; deep red cherry and clove aromas; rich, ripe, bright cherry flavors with spicy, clove notes; forward fruit; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and bright flavors make this medium-weight Pinot a great choice for the table.

13,381 cases made \$26 Score: 90

Coastal Ridge

Coastal Ridge is a label owned and produced by Fred Franzia's Bronco Wine Company, one of the largest wine producers in

the country and the creator of the "Two Buck Chuck" phenomenon. Coastal Ridge Pinots generally carry a California appellation and are value priced. The wines are great values and tend toward lighter body and nice, balanced flavors.

Coastal Ridge

Pinot Noir California 2007

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 4.

Damian Rae

Damian Rae is the dream and venture of John and Sharol Tarabini. The Tarabinis bring their experience in the corporate world to bear on producing fine Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir. Winemaker Kian Tavakoli is a veteran of Napa Valley winemaking, working stints at Opus One and Clos Du Val. The Damian Rae Pinot bottling is from Richard Sanford's La Encantada Vineyard.

Damian Rae

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills La Encantada Vineyard 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, ripe dark cherry and toasty aromas; rich, ripe and deep black cherry flavors with spicy, toasty notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, toasty Pinot with good structure—great for the table.

n/a cases made \$45 Score: 90

Grey Stack Cellars

Grey Stack Cellars actually began life in 2005 as Dry Stack Cellars, founded by Peter and Marie Young to make wine from their family's Dry Stack Vineyard in the Bennett Valley AVA outside of Santa Rosa. Apparently the owners of Dry Sack Sherry didn't like the similarity of the names. The new name, Grey Stack Cellars is a combination of the names of the family's two vineyards: Dry Stack in Bennett Valley and Greywacke in Russian River Valley. Grey Stack Cellars produces Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah, Pinot Noir, Grenache and a Syrah-Grenache blend from estate grapes and will soon add Chardonnay to the mix. Pat Sullivan is the winemaker and Randall Watkins is assistant winemaker. Grey Stack also sources Pinot Noir from the Steiner Ranch and from the Connell Family Vineyard.

Grey Stack Cellars

Pinot Noir Bennett Valley Connell Family Vineyard The Fisherman 2007

Medium ruby color; deep, earthy, dusty cherry aromas; deep, ripe cherry flavors with earthy, dusty notes, some herbs, some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, earthy style of Pinot with nice touch of herbs and mineral notes.

50 cases made \$32 Score: 90

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Heart O' The Mountain

The property that now houses Heart O' The Mountain deep in the Santa Cruz Mountains was established in 1881 by California pioneer Pierre Cornwall and was once owned by film director Alfred Hitchcock. Today Heart O' The Mountain is owned by Robert Brassfield and his family and is focused on producing small-lot Pinot Noir. Bob Brassfield has always been connected to the land and after moving his family to Switzerland for three years and discovering the wines of Burgundy, he returned with an interest in getting into the wine business himself. He and his brother were early investors in Felton Empire winery and then in 1978 Bob and his wife Judy purchased the Heart O' The Mountain estate and began to preserve the historic buildings. The estate had produced wine in the past and in 2000 Bob and Judy decided to reestablish the estate vineyard and with the help of their son Brandon decided to turn an old barn on the property into a winery. In 2005 the first Heart O' The Mountain Pinot was born.

Heart O' The Mountain

Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy cherry aromas with some oak notes; ripe, rich cherry flavors with earthy, spicy notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, rich Pinot with a lot to offer now and after a few years of cellar time.

n/a cases made \$48 Score: 92

J Vineyards & Winery

J Vineyards & Winery was founded in 1986 by Judy Jordan as a methode champenoise winery to make one product: J sparkling wine. While the J sparkling wine put the winery on the map and still remains more than 50 percent of the winery's production, J's new winemaker, veteran George Bursick has made his own mark with the J still wines including Pinot Gris

and Pinot Noir. Pinot Noir bottlings include regional Russian River and Sonoma coast bottlings and vineyard designates from the Nonny's Vineyard, Robert Thomas Vineyard and Nicole's Vineyard. Visiting J is a treat—the winery offers a terrific tasting menu as well as a special salon where you can taste pairings of J wines with appetizers—worth a visit!

J Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Nicole's Vineyard 2007

Medium ruby color, deep cherry and dark fruit aromas; complex cherry, plum and blackberry flavors with some black tea notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex and rich flavors make this a wine worthy of your attention and your patience as it improves in the bottle.

n/a cases made \$65 Score: 90

J Vineyard & Winery

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2007

Medium ruby color; bit closed with simple cherry and oak aromas; direct ripe cherry and plum flavors with some cola notes; some oaky notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Just a little disjointed right now; needs some time to find its balance.

14,500 cases made \$35 Score: 85

Kanzler Vineyards

Steve and Lynda Kanzler came to Sonoma County in 1992. The Kanzlers found the site that would become Kanzler Vineyard in 1993; planting took place in 1996 on the 20-acre former apple orchard. The vineyard is planted primarily to clones 115, 667 and Pommard. Steve manages the vineyard and the business; Lynda is the chief financial officer. The Kanzler's two children are involved in promoting and marketing the wines. Kanzler Vineyard has earned a great reputation among Pinot winemakers and consumers with grapes sourced for producers such as Kosta Browne,

MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

"Many-layered Pinot..."

Kanzler Vineyards

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Reserve 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; bit closed now, but lots of dark cherry and spice aromas underneath; big, rich, dense black cherry flavors; spice and forest floor notes; some sweet oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, complex, many layered Pinot that really belongs in your cellar for a few years at least. Will reward the patience.

50 cases made \$65 Score: 95

SMART BUY!

"Forward and fruity..."

Coastal Ridge

Pinot Noir California 2007

Medium ruby color; ripe red cherry aromas with some spicy notes; ripe, forward red cherry fruit with nice spicy notes; slight bit of tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Forward and fruity, this Pinot will work well with many lighter dishes. It's also a great bargain.

n/a cases made \$7 Score: 88

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Landmark Vineyards, A.P. Vin and Roessler Cellars. The grapes are so good that the Kanzlers decided to make their own Pinot Noir under the Kanzler Vineyards label. His winemaker is Greg Stach. The Kanzler Pinots are bold, stylish, silky Pinots that are definitely worthy of your consideration.

Kanzler Vineyards ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2007***

Medium-deep ruby color; ripe, dense, black cherry aromas with some mineral and forest floor notes; deep, ripe, rich black cherry flavors with spice and mineral notes; bit toasty; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, earthy Pinot with much development ahead. Needs time in the glass and the bottle.

348 cases made \$48 Score: 93

Kanzler Vineyards ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Reserve 2007***

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 4.

Kings Mountain Vineyard

Kings Mountain Vineyard is located above the town of Woodside on Kings Mountain Road. The vineyard is located on a site that has been producing grapes off and on since the late 1800s. Replanted and reestablished in 1992, today the Kings Mountain Vineyard is a one-acre planting consisting of Chardonnay, some Bordeaux varieties and Pinot Noir. Alec Hutchinson is the owner and Brian Caseldon is the winemaker.

Kings Mountain Vineyard ***Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains 2005***

Medium ruby color; spicy dark cherry and herbal aromas; ripe, rich, deep cherry flavors with spice and herbal notes; some tannin and toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and rich Pinot with nice structure and complex flavors.

60 cases made \$45 Score: 91

La Crema

Founded in 1979, La Crema is now owned by sisters Laura Jackson Giron and Jennifer Jackson (daughters of Kendall-Jackson's Jess Jackson) and focuses on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Russian River Valley, Carneros, Sonoma Coast and the Anderson Valley. Three tiers of wines are produced by winemaker Melissa Stackhouse. The Appellation Series showcases the distinct character of one of the four appellations for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The Varietal Series is a set of limited bottlings that reflect the best of each variety and the Nine Barrel Series is the best barrel selection of the vintage. These wines are not only delicious, texture driven Pinots, they are also generally great values.

La Crema ***Pinot Noir Monterey County 2008***

Medium ruby color; rich, cherry and plum aromas with some spicy notes; complex, concentrated spiced, stewed plum flavors with savory colar notes and moderate tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and spicy Pinot with a lot of deep flavors that need some time to resolve.

n/a cases made \$24 Score: 86

La Crema ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2008***

Medium ruby color; shy aromas with floral and light berry notes; bit closed with some tart, hard candy flavors of raspberry and tea, some earthy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. A bit tight and unyielding right now, should settle with some time in the bottle and glass.

n/a cases made \$24 Score: 87

Loma Prieta Winery

Attorneys Paul and Amy Kemp founded Loma Prieta Winery in 2001. The estate vineyards, located at 2,300 feet on steep, west-facing hillsides overlooking the Monterey Bay, are planted to Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. The winery's recent Pinot bottlings are from the Saveria Vineyard in nearby Aptos, California, as well as an estate vineyard bottling. I met Paul Kemp at a wine dinner in Los Gatos and like many of his peers in the Santa Cruz Mountains he is driven and dedicated to making great Pinot in a less-recognized, and certainly underrated area for Pinot.

Loma Prieta Winery ***Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains Saveria Vineyard 2007***

Medium ruby color; deep, herbal aromas with some cherry notes; ripe red cherry flavors with complex herbal notes and some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Lighter, balanced Pinot with nice herbal notes.

410 cases made \$50 Score: 88

MacRostie Winery and Vineyards

Steve MacRostie has been making Pinot Noir in and around Sonoma and Carneros for three decades, starting his career just out of UC-Davis in 1974 at Hacienda Wine Cellars. In 1987 he founded MacRostie Winery to focus on Chardonnay, Merlot and Pinot Noir from the Sonoma side of the Carneros region. In 1998 he planted his first estate vineyard on Wildcat Mountain at the southern end of the Sonoma Valley and the Carneros region. Today he produces Chardonnay, Merlot, Syrah and Pinot Noir, in a balanced, high toned style. His Carneros appellation wines are terrific every year and widely available. The Wildcat Mountain Vineyard wines—Syrah and

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Pinot Noir—are deep and complex and promise even more interesting wines to come.

MacRostie Winery & Vineyards

Pinot Noir Carneros 2007

Medium ruby color; spicy red cherry and toasty aromas; rich, ripe, spicy red cherry flavors with some sweet oak and silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy, tasty Pinot with delicious flavors—this Pinot will go with just about anything on the table.

5,064 cases made \$30 Score: 93

Merry Edwards

Merry Edwards truly has a golden touch when it comes to Pinot Noir. Her winemaking career spans more than three decades and has had a consistent thread of Pinot Noir running through it. After switching from a graduate program in nutrition at UC Berkeley to the enology and viticulture program at UC Davis, Merry became one of the first female graduates to seek work as a winemaker. Her first winemaking position was at Mount Eden Vineyards in 1974, working for then consulting winemaker Richard Graff for three vintages. Merry moved on to help build Matanzas Creek Winery from the ground up and guided that brand for seven years. Merry left Matanzas Creek in 1984 to pursue new opportunities and to start a consulting business. In 1997 she co-founded Meredith Vineyard Estate Inc. and began searching for the best Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley Pinot Noir vineyards to provide the grapes for her Merry Edwards Wines Pinots, as well as to plant and grow her own Pinot vineyards. The Meredith Estate vineyard and the Coopersmith Vineyard are two such projects. Merry also just completed and opened her own winery on Gravenstein Highway in the heart of Russian River Valley Pinot country. Merry's Pinot bottlings include vineyard designates from the Olivet Lane, Meredith Estate, Coopersmith, Flax, Tobias Glen and Klopp Ranch vineyards, regional blends from Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast and a special bottling, Angel Wings, dedicated to her late son. Her Pinots are full and rich, with a great core of deep cherry fruit, earthy notes and great structure for aging.

Merry Edwards

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Angel Wings 2006

Medium-deep ruby color; deep red cherry, spice and forest floor aromas; deep, rich, ripe red cherry with complex spice and earthy notes; silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, rich and complex Pinot with a long life ahead. This is a special bottling honoring Merry Edwards' son Warren Miller who passed away in 2006.

300 cases made \$90 Score: 92

Road 31 Wine Co.

Road 31 Wine Co.'s (formerly Green Truck Cellars) founder

Kent Fortner's journey has led him all over the world before landing him in the Napa Valley making Pinot Noir. Originally from Kansas, Kent studied English and physics at William and Mary in Virginia, then skied and climbed his way around Jackson Hole, Wyoming, ran a wine bar and shop in Boise, Idaho, worked on a fishing boat and at a cannery in Alaska and traveled and climbed throughout Alaska, Nepal and Thailand. In 1996, he found himself working in the winery at Chalone Vineyard and climbing at the nearby Pinnacles National Monument. It was at the Pinnacles that Kent met his future wife, Janet, who was a park ranger there. Kent and Janet would be married at Chalone in 2000. He continued working for other wineries in the then Chalone Wine Group and finally accepted an offer to work as winemaker for Luna Vineyards in the Napa Valley. So what about the name? Road 31 refers to the gravel road in rural Kansas that runs by both his maternal and paternal family farms. Road 31 Pinots are interesting and deep, just like their winemaker.

Road 31

Pinot Noir Napa Valley 2007

Medium ruby color; earthy, stewed cherry aromas; rich, deep, complex stewed cherry and earthy flavors; some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, interesting flavors mark this Pinot—it's great with an earthy pasta.

800 cases made \$39 Score: 92

Rockroom

The Rockroom Winemaking Cooperative—it's a great name, isn't it? Rockroom was founded by Scott Collier and several of his friends with the stated goal of making great wine for themselves and their friends. The focus is on small-lot, high quality wines from the best vineyards that they can source, using sustainable methods. This Pinot producer also has a stated social conscience—they invest their profits in microloans to causes in developing countries. Scott and his associate David Philo have so far focused on Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah and Pinot Noir. Pinot bottlings include vineyard designates from Hein Vineyard in Anderson Valley, Bohemian Vineyard in Russian River Valley and La Encantada Vineyard in Santa Rita Hills. So, why Rockroom as a name? The label is named for a limestone room dug into a hillside in west Austin, Texas that began as a place to store wine and became a place to make small amounts of wine while planning for the jump to commercial winemaking. Interesting story and interesting wines.

Rockroom

Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Hein Vineyard 2007

Medium ruby color; herb and spice aromas with some cherry notes; spicy, dusty cherry flavors with some herbal, clove notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Herb and spice notes contribute to the complexity.

100 cases made \$45 Score: 90

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Rockroom

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Bohemian Vineyard 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, ripe, red cherry aromas with some cinnamon notes; rich, ripe cherry flavors with spicy, cinnamon notes; sweet oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, silky and tasty Pinot with a lot of pretty flavors. This is good at the table and also just to sip by itself.

100 cases made \$44 Score: 92

Rockroom

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills La Encantada Vineyard 2007

Medium ruby color; deep, slightly closed, stewed cherry and plum aromas; ripe, rich, stewed black cherry flavors; some earthy notes; toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy style of Pinot that needs some time in the bottle.

100 cases made \$48 Score: 89

Silver Mountain Vineyards

Silver Mountain Vineyards is located high in the Santa Cruz Mountains—2,100 feet in elevation to be exact—and takes advantage of the warm summer days and cool nights to balance the fruit in its certified organic estate vineyard. Founded in 1979 by Jerold O'Brien, Silver Mountain was born from a belief in the unique qualities of mountain-grown fruit in making distinctive wines. The "Silver" in the winery name comes from the success Jerold O'Brien had in commodity futures trading that help him finance the winery. Silver Mountain produces Chardonnay from its estate vineyard and Zinfandel, Pinot Noir and a Bordeaux blend from purchased grapes.

Silver Mountain Vineyards

Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains Miller Hill Vineyard 2006

Medium ruby color; deep, herbal cherry aromas with some earthy notes; deep, ripe herbal and cherry flavors with earthy notes; moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, herbal style of Pinot with good structure.

n/a cases made \$38 Score: 89

Sojourn Cellars

Craig Haserot and Erich Bradley met on the tennis courts of the town of Sonoma. Both were really from different worlds—Craig was a dot-com boomer and Erich was the winemaker at Audelssa Winery high in the mountains above Sonoma. Both had a passion for tennis and, they soon discovered, for great wines as well. The duo created Sojourn Cellars to create, at first, handcrafted Cabernet Sauvignon from the mountains high above Sonoma. And while their Cabernets are terrific,

their lush, deep, texture-driven Pinot Noirs are truly the big attraction for this venture and really Erich's sweet spot as a winemaker. It seems that each year I like these Pinots a little more. Sojourn Pinot bottlings include blends from Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley, as well as vineyard designates from Windsor Oaks Vineyard in Russian River Valley, and Rodgers Creek Vineyard, Gap's Crown Vineyard and the Sangiacomo Vineyard, all three in the Sonoma Coast/Petaluma Gap region. These are amazing wines, year in and year out.

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Windsor Oaks Vineyard 2008

Medium ruby color; deep, ripe dusty cherry and earth aromas; ripe, dusty red cherry flavor with spice and earth notes, some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy, earthy style of Pinot that will pair well with an earthy mushroom pasta.

100 cases made \$48 Score: 91

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2008

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, ripe red cherry aromas; deep, complex, rich cherry and spice flavors with nice cola notes and some earth; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and spicy Pinot with nice flavors now and more to come with some age.

200 cases made \$42 Score: 92

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2008

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex blueberry and dark cherry aromas with lots of spicy notes; rich, ripe, complex dark cherry and blueberry pie flavors; spice and earthy notes; silky texture, sweet oak; great structure and balance; long finish. Incredibly complex and full of flavor, this Pinot has a lot of time ahead of it but also drinks well now.

440 cases made \$48 Score: 95

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Rodgers Creek Vineyard 2008

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, concentrated, berry aromas; deep, ripe berry and red cherry flavors with earthy, mineral notes and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and concentrated Pinot that makes a good statement for this new vineyard in the Petaluma Gap region.

400 cases made \$48 Score: 93

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2008

Please see "Make Room In The Cellar!" on page 2.

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

Sojourn Cellars

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2008

Medium ruby color; somewhat tight on the nose with earthy, spicy aromas; deep and rich cherry flavors as wine opens up with spice and earthy notes; very silky texture, nice sweet oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Full of potential, this is a Pinot that shows well now with air but really needs some time to develop. Patience....

550 cases made \$39 Score: 93

Storrs Winery

Storrs Winery was launched with the 1988 vintage by husband and wife Stephen Storrs and Pamela Bianchini-Storrs with a white Riesling that won them much acclaim. Steve's family is from Hanover, New Hampshire; Pamela is of Italian descent and wine has always been a part of her life—her grandfather made the family's wine each fall. Both Steve and Pamela attended UC-Davis (he with an emphasis in viticulture, she enology) and used those skills to build Storrs from an initial production of 1,200 cases to the winery's current production of around 12,000 cases. Both believe in a singular philosophy with regard to making their wines: hands on in the vineyard, hands off in the winery. In 2001, Steve and Pamela purchased 50 acres in the Pleasant Valley district of Corralitos on the southwestern slopes of Mount Madonna. They have slowly converted the land to sustainable/organic practices and have planted 10 acres of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The Storrs Pinot bottlings include a Santa Cruz Mountains blend and a blend they call Wildcat Ridge.

Storrs Winery

Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains 2006

Medium ruby color; rich, bright, cherry/strawberry aromas; rich, ripe, bright cherry fruit with some light herbal and mineral notes; nice acidity; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, fruity Pinot with crisp acidity. Nice for lighter fare.

n/a cases made \$36 Score: 87

Three Saints

The Three Saints label is a new brand developed by the Dierberg family in the Santa Maria Valley. The Three Saints wines are all sourced from Dierberg Family estate vineyards in Santa Maria Valley, Santa Rita Hills and Santa Ynez Valley. Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah are currently produced. The wines are produced at the Dierberg estate winery in Santa Ynez; the Pinot Noir in particular is very tasty and a great value.

Three Saints

Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley 2007

Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 2.

Twin Oaks Cellars

While Mark and Sue Weiner have been making their Twin Oaks Cellars wines since 2001, 2005 was their first commercial vintage of Pinot Noir. Mark has learned winemaking from some of the best Pinot makers in California: Bill Brosseau (Brosseau, Testarossa), Ed Kurtzman (August West), Adam Lee (Siduri) and Brian Loring (Loring Wine Company). One of the big things he learned is how important the right vineyard is and he has that part nailed with grape sources such as Sleepy Hollow Vineyard in Santa Lucia Highlands and Richard Sanford's La Encantada Vineyard in Santa Rita Hills. Mark makes his Twin Oaks Pinots at the Crushpad cooperative winemaking facility in San Francisco. His Pinots are aromatic, fruit driven and well balanced. Well worth a look.

Twin Oaks Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Sleepy Hollow Vineyard 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; deep cherry nose with nuances of black tea and earth; deep, complex raspberry and cherry flavors tinged with spiced wood smoke; velvety texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and lush Pinot with flavors that burst through on the long finish.

75 cases made \$42 Score: 93

Twin Oaks Cellars

Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills La Encantada Vineyard 2007

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, spicy strawberry aromas with bergemot, clove, black tea and plum notes. Deep, complex, savory flavors of plum and strawberry, with overlays of root beer and cola; some toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. A spicy and complex Pinot with layers of flavor.

75 cases made \$42 Score: 91

Winter's Hill Vineyard

Winter's Hill Vineyard was founded in 1990 and is owned and operated by the Gladhart family. Peter and Emily Gladhart planted 20 acres of vines on a farm established in 1961. Today, three generations help farm the estate's 35 acres of Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris, and Pinot Blanc that make up the winery's production. The estate vineyard is located in the Dundee Hills with a south-facing slope ranging in elevation from 525-750 feet. Peter manages the vineyard, Delphine Gladhart is the winemaker and Russell Gladhart handles marketing and sales. Winter's Hill produces three Pinot bottlings: a Dundee Hills bottling, a Reserve bottling and a proprietary selection called "Cuvee du Vigneron."

Winter's Hill Vineyard

Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Reserve 2005

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, intense, spice and mineral

IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

aromas; rich, deep, ripe dark cherry and earthy flavors with mineral notes and sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Very deep and rich Pinot with a nice silky texture and just the right amount of oak.

138 cases made \$50 Score: 91

Winter's Hill Vineyard

Pinot Noir Dundee Hills Cuvee du Vigneron 2006

Medium ruby color; complex stewed cherry aromas with earthy notes; ripe, deep stewed cherry flavors with earthy/herbal notes, moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot is complex and deep with some interesting layers of flavor; will match up with a hearty stew.

226 cases made \$39 Score: 89

Winter's Hill Vineyard

Pinot Noir Dundee Hills 2006

Medium ruby color; deep, herbal, cherry aromas; rich, ripe earthy cherry flavors with spice and mineral notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright and juicy flavors make this a nice Pinot to sip or enjoy with grilled meats.

1,195 cases made \$29 Score: 92

Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines discussed in this issue.

Beauregard Vineyards

831.425.7777, www.beauregardvineyards.com

Breggo Cellars

707.895.9589, www.breggo.com

Byron Vineyards & Winery

805.934.4770, www.byronwines.com

Coastal Ridge

800.692.5780

Damian Rae

707.875.9600, www.damianrae.com

Grey Stack Cellars

707.228.1338, www.greystackcellars.com

Heart O' The Mountain

831.345.6133, www.hearttothemountain.com

J Vineyards & Winery

888.594.6326, www.jwine.com

Kanzler Vineyards

707.824.1726, www.kanzlervineyards.com

Kings Mountain Vineyard

650.851.7551

La Crema

707.571.1504, www.lacrema.com

Loma Prieta Winery

408.353.2950, www.lomaprietawinery.com

MacRostie Winery and Vineyards

707.996.4480, www.macrostiewinery.com

Merry Edwards

707.823.7466, www.merryedwards.com

Road 31 Wine Co.

707.649.1200, www.road31.com

Rockroom

www.rockroom.com

Silver Mountain Vineyards

408.353.2278, www.silvermtn.com

Sojourn Cellars

707.933.9753, www.sojourncellars.com

Storrs Winery

831.458.5030, www.storrswine.com

Three Saints

805.736.0757, www.threesaintsvineyard.com

Twin Oaks Cellars

408.356.5998, www.twinoakcellars.com

Winter's Hill Vineyard

503.864.4610, www.wintershillwine.com

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for people passionate about western pinot noir

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Editorial Philosophy

PinotReport is an independent newsletter owned, written and published by Gregory S. Walter. All tastings unless otherwise noted are done blind by the Editor. Any and all opinions and analysis expressed in these pages unless otherwise noted belong to Gregory S. Walter, who has no financial involvement or connection whatsoever in the production, distribution or sales of wine.

Wine Samples

PinotReport accepts wine samples for use in its general "In The Market" new releases tastings as well as its special tasting reports. Please follow these guidelines for submitting wine samples for review.

1. All samples should be fully finished bottles ready for market.
2. Please submit one bottle of each wine.
3. Each wine submitted should include a data sheet with at minimum the suggested retail price, case production and distribution data.

All samples should be sent to the following address:

PinotReport

Attn: Gregory S. Walter

625 Ross Court, Sonoma, CA 95476

Tel: 707.935.0326

About Our Tastings

Generally, there are two types of tastings that appear in each issue of **PinotReport**. The first are our regular "In The Market" tastings of Pinot Noirs new on the market.

The second are our special "Tasting Reports" where we from time to time focus on a particular appellation, producer or style.

How We Taste

We taste wine in small flights with no more than 12 wines in a tasting session and one tasting session in a day. While all scores are finalized before the wines are revealed, wines are usually kept open for a day or more to see how the wines develop. Additional commentary may be added based on this, but scores are not changed.

All tasting unless otherwise noted is done blind by the Editor. Other tasters may participate, but their scores and comments are not part of the official tasting record. The tasting coordinator (who does not taste) arranges and bags all wines, which are then scored and comments recorded before bags are removed. Duplicate wines are inserted in tastings to measure consistency.

Our tastings are done under controlled, consistent conditions. We do not under any circumstances use tasting notes from large tasting events or other sub-optimal tasting venues in our published, scored tasting reports.

Wine Prices and Sourcing

Wine prices vary all around the country and can often vary significantly within the same city. We make every effort to only publish a winery's suggested retail price. This price in some cases will be higher than those you can find in your local markets. The wines we taste either come from the wineries in the form of tasting samples (always finished bottles ready for market) or wines we purchase at retail or at the winery.

Our Wine Ratings

The wines we taste are rated using a 100-point rating system. We fully understand the ongoing debate over the use of the 100-point system and while we respect the right of those who simply despise the system to continue to do so, we believe that the scale has value when used with the accompanying tasting notes as a **relative guide** to wine quality that has the added benefit of **being familiar** and **truly intuitive** for most consumers.

PinotReport's 100-Point Scale

96-100	SUPERIOR; it doesn't get better.
90-95	OUTSTANDING; approaching the best
86-89	ABOVE AVERAGE; a very good Pinot.
80-85	AVERAGE; OK if it's all you have.
60-79	BELOW AVERAGE; not recommended.
50-59	UNDRINKABLE.

Clos Pepe: A Vigneron's Quest For Great Dirt

Just-Published Book Tells Story Of Building World-Class Vineyard Estate

Clos Pepe: A Vigneron's Quest For Great Dirt

By Stephen P. Pepe

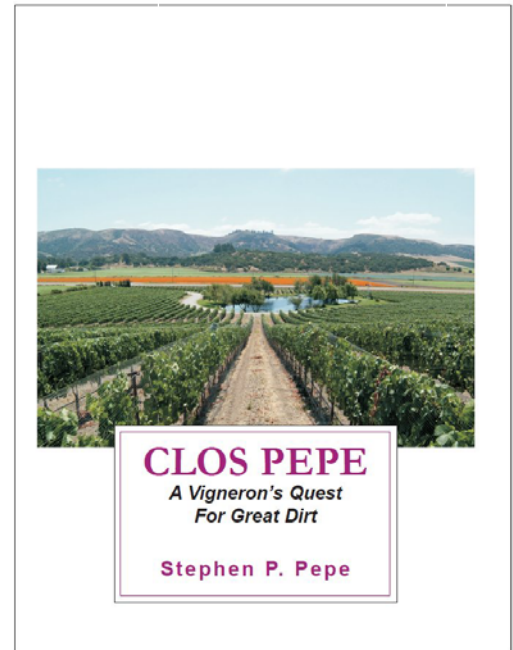
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The story of one of the most celebrated Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards in California, **Clos Pepe Vineyard** in the Santa Rita Hills, is captured in a new book by founder **Stephen P. Pepe** and has just been published by my imprint **Carneros Press**.

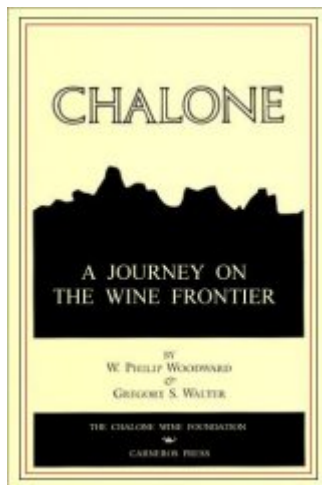
"**Clos Pepe: A Vigneron's Quest For Great Dirt**" is a compelling story about Stephen Pepe's journey from successful attorney, home winemaker and backyard vineyardist in Long Beach, Calif., to a true vigneron (French for one who cultivates a vineyard for making wine) in the then up-and-coming Santa Rita Hills wine region in Santa Barbara County. It's a journey of change and exploration—at times light-hearted and ironic and at other times deliberative and frustrating—with the culmination being the creation of one of the finest Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards and wine brands in California.

Just Published! Order Now!

"**Clos Pepe: A Vigneron's Quest For Great Dirt**" is available directly from Carneros Press for \$25 per copy either online at carnerospress.com or use the convenient order form on the next page.



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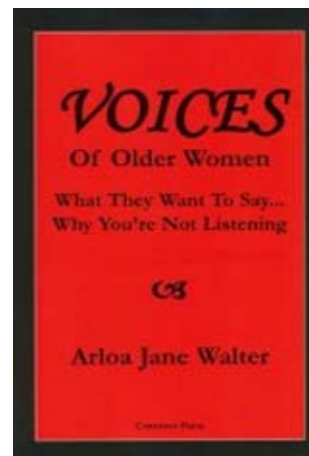
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