

# PINOTREPORT

*for people passionate about western pinot noir*

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

## Here for the long haul...

**I READ A COMMENT ON FACE BOOK LAST MONTH WHERE SOMEONE MADE A STATEMENT** to the effect that Pinot Noir had “jumped the shark.” I’ve never been a big fan of that expression, but it did get me thinking

The expression “jump the shark” was originally used a couple of decades ago to describe when a television program had run out of new ideas. More recently its use has been generalized to mean the point when a brand or concept has become irrelevant. Has Pinot Noir become irrelevant or passé? Have consumers “left the building” and walked away from Pinot Noir in search of what’s new and hot?

The modern renaissance of Western Pinot Noir really stretches back into the early 1980s in terms of the incredible innovations in the cellar and the vineyard that have resulted in the wines we drink today. Of course, the movie (and subsequent phenomenon) “Sideways” propelled Pinot Noir to the forefront of the aspirational wine consumer’s eye—everyone wanted to sit across a table from Virginia Madsen sharing a bottle of Pinot!

Some might say that the “Sideways” effect really constituted a fad and nothing more.

I believe that “Sideways” was a lucky break for Pinot Noir that while amazing did nothing more than bring an already established and growing segment of the wine world to a critical mass much more quickly.

I also believe that Western Pinot Noir is not a fad and is definitely here for the long haul. Not only do the wines continue to get more interesting, elegant and nuanced each vintage, but every month I hear about or taste wines new, artisanal producers who have decided that Pinot is where their passion lies. I’m with them and—I’m guessing—with you.

This issue features new releases from producers including Amelle Wines, Anaba Wines, Bailiwick, Carr Vineyard & Winery, Dutton-Goldfield Winery, Flying Goat Cellars, Goldeneye, Graton Ridge, HKG, La Crema, La Rochelle, MacMurray Ranch, Manzoni Vineyard, Valerie’s Vineyard, Wan Fiore Project and Waxwing Cellars.

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

-- Greg Walter, editor and publisher

## IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

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### 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.

#### Amelle Wines

Amelle Wines is a collaboration of friends Eric Buffington and Ryan Padgett. The name Amelle is a combination of the names of Eric's wife Amanda and Ryan's wife Michelle. Eric is currently associate winemaker at Freeman Vineyard & Winery in Sebastopol; Ryan's background is in geology. The partnership started in 2007 with a small lot of Zinfandel and today includes both Zinfandel and Pinot Noir most recently from the La Cruz Vineyard in the Petaluma Gap.

#### Amelle Wines

##### ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast La Cruz Vineyard 2010***

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Medium ruby color; rich, stewed cherry with baking spice notes; rich, ripe red cherry flavors with earthy, spicy notes and a touch of oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, ripe Pinot with some nice complex earthy notes.

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**50 cases made \$43 Score: 93**

#### Anaba Wines

Anaba Wines is the culmination of founder and Chicago native John Sweazey's decades-long journey learning about and enjoying fine wines, especially those from the Burgundy and Rhone regions of France. John named his wine project, located at the southwestern mouth of the Sonoma Valley, after the "anabatic winds," a phenomenon where winds move across land—in this case, vineyards—and are drawn up slopes due to the warming of the air by the sun at the top of the slope. Anaba's location right in the path of the daily winds from the Petaluma Gap lives up to the name. John is fortunate to have Jennifer Marion as his winemaker. Part of a growing (and good) trend in winemaking, Jennifer has hands-on experience

working on both sides of the fine-wine equation—she has worked for an agricultural technology consulting firm as well as spent time in service as assistant winemaker at Carneros Pinot pioneer MacRostie Winery. Jennifer's Anaba wines are full of texture and nuance and are the best examples of her understanding of what it takes to make terrific wines. In addition to Pinot, Anaba's offerings include Chardonnay, red and white Rhone blends, a rose, Mourvedre and late harvest/dessert wines. Pinot bottlings include a Sonoma Coast blend and vineyard designates including Sun Chase Vineyard and Gap's Crown Vineyard from Sonoma Coast, and Soberanes Vineyard from the Santa Lucia Highlands.

#### Anaba Wines

##### ***Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Soberanes Vineyard 2010***

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

#### Anaba Wines

##### ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010***

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Medium-deep ruby color; ripe cherry aromas with spice and earthy notes; rich, deep, dark cherry flavors with spice and earthy notes; some toasty oak notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, earthy Pinot with nice structure—opens up nicely in the glass.

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**831 cases made \$32 Score: 91**

#### Anaba Wines

##### ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2010***

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Deep ruby color; complex, dark cherry, floral and earthy aromas; deep, rich dark cherry flavors with complex forest floor and sweet oak notes; moderate tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot that needs time in the glass to open up. Has great structure for aging and will reward your patience.

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**513 cases made \$44 Score: 93**

### MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

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**"Bright, complex, spicy..."**

#### La Rochelle

##### ***Pinot Noir Carneros Donum Estate Vineyard 2010***

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Medium ruby color; deep, bright, spicy cherry aromas; rich, bright dark cherry flavors with spice and earthy notes; silky texture; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, complex and spicy Pinot with great structure for age.

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**129 cases made \$75 Score: 94**

### SMART BUY!

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**"Big and structured..."**

#### MacMurray Ranch

##### ***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2009***

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Deep ruby color; dense, dark cherry and earthy aromas; full, rich earthy and dark cherry flavors with some forest floor notes; moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, well structured Pinot with body and flavor to stand up to a nice roast—great value too.

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**71,600 cases made \$27 Score: 91**

## IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

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### Anaba Wines

#### *Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sun Chase Vineyard 2010*

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Medium-deep ruby color; rich, spicy cherry aromas with herbal notes; deep, complex cherry flavors with spice and earth notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. A complex Pinot that has nice structure and subtle flavors.

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**543 cases made      \$42      Score: 93**

### Bailiwick Wines

Paul and Bryan Vais founded Bailiwick Wines in 2009 following years pursuing careers outside of the wine and food world. The San Francisco Bay Area natives count family and the traditions and experiences that surrounded them—many involving great meals and wines—as the driving forces that led them to take the plunge and make their own wines 25 years ago first in a basement and subsequently in garages. The Bailiwick philosophy is to source the best vineyards in multiple appellations and create the best representation of that vineyard in the bottle. Pinot bottlings include two regional bottlings from Russian River Valley and Marin County, and two vineyard designates from the Michaud Vineyard in the Chalona AVA and the Silver Pines Vineyard on Sonoma Mountain. A Vermentino is also produced. Definitely a producer worth watching.

### Bailiwick Wines

#### *Pinot Noir Chalona Michaud Vineyard 2010*

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Medium ruby color; bit tight with some cherry and herbal aromas; deep, cherry and plum flavors with concentrated herbal and earthy notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, interesting Pinot that needs some time in the glass and the cellar.

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**120 cases made      \$44      Score: 93**

### Bailiwick Wines

#### *Pinot Noir Marin County Borderline 2010*

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Medium ruby color; rich, dark cherry and berry aromas with spicy notes; rich, ripe cherry flavors with earthy, herbal notes; slight tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, rich Pinot with nice structure; great with roast chicken or pork.

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**100 cases made      \$36      Score: 91**

### Bailiwick Wines

#### *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2010*

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, earthy aromas with spicy cherry notes; deep, earthy cherry flavors with forest floor notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, complex Pinot that needs some time in the glass to open up.

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**350 cases made      \$36      Score: 91**

### Bailiwick Wines

#### *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Foray 2010*

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Medium-deep ruby color; rich red cherry aromas with bright, spicy notes; bright, ripe red cherry flavors with spicy, toasty notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, spicy Pinot with nice structure for some real versatility at the table.

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**140 cases made      \$40      Score: 93**

### Bailiwick Wines

#### *Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010*

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Medium ruby color; deep, rich cherry aromas with complex, spice and herbal notes; deep, rich, complex cherry flavors with herbal, earthy notes; some tannin and oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot that has great mouthfeel. Delicious.

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**270 cases made      \$36      Score: 94**

### Bailiwick Wines

#### *Pinot Noir Sonoma Mountain Silver Pines Vineyard 2010*

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, spicy aromas with some dark cherry notes; deep, complex, dark cherry flavors with tannin and oak notes; rich texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, rich Pinot with nice complexity. Needs some time to open up, but will reward your patience.

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**140 cases made      \$44      Score: 92**

## Carr Vineyards & Winery

Ryan Carr studied and graduated from the University of Arizona with a degree in graphic arts. Shortly thereafter he decided to move to the Santa Ynez Valley to make wine. In 1999 he made his first wine—10 cases—in his garage. He and his friend Andy Kahn (Kahn Winery) decided to start a vineyard development company so that they could develop and source vineyards for their respective winemaking efforts. At the same time, Ryan became Andy Kahn's assistant winemaker to further hone his craft. Ryan's Carr Vineyards & Winery operation is located in downtown Santa Barbara in an old 1940s Quonset hut that's been outfitted on the inside to look like the inside of a cave. In addition to Pinot Noir, Ryan makes Cabernet Franc, Syrah and Pinot Gris. His Pinot bottlings include a regional Santa Rita Hills blend called Three Vineyards, a Santa Barbara County blend called Harvest Girl and vineyard designates including The Yard Vineyard, Kessler-Haak Vineyard and the Turner Vineyard, all in Santa Rita Hills.

### Carr Vineyards & Winery

#### *Pinot Noir Santa Barbara County Harvest Girl 2009*

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Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 4.

## IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

Dutton-Goldfield Winery was launched in 1998 by Steve and Theresa Dutton, and Dan and Loie Goldfield. Dan and Steve decided to partner in this venture after working closely together as winemaker and grape grower since 1990, Dan as winemaker for several brands, and Steve managing his family's Dutton Ranch vineyards. It's no surprise that the majority of the wines they produce under the Dutton-Goldfield label are from the western Russian River Valley, but other very interesting bottlings are sourced from Marin County, and the Freestone and Occidental areas of western Sonoma County. The Pinots are packed with a core of intense fruit and earthy notes, and wonderful texture.

#### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

***Pinot Noir Green Valley Dutton Ranch - Fox Den Vineyard 2010***

Medium-deep ruby color; deep, rich dark cherry and berry aromas with spice notes; deep, rich, full berry flavors with bright, spicy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, forward Pinot with complex spice notes.

**392 cases made      \$58      Score: 92**

#### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

***Pinot Noir Marin County Azaya Ranch Vineyard 2010***

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, complex aromas of dark cherry, herbs and a hint of thyme; rich, ripe dark cherry flavors with herbal notes, some tannin and oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky, rich Pinot with some nice herbal notes.

**190 cases made      \$58      Score: 91**

#### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

***Pinot Noir Marin County Devil's Gulch Vineyard 2010***

Medium-deep ruby color; rich, lush aromas of cherry and spice

with earthy notes; bright, forward cherry fruit with spicy notes; a touch of toasty oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Spicy, forward Pinot with bright flavors.

**394 cases made      \$58      Score: 90**

#### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

***Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch 2010***

Deep ruby color; deep, bit closed, earthy, forest floor aromas with some cherry notes; deep berry and cherry flavors with earthy, forest floor notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, concentrated Pinot with good structure.

**2,598 cases made      \$38      Score: 88**

#### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

***Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch - Emerald Ridge Vineyard 2010***

Medium-deep ruby color; complex, earthy aromas with some berry notes; rich, ripe, berry and cherry flavors with forest floor and oak notes; mouthfilling; good structure and balance; long finish. Forward fruit flavors with nice structure make this a good Pinot for the table right now.

**251 cases made      \$58      Score: 90**

#### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

***Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Dutton Ranch - Freestone Hill Vineyard 2010***

Deep ruby color; deep, complex, spicy cherry aromas with some forest floor and herbal notes; deep, rich, dark cherry flavors with baking spices and some forest floor notes; silky texture; some sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, complex Pinot with a great palette of flavor.

**309 cases made      \$72      Score: 93**

#### Dutton-Goldfield Winery

***Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast McDougall Vineyard 2010***

Medium ruby color; complex, deep aromas of herbs and forest

### MAKE ROOM IN THE CELLAR!

***"Delicious, deep and complex..."***

#### Anaba Wines

***Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Soberanes Vineyard 2010***

Deep ruby color; complex stewed cherry aromas with earthy, bacon notes; deep, complex, dark cherry and plum with earth and anise notes; some tannin and oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Deliciously deep and complex, this is a Pinot perfect for roasted or grilled meats, or just to drink by itself.

**96 cases made      \$48      Score: 94**

### SMART BUY!

***"Bigger, bolder style..."***

#### Carr Vineyards & Winery

***Pinot Noir Santa Barbara County Harvest Girl 2009***

Deep ruby color; deep berry and plum aromas with pepper and anise notes; big, rich berry and plum flavors with pepper and earthy notes; moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Bigger, bolder style of Pinot—ready to drink with some barbecue.

**354 cases made      \$24      Score: 91**

## IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

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floor; deep, earthy, forest floor flavors with some stewed cherry notes; moderate oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, complex Pinot that needs a little time in the glass to open up.

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**239 cases made      \$58      Score: 88**

### Flying Goat Cellars

Flying Goat Cellars is named for the athletic prowess of Norman Yost's two pygmy goats. And while I've not seen Norm Yost do any flipper turns or unrestrained spiral loops, he has approached Flying Goat Cellars with the same passion and enthusiasm. Norm came to Santa Barbara County first to work as winemaker at Foley Estate's winery in the Santa Rita Hills. Flying Goat Cellars was a natural progression for him. The Pinot focus is on vineyards in Santa Barbara County and includes bottlings from Dierberg and Solomon Hills vineyards in the Santa Maria Valley, Rancho Santa Rosa and Rio Vista vineyards in Santa Rita Hills. The style is bold, with a deep core of fruit and earthy complexity, and extremely well balanced.

#### Flying Goat Cellars

***Pinot Noir San Luis Obispo County Salisbury Vineyard 2009***

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Deep ruby color; rich, full aromas of cherry and plum with spice and toasty oak notes; rich, deep stewed cherry and plum flavors with spicy oak and earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, mouthfilling Pinot that needs time in the glass to really open up.

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**250 cases made      \$38      Score: 92**

#### Flying Goat Cellars

***Pinot Noir Santa Barbara County YNOT 2010***

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Medium ruby color; bright, forward cherry aromas with spicy notes; rich, ripe red cherry flavors with bright acidity and spicy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Bright, spicy Pinot that is wonderfully drinkable right now.

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**450 cases made      \$25      Score: 89**

#### Flying Goat Cellars

***Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley Garey Ranch 2009***

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep black cherry aromas with some herbal, earthy notes; deep, dark cherry and plum flavors with earthy notes; rich, silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. This is a deep, rich Pinot with the structure to stand up to just about anything on the grill.

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**125 cases made      \$42      Score: 90**

#### Flying Goat Cellars

***Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley Solomon Hills 2009***

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Deep ruby color; deep, complex, but slightly closed plum and dark cherry aromas with earthy notes; deep, complex cherry

and plum flavors with earthy, savory notes; some oak and tannin; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot that is just beginning to show its stuff. Needs time in the glass and the bottle.

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**151 cases made      \$42      Score: 93**

### Flying Goat Cellars

***Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Racho Santa Rosa 2009***

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Deep ruby color; complex, deep berry and plum aromas with earth and oak notes; complex, rich plum and berry flavors with lots of earthy notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, forward Pinot with bright acidity—drinking great now.

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**120 cases made      \$46      Score: 93**

### Goldeneye Winery

Dan and Margaret Duckhorn, long known for their Napa Valley Merlot, decided in 1990 to concede to their growing interest in Pinot Noir and in 1996 launched Goldeneye in the Anderson Valley along the migratory path of the winery's namesake, the Goldeneye Duck. Since its first vintage, Goldeneye's five estate vineyards have grown to 173 acres of vines. Winemaker Michael Fay takes a minimalist approach in his winemaking, resulting in expressive, balanced Pinots. Pinot bottlings include the Anderson Valley blend and several vineyard designates. These are consistently delicious Pinots.

#### Goldeneye

***Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2009***

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Deep ruby color; complex, earthy cherry aromas with some toasty oak notes; deep, rich, dark cherry flavors with complex earthy notes; some toasty oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, rich and complex, this is just a pleasure to drink.

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**9,389 cases made      \$55      Score: 92**

#### Goldeneye

***Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Confluence Vineyard 2009***

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Deep ruby color; deep, complex earthy aromas with some cherry and game notes; rich, deep cherry and plum flavors with earthy, gamey notes; some toasty oak; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, deep Pinot with incredibly complex flavors.

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**348 cases made      \$80      Score: 91**

#### Goldeneye

***Pinot Noir Anderson Valley The Narrows Vineyard 2009***

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex, earthy aromas with some cherry notes; big, deep, complex dark cherry flavors with strong herbal and earthy notes; moderate tannin; good

## IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

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structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot with a long life ahead of it. Give it plenty of air.

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**278 cases made      \$80      Score: 92**

### Goldeneye

#### *Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Gowan Creek Vineyard 2009*

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Medium-deep ruby color; complex berry and cherry aromas with earthy notes; rich, deep stewed berry and cherry flavors with earthy, savory spice notes; good structure and balance; long finish. This Pinot is complex and well structured—give it plenty of air in the glass to open it up.

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**\$80      Score: 91**

### Goldeneye

#### *Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Ten Degrees 2009*

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Deep ruby color; complex dusty cherry aromas with earthy and toasty oak notes; deep earthy, cherry flavors with some spice and anise notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Complex, earthy Pinot with nice structure for the cellar.

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**365 cases made      \$110      Score: 92**

### Graton Ridge Cellars

Graton Ridge Cellars is the latest incarnation of the Paul family's more than six decades of commitment to sharing the plenty of the Russian River Valley with visitors from far and wide. At first, visitors came to sample and buy Gravenstein apples and fresh apple juice; today it's Russian River Valley Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc. Three generations of the Paul family, led by Art and Barbara Paul are involved in the family business today. Winemaker Nick Legg produces small lots from the estate vineyard.

### Graton Ridge Cellars

#### *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2010*

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Medium-deep ruby color; earthy, stewed cherry aromas with some spice notes; deep, stewed cherry flavors with earthy, savory spice notes; some tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy and full Pinot; nice with a mushroom pasta.

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**319 cases made      \$45      Score: 88**

### Graton Ridge Cellars

#### *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Paul Family Vineyard 2010*

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, stewed cherry aromas with baking spice and earthy notes; rich, forward cherry flavors with baking spice, cinnamon and earthy notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, ripe Pinot with nice forward flavors. Perfect for roasted chicken or pork.

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**165 cases made      \$50      Score: 92**

### HKG

HKG is the high-end label produced by the new owners of a 100+ year old property in the Russian River Valley near Healdsburg. Hop Kiln Winery has long been a fixture of Russian River wine country. The new owners are certainly taking the right steps. The estate's 248 acres are being replanted, revitalized and modernized. The winemaker is Chuck Mansfield. HKG's Pinot bottlings are definitely a sign of great things to come from this landmark property on Westside Road.

### HKG

#### *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2009*

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, stewed dark cherry and earthy aromas with some cola notes; deep, rich, ripe dark cherry flavors with spice and cola notes; some oak; rich mouthfeel; good structure and balance; long finish. Ripe, rich Pinot with full flavors and lots of depth.

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**860 cases made      \$38      Score: 92**

### HKG

#### *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Bridge Selection 2009*

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, rich red cherry aromas with spice and herbal notes; rich, full stewed red cherry flavors with herbal and earthy notes; some oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy Pinot with nice herbal notes.

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**450 cases made      \$38      Score: 90**

### La Crema

Founded in 1979, La Crema is now part of the Kendall-Jackson family 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 Elizabeth Grant-Douglas. 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 2010*

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, stewed cherry and plum aromas with herbal, earthy notes; deep, rich, stewed cherry flavors with some herbal notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Earthy, herbal Pinot that's ready to drink.

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**51,000 cases made      \$20      Score: 86**

### La Crema

#### *Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2010*

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Deep ruby color; complex, spicy cherry aromas with some

## IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

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earthy notes; rich, ripe, stewed cherry flavors with spice and cola notes; mouthfilling; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich and ripe Pinot that is drinking well right now.

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**5,800 cases made      \$40      Score: 90**

### La Crema

#### *Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2010*

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Medium ruby color; subtle, spicy cherry aromas with some earthy notes; ripe, stewed plum flavors with spice and earthy notes; soft and silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Subtle, soft Pinot perfect for sipping on its own.

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**\$25      Score: 90**

### La Rochelle

Steven Kent Mirassou is part of a family that has had more than 100 years of pioneering history in California wine with the founding and development of Mirassou Vineyards. Steven's wine ventures are under his three-brand Steven Kent Portfolio that also includes "Lineage" (a wine made from the five classic Bordeaux varieties), Steven Kent (mainly focused on estate Livermore Valley Cabernet Sauvignon but other wines are produced) and La Rochelle, Steven's label focused on high-end Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. The name "La Rochelle" comes from the French port from which Steven's great-great-grandfather departed more than a century and a half ago for the New World. Steven and Winemaker Tom Stutz source fruit from superstar vineyards up and down the West Coast to create several vineyard designate Pinot bottlings as well as appellation blends. Some classically proportioned Chardonnay bottlings, a Pinot Meunier and a delicious Rose of Pinot Noir are also produced. The La Rochelle Pinots are texture driven, not shy in flavor and impeccably balanced.

### La Rochelle

#### *Pinot Noir Carneros Donum Estate Vineyard 2010*

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

### La Rochelle

#### *Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands 2009*

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Medium-deep ruby color; deep, complex stewed cherry and plum aromas with pepper and earthy notes; deep, complex, earthy flavors with complex stewed plum notes; moderate tannin and oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep, complex Pinot that needs a bunch of time in the glass to open up.

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**381 cases made      \$38      Score: 93**

### La Rochelle

#### *Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Soberanes Vineyard 2010*

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Deep ruby color; bit tight, deep cherry and plum aromas; big,

complex stewed cherry and plum flavors with earthy and anise notes; moderate oak and tannin; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Big, deep and silky Pinot that is still a baby. Although it's delicious now, it will reward your patience.

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**66 cases made      \$75      Score: 94**

### MacMurray Ranch

The land that is MacMurray Ranch today was originally homesteaded by Colonel George Porter, who came to the Russian River Valley in 1846. Porter's family farmed the land for generations until in 1941 actor Fred MacMurray purchased the ranch to raise his family there. The main difference at the ranch between then and now is that vineyards have replaced the pasture land. In 1996, several years after Fred MacMurray's death in 1991, the incredibly beautiful 1,700-acre ranch was purchased by the E.& J. Gallo winery and the brand created. MacMurray Ranch focuses on Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris, the former being sourced primarily from estate vineyards in the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast, although the winery has begun sourcing Pinot from outside the North Coast area, as far away as the Santa Rita Hills.

### MacMurray Ranch

#### *Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2009*

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Please see "Smart Buy!" on page 2.

### Manzoni Vineyards

When Joseph Manzoni came to the United States in 1921 from Switzerland he eventually settled in the Salinas Valley working in the dairy business. He and his family moved to farming row crops, a business the Manzoni family continues today. He brought with him a tradition of making wine and Grappa and shared that knowledge and tradition with his son Louie Manzoni and his grandsons Mark and Michael Manzoni. The family planted six acres of grapes in 1990 and then in 1999 started the Manzoni Wines label. Wines produced include Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah and port.

### Manzoni Vineyards

#### *Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands Home Vineyard 2010*

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Medium ruby color; deep, rich red cherry and plum aromas with spice notes; rich, stewed cherry flavors with some earth and spice notes; sweet oak; good structure and balance; long finish. Rich, forward Pinot with soft flavors and nice texture.

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**441 cases made      \$26      Score: 89**

### Valerie's Vineyard

Valerie's Vineyard is a joint venture of Sonoma public relations consultant Michael Coats, his wife Valerie, Chuck and Jerry Hanson of the Hi-Time Wine Cellars retail operation in

## IN THE MARKET: Recent Pinot Noir Reviews

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Southern California (Valerie's parents) and Vicki Brown (Valerie's sister). The vineyard is one acre and organically farmed on the Sonoma side of the Carneros region. The first vintage was 2003. The Pinot from Valerie's Vineyard is an interesting wine from what appears to be a great little micro-site in the western Carneros.

### Valerie's Vineyard

#### *Pinot Noir Carneros One Acre 2010*

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Deep ruby color; deep, dense berry and cherry aromas with smoky oak notes; deep, dark cherry flavors with earthy notes; some spice; moderate tannin and oak notes; good structure and balance; long finish. Dense, deep Pinot with a good dose of oak.

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**58 cases made      \$40      Score: 90**

### Wan Fiore Project

The Wan Fiore Project is the collaboration of Raymond Wan and Robert Fiore and brings together two friends from different backgrounds who share a love and passion for fine wines. Raymond Wan, with a background in finance and sales, learned his hands-on vineyard skills as an intern at Clos Pepe Vineyard in the Santa Rita Hills. It was there he conceived of the idea of creating his own wine venture. Robert Fiore came from a science background and took extension courses at UC Davis to learn the mix of skills needed to make fine wine. Because of Raymond's connection with Clos Pepe, they were able to make a Clos Pepe Pinot in 2009 and 2010. Great concept and definitely a label to watch.

### Wan Fiore Project

#### *Pinot Noir Santa Rita Hills Clos Pepe Vineyard 2010*

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Deep ruby color; intense, deep plum and black cherry aromas with pepper and anise notes; deep, complex plum flavors with earthy, black pepper notes; some tannin and oak; lush texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Deep and intense Pinot with layers of lush complexity. Pair with grilled meats.

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**50 cases made      \$49      Score: 93**

### Waxwing Cellars

Waxwing Wines is what happened when Scott Sizemore left the world of commercial winemaking in 2006 to stay home with his newborn son. Scott had more than 20 years in winemaking with wineries like Ravenswood, Rosenblum Cellars and Pellegrini Family Vineyards. He saw an opportunity to focus on his own small-lot wines, particularly Pinot Noir and Syrah, from the Sonoma Coast and other appellations. Waxwing Wines is named for the distinctive Cedar Waxwing songbirds that can be seen all over Northern California. Scott's Pinots are rich and silky and worthy of your attention.

### Waxwing Cellars

#### *Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Spring Hill Vineyard 2010*

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Medium ruby color; ripe cherry aromas with herbs and rhubarb notes; rich, ripe stewed cherry flavors with earthy and herbal notes; silky texture; good structure and balance; long finish. Silky, rich Pinot with interesting herbal notes.

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**75 cases made      \$33      Score: 92**

### Contacting The Winery

Below is contact information for wines discussed in this issue.

#### **Amelle Wines**

707.529.9011, [www.amellewines.com](http://www.amellewines.com)

#### **Anaba Wines**

707.996.4188, [www.anabawines.com](http://www.anabawines.com)

#### **Bailiwick Wines**

707.509.0259, [www.bailiwickwines.com](http://www.bailiwickwines.com)

#### **Carr Vineyards & Winery**

805.965.7985, [www.carrwinery.com](http://www.carrwinery.com)

#### **Dutton-Goldfield Winery**

707.823.3887, [www.duttongoldfield.com](http://www.duttongoldfield.com)

#### **Flying Goat Cellars**

805.736.9032, [www.flyinggoatcellars.com](http://www.flyinggoatcellars.com)

#### **Goldeneye Winery**

707.895.3202, [www.goldeneyewinery.com](http://www.goldeneyewinery.com)

#### **Graton Ridge Cellars**

707.823.3040, [www.gratonridge.com](http://www.gratonridge.com)

#### **HKG**

707.433.6491, [www.hkgwines.com](http://www.hkgwines.com)

#### **La Crema**

707.571.1504, [www.lacrema.com](http://www.lacrema.com)

#### **La Rochelle**

925.243.6442, [www.lrwine.com](http://www.lrwine.com)

#### **MacMurray Ranch**

707.431.5507, [www.macmurrayranch.com](http://www.macmurrayranch.com)

#### **Manzoni Vineyards**

831.675.3398, [www.manzoniwines.com](http://www.manzoniwines.com)

#### **Valerie's Vineyard**

707.935.6203, [www.valeriesvineyard.com](http://www.valeriesvineyard.com)

#### **Wan Fiore Project**

[www.wanfioreproject.com](http://www.wanfioreproject.com)

#### **Waxwing Cellars**

415.902.3468, [www.waxwingwines.com](http://www.waxwingwines.com)

[ PNR ]

## PINOTREPORT

*for people passionate about western pinot noir*

### Greg Walter

Editor and Publisher

### Patrick Mullane

Contributing Editor

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### Editorial Philosophy

**PinotReport** is an independent newsletter owned, written and published by Greg 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 Greg 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: Greg Walter

625 Ross Court, Sonoma, CA 95476

Tel: 707.696.7553

### 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

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

# PINOTREPORT

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