



TORONTO VINTNERS CLUB Inc.

www.torontovintners.org



PINOT NOIR: WEST COAST & BEYOND

Tuesday, January 11, 2005 6:15 P.M.

The Ontario Club, 5th Floor, Commerce Court South
(Northeast Corner of Bay & Wellington Streets)
Toronto, Ontario Tel: (416) 862-1270

Pinot Noir grapes produce what many connoisseurs consider to be the best wine in the world. This is not a wine, however, that merrily goes along with whatever comes its way. It's often described as moody or fickle and difficult because it is so susceptible to influences in the vineyard and in the winery. Purists argue that Burgundy is the only area on this planet where the pinot noir grape can grow happily but if that's the case, why have the highly respected families of Drouhin and Lafite Rothschild from France looked to the 'new world' to establish pinot noir vineyards? And why is it that even the most distinguished of experts often fails to distinguish between a Burgundy and a new world pinot noir? Is there something to be said for these new world pinot noirs? Well, if you like to drink Pinot Noir but hate to shell out high prices, then sing praises for new world Pinot Noir wines.

To begin the celebrations of Toronto Vintners' 30th year of operation, we bring you 9 wines in total for the January tasting. Eight Pinot Noir wines originate from the west coast: California, Oregon, and British Columbia, and for comparison we are serving a premier cru wine from Burgundy (see over for details of each wine). Expect a wide range of styles and ripeness of the grapes because of the different terroirs and clones. In addition to the 'old world' pinot noir (Drouhin's Chambolle Musigny "Les Baudes"), one wine is patterned after the French Burgundy style and tradition (Domaine Drouhin in Oregon's Willamette Valley), four wines (Chalone, Acacia, Sanford and Steele) are from Californian estates with Chalone and Acacia both being owned by Lafite Rothschild of Bordeaux; another hails from the up-and-coming Quail's Gate of BC which is producing some incredibly good wines at very reasonable prices, while the remaining two (Sokol Blosser and King Estate) are from Oregon's Willamette Valley. Will you be able to pick out the 'old world' from the new and which will you prefer? Is it possible to find a pinot noir at an affordable price? Come and find out - you might be very surprised.

So, don't miss this intriguing tasting with its line-up of excellent quality vineyards. And please check our website for details of a guest speaker (TBA).

NOTE: 76 places only. Guests will be accommodated only if members don't fill the tasting. First come basis. No telephone or e-mail reservations. Deadline for reservations: January 7/05 Cancellations without penalty until Jan.7 by calling 416-209-1442 or email events@torontovintners.org. You will be contacted only if we're sold out. Cheques payable to Toronto Vintners Club Inc. (Time saving tip: cut out the address box below & paste it onto your envelope.**)**

Names:		
Address (only for unaccompanied guests or for membership info change).		
Bus Tel:	Home Tel:	
Email:		
Guests' Names:		
_____ Member's assessment -	\$48.00 pp	\$
_____ Guest / non-member assessment -	\$56.00 pp	\$
TOTAL		\$
___ Yes, I would like to sit at the Newcomers table with an experienced taster.		

**Pinot Noir
January 2005**

Mail to:
Toronto Vintners Club
c/o S. Dorosh
PO Box 1023
TDC Postal Station
77 King St. West,
Toronto, ON
M5K 1P2

I understand and accept my personal safety responsibilities when attending a Toronto Vintners Club event.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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Pinot Noir: West Coast & Beyond

The Okanogan valley is in a high tourist region. The land is expensive, the area is almost a desert, but Lake Okanogan provides humidity and acts as a moderator to the weather. The grapes are hand harvested in early October at the peak of physiological ripeness, and then fermented using traditional Burgundian vinification techniques, including new French barriques for maturation, to produce our selection for tasting. Wouldn't it be nice to find a Canadian Pinot Noir of high quality at such a reasonable price?

California - where there are over 80 authorized viticultural areas (AVA's) - The World Atlas of Wines points out: "The aim now is much better matching of grape variety to a specific site: This has confirmed the supremacy of Cabernet Sauvignon in the glorious mid-Napa Valley, Zinfandel in Dry Creek Valley, and Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in Carneros." Both the Acacia vineyard and the Sangiacomo vineyard selections are in the cooler southern part of Sonoma, with Acacia in the Napa Valley AVA of "Los Carneros" and Sangiacomo just to the west, in the Sonoma valley AVA, but also listed as Carneros. "... Strong winds rattle the vine leaves more often than not and slow the ripening process to such an extent that Carneros produces some of California's most delicate wines."

Oregon prides itself on how unlike California it is. The Pinot has trouble ripening in California, but, as The World Atlas of Wine says of the Willamette valley- "Since 1970 Oregon and Pinot Noir have been inextricably linked. The gray skies of this lush pastoral country can do what California found next to impossible: conjure up the illusion of drinking fine red burgundy, even if Oregon Pinots are, in general, softer, rounder and earlier maturing than their European counterparts. ... Whether or not this is what convinced them, high profile foreigners moved in:" (Brian Croser from Australia into Argyle and Robert Drouhin and his daughter from Burgundy.) Our wines come from the Willamette valley and the King Estate somewhat south of the valley.

- 1. 1998 King Estate, Oregon** \$29
S. Willamette Valley- huge estate that sources its grapes from all over. But their new estate wines are top. WA writes-Now maturing, a rarity-a ripe Pinot Noir from a non-vintage...fruit is black cherry, strawberry with attractive tobacco, wood and light smoke from French oak. - Rate -88
- 2. 1999 Sanford, California** \$62
In Santa Barbara, this winery produces intensely regional Pinot. WA writes: This is interesting, quite powerful. But not typical pinot, with intense nutty, meaty nose, mindful of southern Italian reds. Rate-87
- 3. 1999 Steele Wines- Sangiacomo, California** \$54
Heavy clay soil and less sun create problems, except for the Pinot Noir! The French oak gives a smoky aromatic backdrop to the wonderful fruit aroma and flavours. Medium colour and the pronounced aroma of Bing cherries, combine with a smooth structure and perfect balance.
- 4. 2000 Domaine Drouhin, Oregon** \$49
Willamette Valley. Superb estate grown Pinot Noir from one of the first families of Burgundy. Grapes picked by hand, all gravity feed in the winery, no pumping. No yeast inoculation. Gives real taste of the terroir. Aged in French oak-Allier, Vosges and Nevers, only 20% new, to retain the character of the region. Classic Burgundian style. Drink now!
- 5. 2000 Quail's Gate (Ltd Edition), B.C.** \$19
On the West shore of L. Okanogan, West of Kelowna. This winery has produced a 2002 Silver Medal winner, ranked at 88 points, as compared to the "Family Reserve" (at \$35 in B.C.), which earned 89 points. Grapes selected from special parcels, produce a wine with warm cherry and plum aromas, a silky mouthfeel and slightly spicy, smoky finish. (From their website) WS rated at 86
- 6. 2000 Sokol Blosser, Oregon** \$45
Located in the Red Hills of the Willamette Valley, the estate is family owned. Wine is full of bright fruit flavour and spicy oak, with potential for aging. Blended with grapes from their three oldest blocks of vines, the wine is complex, offering full flavour on the palate and a long, smooth finish.
- 7. 2000 Chalone, California** \$59
Monterey. A unique estate 1800 feet high in the Gaviilan Mountain range. This and Acacia are owned by Lafite Rothschild. A source of dark, tannic Pinot Noir. The vineyard is one of the few growing grapes on limestone-based soils, same as in Burgundy.
- 8. 2001 Acacia, California** \$45
Carneros. Returned to single vineyard wines after a phylloxera induced interlude! Part of the Chalone Group. Started the first Pinot Noir vineyard in Carneros. Makes silky and seductive Pinot, with rose petal texture, flavours of teaberry, Setsamu plums and toffee. WS rates at 89-91
- 9. 2000 Chambolle-Musigny "Les Baudes" 1^{re} cru. Joseph Drouhin, France** \$69
This is a toasty, structured wine, expressing the firmer side of Chambolle-Musigny wines. Ripe, red fruits lend an open, fresh aspect, but the overall impression is of restrained power. Score - 92. (Roger Voss, winemag.winenthusiast.com, Nov. 2002). ON Classics Catalogue: If you want charm, finesse and very well integrated fragrant cherry, spicy and mineral flavours this is a good buy. Excellent length. Light to mid-weight but still has some tannin, so age it another couple of years. Score 91.

Notes from Hugh Johnson's & Jancis Robinson's The World Atlas of Wine, Vintages, Wine Spectator (WS), Wine Access (WA).

"The wine seems to be very closed-in and seems to have entered a dumb stage. Sort of a Marcel Meursault."
Paul S. Winalski