

WINE News

Thankful for Pinot Noir!



NOVEMBER 9, 2015 FEATURES

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Pinot Noir from Burgundy and Around the World

By Trey Beffa

The Pinot Noir grape can make some of the best wines in the world!

Alex Pross, Gary Westby and I were lucky enough to spend a few days in Burgundy last month. Our last appointment of the trip was a visit to Domaine Armand Rousseau in Gevrey-Chambertin. Here we had a chance to taste the entire range of 2014s out of barrel. It was like nothing I have ever tasted. The wines were so good, it was nearly a life-changing experience. Pinot Noir can make wines like this—but at a price.

We have some **Domaine Armand Rousseau wines from the 2012 vintage** available in stock and on pre-arrival, priced from \$299.99 to \$1,699.99. If you are willing to pay for them and actually drink them someday, you are in for this life-changing experience I am referring to.

For this newsletter, however, let's focus on Pinot Noir that is more of the everyday drinking variety. Not only from Burgundy, but from California, Oregon, New Zealand and even Champagne. While they may not be "life changing," they also will not break the bank and will provide plenty of enjoyment on your table. Here's a quick pick, also tasted on our recent trip to Burgundy, that fits that bill:

2013 Jacques Bavard Auxey-Duresses Rouge (\$23.99) In our last shipment, along with many of his terrific white wines, we also received a bit of his reds. This wine shows lots of red cherry fruit, spice, and hints of earth. It is a wonderfully fresh and aromatic red wine that will pair very well with your Thanksgiving feast or next holiday meal. Enjoy!

2012 Albert Bichot Savigny-Les-Beaune

(\$19.99) Savigny-Les-Beaune is a village located north of Beaune, in the heart of the Burgundy region. This commune is known for producing some extremely user-friendly wines with very reasonable price points. A classic Burgundy from a riper vintage, the 2012 Savigny-Les-Beaune from Bichot is a wonderfully fresh and fruity Pinot Noir that can be enjoyed tonight. Flavors of fresh cut strawberries and lavender are followed by a long, spicy finish. Perfect turkey wine!



2013 Banshee Sonoma County Pinot Noir

(\$22.99) As difficult as it is to produce excellent Pinot Noir in California, it is even more difficult to do so at a reasonable price point. "Medium deep ruby in color, the nose explodes with opulent smells of dried rose petals, fields of ripe strawberries, wet river stone mineral undertones, and a mild, toasty, cedary undercurrent to support all of this in the nose, which definitely carries over nicely to a complex, integrated, lush, viscous, well-focused palate impression." —*Jim Barr, K&L*



2013 TWR (Te Whare Ra) Pinot Noir

Marlborough (\$26.99—Elsewhere \$40) One of the best sub-\$30 Pinots we carry, period, from one of the top wineries in New Zealand. The nose is pure Pinot: red flowers, bramble fruit and forest berries leaping from the glass; Asian spice notes emerge with air. On the palate, the wine is wonderfully soft and silky, with ultra-fine tannins. It is mid-weight, with exceptional purity and lovely, elegant concentration. A K&L Top Staff Pick for Thanksgiving! 94 points James Suckling.



Domaine Bart: Great Terroir and Great Value

By Gary Westby

Meeting Martin and Pierre Bart in Marsannay, along with their fantastic puppy, Lemon, was one of the highlights of my trip to Burgundy this past October. This 50-acre estate is part of the old Clair Dau estate, which was broken up between Jadot, Bruno Clair and the Bart family in 1985. The Barts' share was 25% of this fantastic property, which they have slowly grown over the years. Because of our direct importation of these great Pinot Noirs, we are able to offer them at great prices, skipping the import company and distributor margins that do so much to make wine, and Burgundy specifically, so very expensive. This producer has been one of my personal favorites for many years, and the wines age very well if you have the patience. Luckily, the Bart family prizes balance above all else, and the wines drink extraordinarily well when young. I plan on enjoying this lineup for Thanksgiving, which is one of the great pairing occasions for Burgundy: with the turkey, stuffing and all the fixings. I hope you can find a bottle or two of these great Pinots to try here, too.



2014 Domaine Bart Marsannay Rosé (\$13.99) is a fantastic all-Pinot Noir rosé from the most famous appellation in all of Burgundy for pink wine. It is delicate, dry and has wonderful, subtle strawberry fruit. This wine will be as at home as the aperitif as it will be with the ham on the Thanksgiving table.



2012 Domaine Bart "Hervelets" Fixin 1er Cru (\$39.99) Might be the best value we have under \$50 in Burgundy in the store. This dark, powerful wine has all of the substance and "gras" that one could wish for, but without any of the excess of New World Pinot. Exquisite, earthy, perfectly balanced Pinot for both the Burgundy graduate and the novice. I hope that you will join me in drinking this with the big bird on Thanksgiving!



Martin Bart and his Border Collie puppy, Lemon, at the domaine in Marsannay.

2013 Domaine Bart Bourgogne Rouge (\$16.99) One of the most well balanced, fruit-driven, crunchy red Burgundies in the store. If you like your Pinot on the refreshing side, you will be thrilled with the value in this bottle.

Pinot Picks for Thanksgiving Dinner

By Christie Brunick

I love Talley Vineyards. And what I love more is a great value from one of my favorite Central Coast producers. The **2013 Bishop's Peak San Luis Obispo Pinot Noir (\$17.99)** is Talley's second label, but the fruit is still being sourced from their esteemed local vineyards. The result is a mind-blowing, amazingly delicious and juicy Pinot Noir for under \$20. Not only am I a huge fan of this label, I even served it at my own wedding reception—because it over-delivers for the price and is everything you could want from a classic California Pinot Noir. It's drinkable with or without food; balanced, with the right amount of acid and fruit; and bright and juicy. In sum, a perfect, crowd-pleasing Pinot. Thanksgiving



is around the corner, and I can't think of anything better for your guests that will be well received and not break the bank!

If you thought 2012 was an amazing vintage for Oregon Pinot Noir, then wait until you start tasting the 2014s! Like the '12s, these puppies are vibrant and juicy, but with possibly even more suppleness on the palate and intense purity of fruit. I love the **2014 Evesham Wood Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.99)** because it shows off the highlights of this amazing vintage, while remaining true to the classic roots of this Burgundian-inspired producer, with all of its complex spice, floral, and savory undertones.



Absolutely the perfect wine for fall, and will pair perfectly with all those autumn-inspired Thanksgiving flavors!

If you're feeling fancy this holiday season and you want a show-stopper Pinot that absolutely no one will complain about, then don't look any further than the **2013 DuMol Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$69.99)**. This wine screams elegance, polish, and class, all bottled up and packaged for your drinking pleasure. DuMol always delivers the goods: richness of fruit, purity of fruit, and a juicy and balanced mouth-feel. This is a sexy little Pinot that will get your turkey feathers ruffled in all the right ways!



The Best of Both Worlds: New Zealand Pinot Noir

By Ryan Woodhouse

There is something magic about New Zealand Pinot Noir. Many people who are inquisitive about Kiwi Pinot ask: “So, is it more like California Pinot or Burgundy?” It’s an interesting question, and one that I have given a lot of thought to. My best response is that I believe it falls somewhere in between California and Burgundy, encapsulating the best of both worlds. It has the pure and expressive fruit of California, but the freshness, drive and acidity that are more common in Burgundy.

It’s important to note that New Zealand has many distinct Pinot producing regions. However, I think it is valid to talk about NZ Pinot as a collective, at least in terms of its general characteristics. So, why does New Zealand produce such a distinctive and nuanced style of Pinot Noir? Well, what New Zealand has in abundance is light—pure, unfiltered, intense sunlight. Also, being a fairly remote, sparsely populated island means the air is clean and clear. This southern part of the globe also has a very thin ozone layer, allowing more ultraviolet light to penetrate the atmosphere. This powerful sunlight means that the vines work very efficiently, and thus grapes gain excellent physiological ripeness. At the same time, being a small island at quite southerly latitudes, in the middle of a cold, rugged ocean, means that NZ has a very cool climate. The lack of extreme heat, especially toward the latter half of the growing season, means that grapes retain vital acidity and don’t tend to get the huge spikes in sugar that we see in warmer growing regions. The result is Pinot Noir with highly expressive aromatics, fruit purity, bright, fresh acidity and typically very moderate alcohol levels.

Though more regionally specific, New Zealand also has some fantastically diverse soils that add their own touch of magic to this most fickle of grapes. Central Otago’s schist-dominated soils breed a line of Pinots with compact layers of flavor and texture, powerful wines with great energy. Waipara has that wonderful clay/limestone complex that is so renowned for Pinot Noir: the wines are typically, quite lifted, exotically perfumed and flavored. Marlborough, so synonymous with Sauvignon Blanc, has pockets of deep and ancient clay soils that produce wonderfully aromatic and soft, broad, elegant Pinot Noir (See the 2013 TWR Pinot on the cover). Martinborough’s lime-studded alluvial soils often produce more structured, focused wines with lots of spice and mineral notes. The wines share a purity, freshness and elegance, but with ever more refined regional distinctions as people more thoroughly engage their land and craft.

Finally, thanks to our direct import program, the relative strength of the U.S. dollar, and the “up and coming” status of NZ Pinot, the quality vs. price point on these wines is second to none. Don’t just take my word for it—ask our staff members what they are drinking!

2012 Terra Sancta “Mysterious Diggings Vineyard” Pinot Noir Central Otago (\$15.99) A new screaming deal thanks to our direct relationship. A single vineyard Central Otago Pinot for \$15.99! Fresh, juicy berry fruits, baking spice, wild thyme, and a lovely savory, gamey aspect so true to Central Otago. Fantastic wine for the money.

2013 Grey’s Peak (Greystone) Pinot Noir Waipara (\$24.99) From hillside vineyards overlooking the valley. Clay/limestone soils give exotic Asian spice notes, lots of lifted florals, fresh plum, dark berry fruits. Quite a dense, powerful Pinot, but still has great acidity and poise. Grey’s Peak is one of NZ’s most awarded Pinot producers of the last few years. This wine is singing right now. 96 points Bob Campbell.

2012 Ellero “Pisa Terrace Vineyard” Pinot Noir Central Otago (\$29.99) A lovely wine from one of the top single vineyard sites in Central Otago. BioGro organically certified and entirely hand tended. The vines grow into a terrace of glacial moraines/schist gravels. The wine is compact, layered and ultimately pure. Fresh forest berries, lifted baking spices, warm stones and a touch of raspberry puree. Linear and focused on the palate, with defined, yet fine tannins. Lots of mineral, stony influence in the finish with a nice lick of oak spice.

2013 Tongue In Groove “Cabal Vineyard” Pinot Noir Waipara (\$29.99) One of the coolest new projects in NZ—but these wines aren’t all about the wacky packaging and smooth talking! The wine has real substance and character. Made by Lynette Hudson (@Pinotdominatrix), notorious for her skills with this varietal. The wine is rich, expressive and exotic. The flavors are ripe and juicy, but the whole thing is pinned together by bright acidity and a nice mid-weight extraction. 95 points Bob Campbell.

2012 Pegasus Bay Pinot Noir Waipara (\$34.99) Pegasus Bay is perhaps the most established of the Waipara Pinot producers. They have 30-year-old Pinot vines and use very traditional techniques. This a complex and deep wine; it’s led by bramble fruit, fresh plum, clove and sandalwood. Very supple texture, elegant in the mouth. Keeps evolving in the glass. Enchanting Pinot. 96 points James Suckling.





Vivien Lamoureux of Champagne Lamoureux, with some of his Pinot Noir vines in Les Riceys in Champagne—less than three miles from Burgundy!

Pinot from the Other Side

By Gary Westby

Just three miles from Burgundy, the Lamoureux family produces some of the most surprising and excellent Pinot Noir in this newsletter—and it isn't red. The Lamoureux are located in the village of Les Riceys, a town that has switched hands between the Dukes of Burgundy and the Comtes of Champagne many times over the course of history. When the village was under control of Burgundy, the winegrowers in the area had only a market for white wine, but when it was under control of the Champenois, they only had a market for red. This led to the development of one of the most famous rosé wines in all of France, which is only now making its way in small quantities to the U.S. market. The soil in the village is nearly identical to Chablis (Kimmeridgian limestone), but the vineyard is predominantly planted to Pinot Noir.

The **Lamoureux Rosé des Riceys (\$29.99)** is the ancestor of these pre-sparkling wines of Champagne, and suitable for both those looking for the delicacy and lift of a white or the dark cherry savor of red Pinot Noir. When we received our first shipment, it was dubbed “the unicorn wine” by one of our customers. It is a surprisingly complex, complete and

integrated wine, and ages very well. I had a bottle of the 1989 that was in excellent shape on my visit in October!

Most of the family's production is sparkling. The **Jean-Jacques Lamoureux “Réserve” Brut Champagne (\$29.99)** is a fantastic all-estate, all Pinot Noir bottle. A strong dollar has allowed us to offer this batch at a great price, but don't underestimate this Champagne. It is 50% reserve wines and full of baguette toast notes and savory, cherry Pinot Noir fruit, and loaded with fine, compact bubbles. It finishes dry, with Chablis-like minerality, and makes a perfect aperitif.

We also received a small amount of the family's top bottling, the **Jean-Jacques Lamoureux “Trilogie” Brut (\$49.99)**. This non-vintage is based on the great 2008 harvest and composed of one-third each Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Meunier. Before bottling, two-thirds is aged in large oak for a year, and then given five years of aging on the lees. If you love spicy, complex, layered, textural Champagne like Bollinger, Tarlant and Krug, grab a bottle before it is gone!



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