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# PINOT NOIR AROUND THE WORLD

Pinot Noir has been around for a very long time. It was known to the Romans who invaded French Gaul 2,000 years ago. During the Middle Ages, Catholic monks served Pinot wines in their sacraments. It was also highly prized by a number of French Kings.

A great Pinot Noir wine will leave a lasting impression on the palate, and its aroma can be intense. However, most people agree that the most appealing quality of Pinot is its soft, velvety texture.

## PINOT FACTS

- The name "Pinot Noir" comes from the French words for "pine" and "black," alluding to the variety's tightly clustered dark purple pine cone-shaped bunches of fruit.
- Pinot Noir wines tend to be light to medium bodied with aromas of red berries, flowers, spice, and occasionally "barnyard" and tobacco.
- One of two black grape varieties (along with Pinot Meunier) used in Champagne production.
- Notoriously difficult to grow due to its tenderness, low yields, and susceptibility to disease, Pinot Noir is sometimes referred to as "the heartbreak grape."
- Pinot has around 30,000 genes in its DNA - making it even more complex than the human genome, which contains 20,000 to 25,000 genes.
- Susceptible to spontaneous mutation in the vineyard, there are thought to be between 200 and 1,100 distinct genetic variations of Pinot Noir. Such variations are referred to as "clones." Very few clones make a complete wine. Wineries often blend several together to form their proprietary Pinot Noirs.
- Is said to be the most *terroir* driven of all grape varieties. It can taste vastly different from one location to the next.

## SERVING TIPS

- Pinot should be served slightly cooler than heavier bodied reds. 55 to 60 F is ideal.
- To truly appreciate its prized aromatics, Pinot is best served in a glass with a large bowl.



Wrong

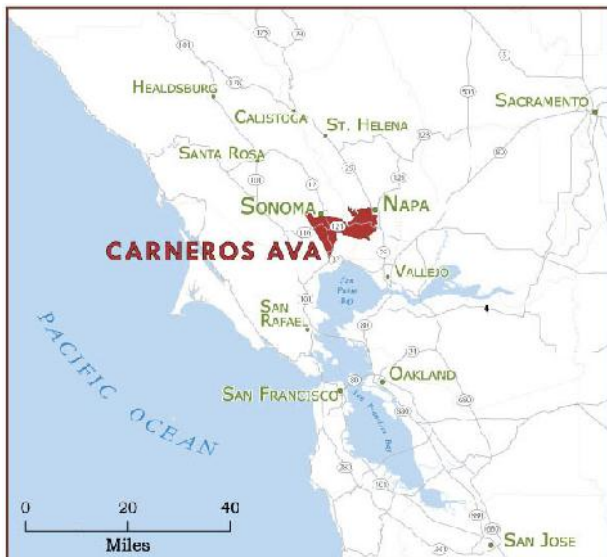
Right

## FOOD PAIRING

- Pinot Noir is considered a very food friendly wine, and is equally at home with both red meat and fowl. It can even be served with certain types of fish. A classic pairing is Oregon Pinot Noir with wild salmon.

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# CALIFORNIA



Pinot's California roots date back to the 1880s, with significant plantings in Carneros' Stanly Ranch and Gustav Niebaum's Inglenook (now Niebaum-Coppola) vineyards in Rutherford. All of the vines were propagated from cuttings smuggled into the US from Burgundy. The grape is still found in these vineyards to this day. Most of the grapes from this period were used for the production of sparkling wine or blended into so-called "California Burgundy."

The first 100% Pinot Noir table wine was produced by Martin Ray Winery in the mid-1940s, but it wasn't a big seller. Robert Mondavi also released varietal Pinot Noir in the 1960s and 70s with limited success..

California Pinot Noir got a big shot in the arm in 2004 with the release of a movie called "Sideways." In the film, the movie's protagonist waxed poetically about Pinot, while dismissing Merlot and Cabernet Franc as underachievers. As a result of the popularity of the movie, US Pinot Noir sales went through the roof.

## GLORIA FERRER BLANC DE NOIRS N/V

**California, Carneros Region • \$19 - The Wine Market, Mendota Heights**

- 90 pts, Editor's Choice, Wine Enthusiast
- 89 pts, Wine Spectator

## 2007 ETUDE PINOT NOIR

**California, Carneros Region • \$39 - France 44, Edina**

- 94 pts, Pinot Report
- 92 pts, Wine Enthusiast
- 90 pts, Robert Parker

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# OREGON

Up until 1966, Oregon wines were made primarily from fruit other than grapes. That was the year that California winemaker David Lett migrated north and rooted the first Pinot Noir cuttings in the Willamette Valley. Lett was convinced that Pinot was much better suited to Oregon than California, due to its more "Burgundian" soil and climate, and set out stake his claim in the region. Other winemakers were soon to follow, including Dick Erath and David Adelsheim.



In 1979 Lett entered Eyrie Vineyard's 1975 Pinot Noir into a Paris tasting of wines from 330 countries. Surprisingly, his wine placed in the top 10 of the Pinot Noir category. A year later, Eyrie took second place in a similar competition - only one point behind Domaine Drouhin's 1959 Chambolle-Musigny from Burgundy - thus securing Oregon's reputation as a region capable of producing world class Pinot Noir.

2007 CARDWELL HILL ESTATE PINOT NOIR

Oregon, Willamette Valley • \$23 - France 44, Edina

- 90 pts, Wine Spectator

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# NEW ZEALAND

Pinot Noir didn't find its way to New Zealand until the late 1970s, and, even then, got off to a rocky start when the first plantings were found to be not Pinot, but rather Gamay (of Beaujolais fame). In the late 1990s, British wine writers Jancis Robinson and Oz Clarke were beginning to take notice of the wines coming out of the Marlborough and Central Otago regions.

As is the case for other New Zealand wines, Pinot noir from this part of the world is fruit-driven, forward, and early maturing in the bottle. It tends to be somewhat full bodied (for the variety) and approachable, with restrained use of oak. High quality examples of New Zealand Pinot noir, particularly from the Martinborough region, are distinguished by earthy flavors with a greater complexity.

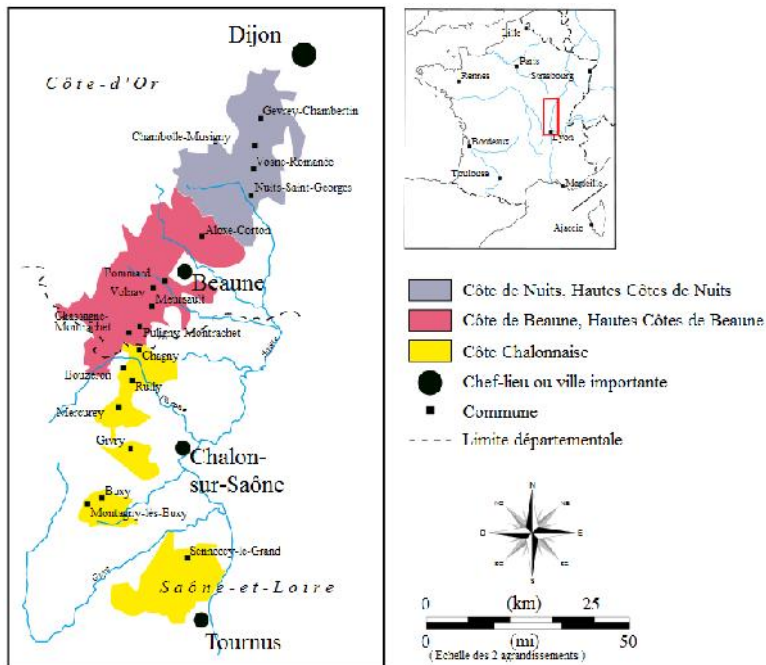


2009 OYSTER BAY PINOT NOIR

New Zealand, Marlborough • \$20 - The Wine Market, Mendota Heights

- 91 pts, Wine Spectator

# FRANCE



France is the ancestral home of Pinot Noir, and, although good commercial examples can be found throughout much of southern France, Burgundy (Bourgogne) is the area where it really shines. Throughout history, Burgundy has been the wine of kings and the church. In fact, the Catholic church owned the largest vineyard holdings up until the French Revolution, when the land was reclaimed by the people of the local villages. French law now requires an individual's vineyard holdings be divided equally among one's heirs, resulting in smaller and smaller vineyard parcels as time goes on.

Burgundy relies heavily on the *négociant* system, wherein a broker buys grapes from small growers in order to produce their label. Quality is enforced by requiring certain standards be met. Some *négociant* produced brands you may be familiar with are Louis Jadot, Chapoutier, and Bouchard & Sons.

The highest quality red Burgundy comes from the Côte d'Or ("Gold Coast"), which is the northernmost part of the region. The Côte d'Or is further divided into the Côte de Nuits, Côte de Beaune, and Côte Chalonnaise districts. Of these, the Côte de Nuits has a reputation for consistently producing good, though expensive, Pinot Noir wines.

Quality can be spotty when it comes to French Pinot Noir. Even in the best regions, vintages can vary wildly from year to year. When shopping for Burgundy, your best bet is often to trust your wine merchant.

## 2005 DANIEL BOCQUENET NUITS-ST-GEORGES AUX ST-JULIEN

### France, Côte D'Or • \$61 - The Wine Market, Mendota Heights

- 89-91 pts, Robert Parker
- 90 pts, Burghound