

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

January 2020

E2 DRY RED PINOT

Presented by Jordan Muller (Victoria Chapter)

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

After completing this session, you should know:

- The description and technical characteristics of this class
- The areas of the world which produce this type of wine;
- The characteristics of this varietal of wine;
- History and origin of this grape
- Manner or style in which this wine is made
- Tips about judging this class

DESCRIPTION – PINOT NOIR

Nose – earthy, Bing cherry, spice, light, plum, dry black cherry; and an aroma that can resemble wilted roses. **Flavour** – cherry, spice, raspberry, currant, mushroom, along with earth, tar, herb and cola notes. Complex, silky tannins, barnyard notes. Velvety mouthfeel. Long finish

DESCRIPTION – GAMAY NOIR

Nose & Flavor – Violet, rose petal, cherry, strawberry, raspberry

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Ingredients: Grapes

Alcohol: 11% - 15%

Colour: Medium red to garnet

Sugar: 0.0% - 1%

Specific Gravity: 0.990 - 0.994

Acidity: 5.0g/L - 7.0g/L

pH: 3.3 – 3.8¹

INTRODUCTION

Dry red pinots are paler in color and character than most other reds, allowing them to be distinctly delicate. This delicacy is reflected in the grape itself requiring greater finesse from the winemaker

¹ https://www.bcawa.ca/events/bcawa/2018%2010%2014%20BCAWA_Handbook_2018_Oct%20-%20Draft.pdf

in order to make their vintage stand out, but when done well can make for a uniquely deep character from a relatively light bodied varietal.²

Pinot Noir Wine Profile

FRUIT: Cranberry, Cherry, Raspberry

OTHER: vanilla, clove, licorice, mushroom, wet leaves, tobacco, cola, caramel

OAK: Yes. French Oak Barrels.

TANNIN: Medium Low

ACIDITY: Medium High

HISTORY

One of the oldest varietals known, pinot noir's history can be traced to 1st century AD in the hills of Burgundy where it was proprietarily grown by the noble Pinot family. Stories about how the grape came to the region differ with some accounts crediting the Romans while others say it was brought north by the Aedui (Celtic tribe of central Gaul) invasion of Italy. In the following centuries, Catholic monks took up the practice of tending the vineyards and using the wines produced in their sacraments. This grew approval and a discerning taste in the masses for a finely made wine further specializing in the grape and practice. In 1789 this system would be overturned during the French revolution, where the church owned vineyards were turned over to families, creating the private industry still strong today.

Favoring a chalky, well-drained soil with plentiful sunlight and above average temperature, the pinot noir grape has found world class growing regions in Australia, California and Argentina that somewhat mimic what the most successful vineyards in Burgundy have to offer. Being a genetically unstable plant, with more than 1000 genetically unique clones worldwide compared to cabernet sauvignon's 12, there is a huge variation in quality when putting down new vines.

In addition, every winemaker must contend with is a grape susceptible to just about every disease that plagues other varietals. Fungus, pests and mold are happy to pester the harvests of any vintage with the grape offering little immunity.

None of these prevent winemakers from making pinot noir one of the most prolific grapes internationally, and one of the most sought after.³

GROWING AREAS:

France: Most famously in the Burgundy appellation. Within Burgundy the finest wine comes from the Cote d'Or escarpment. Champagne has more pinot noir planted than any other region in France, using it for blending with champagne grapes or bottling it on its own as a 'blanc de noir'

Canada: Grown for some time in Ontario in the Niagara peninsula, more recently in the Okanagan in the Naramata Bench and even on Vancouver Island.

² <https://winemakermag.com/article/557-pinot-noir-varietal-focus>

³ <https://www.uncork.biz/tidbits13.aspx>

Germany: Pinot noir is Germany's number one planted red grape and regularly produces outstanding pinots, calling them spätburgunder.

New Zealand: Following behind the production of sauvignon blanc, pinot noir is New Zealand's second most grown grape variety. They cover 5,569 hectares (13,760 acres) and produced 36,500 tonnes of grapes.

United States: With most pinot noir production by volume and quality to some degree coming from California, it's important to note that Oregon has also carved out a well renowned production of pinots. Well renowned regions in California have become known specifically for their pinot noir such as Sonoma Coast, Santa Cruz Mountains, Russian Rivers, St. Rita Hills and Anderson Valley among others.

Chile: Chilean pinot noir more reflects north America's style of pinot noir than anywhere else, the aromas lean more towards flowers like violets, roses and vanilla than fruit⁴

TERROIR AND TASTING NOTES:

Pinot noir is highly dependent on the terroir. In France the grape takes on an earthy, rustic and acidic character. In California you are more likely to find a deep cherry velvet character with a long finish. In Germany you will find raspberry with a sweet cherry complimented by a profound earthiness. The fruit flavors of Italian pinot lean towards smoke, tobacco, white pepper and clove. Oregon pinots will have more color and body than Californian pinots with notes of Bing cherry as well as truffle mushrooms and dandelion. New Zealand pinots are loaded with fruit but have a distinct gamey-meaty flavor to them. Chilean pinots will have notes similar to Californian and Oregon leaning towards vanilla, violets and roses.⁵

AGING AND OAKING:

The French style of allowing the grapes to age in cluster allow more tannin and earthy characteristics to impart themselves into the wine, and these characteristics allow for longer aging while maintaining stability in the wine. The use of new French oak can add complementary notes such as toffee, vanilla and chocolate. The casing will usually last for 5 years but can stretch to 10 and then far beyond that once in the bottle and cellared. In the new world, fewer tannins mean less can be gained in character from long term aging, with optimal stability usually being reached between 1-3 years in the cask.

Typically, once in the bottle, with the exceptions of Burgundian or some California pinots, it is best to drink the wine within 4-5 years of the vintage.⁶

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinot_noir#Regions

⁵ <https://winefolly.com/review/pinot-noir-wine-facts/>

⁶ <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/wine-101->

SERVING AND FOOD PAIRING:

SERVE 55–60°F / 12-15°C

Duck confit, mushroom Alfredo pasta, chicken roasts, pork chops, live lobster dinners⁷

JUDGING

French pinot noirs: look for the more earthy and floral attributes, as these are an essential addition from the French terroir. Hibiscus, potpourri, potting soil and moss being chief notes to search for.

Californian pinot noirs: Typically noted for their lush dark berry and cherry character, look for a fine balance in acid and sugar that allows these fruits to come through. Bonus points for added notes of tea, vanilla and other aged in character.

THE FLIGHT

I wanted to have a representative bottle from Burgundy to be contrasted with what can be found in the new world in Chile and the Okanagan. These are wine commonly featured in local restaurants that put a spotlight on the great wines we can produce. With the addition of some gamay noir, we will also get a chance to see the difference in character that it might bring when put next to a variety of pinot noirs.

REFERENCE:

See footnotes throughout.

⁷ <https://winefolly.com/grapes/pinot-noir/>