

BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

March 2013

CLASS E2 – DRY RED PINOT

Presented by John Matkovich & Ken Fowler (Mainland Chapter)

Pinot Noir (pronounced Pee—noh—n'wahr) - *One of the Toughest Wines You'll Ever Love*

AFTER COMPLETING THIS SESSION YOU SHOULD KNOW:

1. The description and technical characteristics of the C2 Dry Red Pinot class.
2. The most famous area in the world for growing Pinot Noir.
3. Areas of the world that grow Pinot Noir.
4. Why Pinot Noir is a challenging grape to grow.
5. Names of some of the top Pinot Noir producers
6. Typical descriptors of Pinot Noir.
7. Some of the foods that pair well with Pinot Noir

C2 DRY RED PINOT

Wines in the Dry Red Pinot Class must contain at least 85% of one or more of the following varieties: Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier, or Gamay Noir. Ideally, these wines exhibit fruity attributes and may be at their peak when young. The best mature examples demonstrate complexity and finesse while retaining substantial fruit.

Varietal wines in the Dry Red Pinot Class must contain at least 85 % of one of the following varieties: Pinot Noir, Pinot Meunier or Gamay Noir.

Blended wines in the Dry Red Pinot Class must contain at least 85 % of two or more of the above varieties.

WINE CHARACTERISTICS:

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 mouth feel. Long finish.

Pinot Meunier. Somewhat light in colour and body. Strawberry, black currant, plum, raspberry, blueberry in the flavour.

Gamay Noir. Violet, rose petal, cherry, strawberry, raspberry aromas and flavour.

TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Ingredients: Grapes

Alcohol: 11%-16%

Colour: Medium Red to Garnet

Sugar 0.0% - 1%

Specific Gravity: 0.990 - 0.995

Acidity: 5.0g/L - 6.7g/L

pH: 3.4 - 4.0

OVERVIEW

Pinot Noir is one of the oldest grape varieties to be cultivated for the purpose of making wine. Ancient Romans knew this grape as *Helvenacia Minor* and vinified it as early as the first century AD. Pinot Noir is often described as being a “difficult” grape, to grow, to deal with in the winery, and to find truly great examples of, but fans are passionate about this variety. Great Pinot Noir creates a lasting impression on the palate and in the memory.

The reputation that gets Pinot Noir so much attention, however, is owed to the Wines of Burgundy (Bourgogne), France. For most of wine history, this two-mile-wide, thirty-mile-long stretch of hills, called the *Côte d’Or* (“Slope of Gold”), was the only region to achieve consistent success from the Pinot Noir vine.

The quality of *Bourgogne* is due to a number of factors. Its vineyards slope gently down toward the East, providing the vines with long sun exposure yet avoiding afternoon heat. The soil there is very calcareous (chalky; containing calcium carbonate), offering good drainage. Well-drained soils have a higher average temperature, which assists ripening. Pinot Noir seems to reflect more pronounced *Gout de Terroir*, or flavour of the soil, than other black grape types, making vineyard site selection a critical factor.

Recognized worldwide as a great wine grape, Pinot Noir has many aliases and is grown in Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria (called *Blauburgunder* or *Spätburgunder*), Brazil, Canada, Croatia (*Burgundac*), Czechoslovakia, England, France, Germany (*Spätburgunder*), Greece, Hungary, Italy (*Pinot Nero*), Mexico, New Zealand, Switzerland (*Clevner*, but labeled “Dole” when often blended with *Gamay Noir*), and the United States. Quality Pinot Noir has been grown in Ontario for some time in the Niagara Peninsula and North shore of Lake Erie.

THE GRAPE

Pinot Noir is a red wine grape of the species *Vitis Vinifera* and is grown around the world. The Pinot grape does not like extremes of hot or cold climates and grows best in regions with warm days and cool evenings. It thrives in well-drained chalky soils where it can produce wines, which often require long aging and exhibit complex fragrances. Pinot Noir clusters look like a black pinecone, from which it gets its name: Pinot (Pine) and Noir (Black).

It is widely considered to produce some of the finest wines on earth but is also one of the hardest to cultivate and transform into wine. Pinot Noir tends to produce narrow trunks and vines. In the vineyard it is sensitive to light exposure, cropping levels (must be low yield), soil types and pruning techniques. In the winery, it is sensitive to fermentation methods, yeast strains and is highly influenced by its *Terroir*, with different regions producing significantly different wines. Its thin skin and tight fruit clusters make it highly susceptible to bunch rot and other fungal diseases. The vines themselves are prone to downy mildew, leaf roll and fan leaf virus, which makes the grape difficult to grow.

Nearly every affliction known to affect vines is common among Pinot Noir vineyards. Although quite tolerant of cold climates, it is particularly susceptible to spring frosts, because it is one of the earliest-leafing varieties. The sharpshooter leafhopper finds Pinot Noir a perfect host. This bug carries Pierce’s Disease, which can destroy an entire vineyard in as little as three years. Leaf-roll virus is prevalent in almost all Pinot Noir plantings over ten years old. The Pinot vines are not very vigorous and often lack adequate leaf cover to protect the fruit from birds, which do much damage. Even if the grapes survive the birds, if not picked promptly at maturity, the thin-

skinned and tender berries shrivel and dry out rapidly resulting in a raisiny aroma and neutral flavour.

WORLD'S TOP PRODUCERS

The list below is but a few of the world's top Pinot Noir producers: (note that Northern California and the Willamette Valley of Oregon are producing many good to high quality Pinot Noirs).

Innocent Bystander Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley Australia
Kris Winery, Trentino-Alto Adige Region, NE Italy
Martinborough Wine Centre, Wellington, NZ
Pegasus Bay, Waipara Valley, NZ
Sokol Blosser Cellars, Willamette Valley, Oregon
Hayman and Hill, Santa Lucia Hills, Monterey County, California
Merry Edward's Wines, Russian Valley, California
Château de Sancerre, Loire Valley, France
Domaine Louis Jadot, Côte d'or, France

TYPICAL DESCRIPTORS:

Wine Colour

Pinot Noir ranges from pale to deep burgundy red with older wines more brick coloured. The grape's colour when young may be compared to garnet and is much lighter than that of other red wines, but emerging Pinots from other regions of the world are more fruit forward and darker in colour, notably California and New Zealand.

Aromas

The wide range of aromas that Pinot can produce can sometimes confuse tasters. Pinot tends to be light to medium bodied with aromas of black cherry, raspberry or currant. Traditional red Burgundy is famous for its fleshy farmyard aromas. The aromas can range from truffles to meatiness in Burgundy to mocha and coffee in California.

Aromas can also include beetroot, blackberry, black cherry, currant, pepper, cinnamon, cranberry, herbs, lavender, licorice, mint, perfume, plum, spice, violets. Bottle aged Pinots may produce bacon, earth (Terroir), prune, tobacco leaf, vanilla, nuts, oak and hay, to name but a few.

Body

Pinots from Burgundy tend to be light to medium bodied, rich, and high in alcohol with well-balanced acids and tannins.

Flavours

Some of its more prominent flavours include: raspberries or strawberries when young and licorice when older. Cranberries, violets, mushrooms (black truffles), game, "forest floor" and sometimes even compost or manure are flavours you will encounter in Pinot Noir.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Pinot Noir's greatest strength is its suppleness. Without the hard tannic structure found in many red wines, it pairs effortlessly with a wide range of foods – from fish through game birds to grilled beef and lamb. Don't overwhelm its gentle fruit and refined complexity with strong or spicy flavours, simply prepared dishes are best.

If you are not up to a full meal, then a cheese plate would be an excellent choice. Young, fruity Pinot Noir would pair well with Brie and other fresh soft ripened cheeses, while older Pinots could easily pair with cheddar, semi-hard goat's cheese, dry Jack, aged Gouda, Gruyère, Comté and Monterey Jack.