

# BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

November 14, 2018

## Pinot Noir

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### 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 mouth feel. Long finish.

### **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

### Introduction

Pinot Noir wines are pale in color, translucent and their flavors are very subtle. The grape itself is weak, suffering from a variety of diseases and its genetics make it highly susceptible to mutation. Despite the difficulty in growing the grape, prices for a bottle of Pinot Noir are generally more than a similar quality red wine.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://winefolly.com/review/pinot-noir-wine-facts/>

**AGEABILITY:** Yes. 2-18 years depending on the style.

**SERVING TEMP:** Cool to touch (63 °F | 17 °C)

### **History**

With evidence of vines planted by the Celts before 200 B.C. and Roman soldiers growing grapes dating back to the first century, Burgundy was recognized early on as premier real estate for growing grapes. Yet, like many burgeoning European wine regions, it was the Medieval monasteries that deserve primary credit for cultivating the region's scholastic vineyards through the Middle Ages. Experimenting with grapes and land locations, and quickly recognizing Burgundy's epic influence, along with the dominating force of the regional terroir, the Benedictine and Cistercian monks served to identify and define the most ambitious vineyard locations of the region. These prestigious vineyards were destined to become some of the wine world's most prized grape-growing land possessions. While honing viticultural techniques and traditions, the combined efforts of Benedictine and Cistercian monks laid much of the groundwork for Burgundy's modern wine scene.

It wasn't until the French Revolution that the ownership of Burgundy's vineyards transferred from the church and aristocratic circles to individuals in segmented blocks of land. The region's vineyards were further fragmented when Napoleon sliced and diced the vineyards by instituting that all inherited land must be divided equally among heirs. To this day it is not unusual to find a 120-acre vineyard owned by 80+ growers, with as little as several rows of vines under the ownership of a single grower. This fragmented system has made the role of the négociant (a collective house that buys regional wines typically by the barrel to blend with other wines from the same region or appellation) extremely important.<sup>2</sup>

### **Growing Areas:**

**Total area: ~290,000 acres worldwide** (117,000 hectares)

Growing regions in order of area:

- France (75,760 acres)
  - Nuits-St-Georges, Gevrey-Chambertin, Morey-St-Denis, Chambolle-Musigny, Vougeot, Flagny-Echezeaux, Vosne-Romanee, Aloxe-Corton
- United States (73,600 acres)
  - Sonoma, Sta Rita Hills, Santa Lucia Highlands, Willamette Valley
- Germany (29,049 acres)
  - Baden, Pfalz, Rheinhessen, Württemberg
- New Zealand (10,648 acres)
  - Martinborough, Marlborough, Central Otago
- Italy (10,082 acres)
  - Veneto, Alto Adige, Friuli
- Australia (8,693 acres)
  - Victoria
- Chile (7,127 acres)
  - Central Valley, Limari Valley, Maipo Valley, Casablanca Valley
- Argentina (4,450 acres)
  - Rio Negro
- South Africa (2,520 acres)
  - Western Cape, Stellenbosch, Walker Bay<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.thespruceeats.com/what-is-burgundy-wine-3510933>

<sup>3</sup> <https://winefolly.com/review/pinot-noir-wine-facts/>

### **Terroir And Tasting Notes:**

**French Pinot Noir** - In Burgundy, Pinot Noir is usually very herbaceous and light (except for [pristine vintages](#)). Earthy aromas dominate including smells similar to a brown paper bag full of mushrooms or wet leaves. Along with the earth are faint floral smells of roses, violet and a smell of fruit that leans towards raw, freshly picked cherries.

**German Pinot Noir** - Germany produces Pinot Noir right next to the border of France in a wine region called Ahr. These wines tend to offer more raspberry and sweet cherry aromas along with a healthy portion of earthiness.

**Italian Pinot Noir** - Pinot Noir grows best across northern Italy where the climate is much cooler. The fruit flavors of Italian Pinot Noir are similar to that of France, but the earthy flavors lean toward smoke, tobacco, white pepper and clove. Pinot Nero, as the Italians call it, tend to have more color extraction and higher alcohol.

**California Pinot Noir** - A giant leap in flavor and intensity from the Pinot Noir in France and Germany, California Pinot Noirs are bigger, lush and more fruit-forward. Look for flavours ranging from sweet black cherry to black raspberry and secondary aromas of vanilla, clove, coca-cola, and caramel.

**Oregon Pinot Noir** - Oregon Pinot Noir is usually a few steps lighter in color and texture than California Pinot Noir, and is usually more tart. Expect cranberry, bing cherry fruit flavours with secondary aromas of truffle mushrooms and sometimes even a green dandelion stem flavour.

**New Zealand Pinot Noir** - On the southern island in New Zealand there is a plateau called Central Otago that gets enough sunshine throughout the season to produce rich Pinot Noir in a style similar to California. What makes New Zealand Pinot Noir unique from California Pinot is stronger spice and gamey-meaty aromas along with loads of fruit.

**Australian Pinot Noir** - Pinot Noir doesn't grow very well in Australia except for some locations in Western Australia, especially around Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. Expect sweeter fruit notes leaning towards blueberry and even blackberry but in a spicy-gamey tinge similar to New Zealand in the aroma.

**Chilean Pinot Noir** - South American Pinot Noir has a lot of similarities to Oregon or California Pinot Noir. The aromas lean more towards flowers like violets, roses and vanilla than fruit.<sup>4</sup>

### **Aging And Oaking:**

**Aging – New World = 3-5 years, Old World = 5+ years<sup>5</sup>**

When Pinot Noir doesn't age well, its usually a result of excessive ripeness that drives down acids, and leads to wines that are fruit forward, flavourful, but not well balanced. As the wine ages, the fruit deteriorates, and there's not much structure left to hold the wine together. Another factor can be the age of the vines. Generally older vines do better at creating wines that age better. With the growth in Pinot Noir as a favoured varietal, more vineyards are being planted, and the fruit is good, but the vines are young. That doesn't normally help the ageability

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<sup>4</sup> <https://winefolly.com/review/pinot-noir-wine-facts/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://winefolly.com/tutorial/cellar-wine-guide/>

profile.

By knowing which producers favour balance over ripeness and by buying Pinot Noirs from vineyards that are not excessively hot, you can get a Pinot Noir that ages well. Also by buying older vine Pinot Noir. Vintage is important too, with age enhancing a capable Pinot Noir's qualities.<sup>6</sup>

**Oaking** - Long aging in oak adds richness, tannin and vanilla aromas whereas less oak aging lets the bright cherry flavours of pinot noir show through.<sup>7</sup>

**Serving and Food Pairing:**<sup>8</sup>

**SERVING TEMP:** Cool to touch (63 °F | 17 °C)

Cheese: Gruyère de Comté

Dishes:

- Spiced Duck with Confit Ragù
- Mushroom Risotto
- Chicken w/ Beurre Rouge
- Grilled Trout with Bacon, Green Beans and Farro
- White Pizza
- Lobster Pea Ravioli w/ Cream
- Wild mushrooms and Polenta with Goat cheese and Herbs

**Judging**

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.

**The Flight**

This flight takes from all Pinot Noir corners of the world, so expect variety. The goal was to provide a wide range of what a Pinot Noir could be. There is also a range of quality. So without further ado, cheers, and enjoy!

**References:**

See footnotes and numbers throughout document.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://forums.winespectator.com/topic/aging-pinot-noir>

<sup>7</sup> <https://winefolly.com/tutorial/pinot-noir-regions/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://winefolly.com/review/pinot-noir-wine-facts/>