

# BC GUILD OF WINE JUDGES

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## Class E2 Dry Red Pinot

Presented by [Master Judge] Mary Homer (Victoria Chapter)

You, as the reader, (in particular, trainees and judges not qualified in this class) are encouraged to access, from the Guild website ([www.bcgwj.ca](http://www.bcgwj.ca)), the 5 sets of previously prepared Presentation Notes on this topic as well as read the information shared below.

### AFTER READING THESE NOTES YOU SHOULD KNOW:

1. The 3 grape varieties named in the BCAWA Definition of Class E2 – Dry Red Pinot
2. The BCAWA Technical Characteristics
3. The 9 most recognized Pinot Noir wine regions around the world
4. How Pinot Noir is referenced in those countries
5. What area(s) in Canada grows Pinot Noir (& how many acres are planted with Pinot Noir)
6. What are the 6 grape varieties that have come to be known as “noble” grapes.
7. Why is Pinot Noir called the “heartbreak grape”.
8. What foods best pair with Pinot Noir.

### BCAWA DEFINITION of CLASS E2 – DRY RED PINOT

Wines in the Dry Red Pinot Class (E2) 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.

### Wine Characteristics:

#### Pinot Noir:

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

*[author's note: Pinot Noir is a lighter red wine grape known for its fruity flavours and primarily grown in cooler regions like Burgundy, France]*

#### Pinot Meunier:

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

*[author's note: Pinot Meunier is a mutation of Pinot Noir, primarily used in Champagne production, known for its bright fruit flavours and higher acidity]*

#### Gamay Noir:

Violet, rose petal, cherry, strawberry, raspberry aromas and flavour. *[author's note: Gamay Noir is a lighter red wine grape that share similarities with Pinot Noir but is often noted for its floral and fruity aromas, particularly in the Beaujolais region]*

### BCAWA TECHNICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Ingredients: Grapes  
Alcohol: 11% - 15%  
Colour: medium red to garnet  
Sugar: 0.0% - 1%  
Specific Gravity: 0.990 – 0.994  
Acidity: 5.0 g/L – 7.0 g/L  
pH: 3.3 – 3.8

## **ABOUT THE GRAPE:**

When it comes to wine grapes, there are more than 10,000 types of varieties around the world. The term “noble grapes” has come to represent only 6 well-known international varieties: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Riesling. These varieties gained their royal title, in part, because they have a “heightened ability to express how and where they were grown.” Plus, they’ve been planted across the globe and have formed the “cornerstone” of winemaking over the last few centuries.

Pinot Noir has a reputation for producing some of the finest wines around the world, but it also is commonly known, amongst winemakers, as the “heartbreak grape” as it is one of the most difficult to cultivate and transform into wine.

Due to its narrow trunk and vines, in the vineyard it is sensitive to:

- light exposure;
- cropping levels (must be low yield);
- soil types; and
- pruning techniques.
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Once the grape arrives in the winery, it continues to be sensitive to:

- fermentation methods;
- yeast strains; and
- bunch rot and other fungal diseases due to its thin skin and tight fruit clusters.

When the stars align and the grape is grown successfully, a skilled winemaker is able to create a wine that is both elegant and complex.

## **PINOT NOIR WINE REGIONS**

There are 290,000 acres of Pinot Noir planted worldwide and that number continues to grow. The more popular areas for Pinot Noir are:

1. France (75,760 acres) (region of Burgundy; sub-regions of Côte de Nuits, Côte de Beaune)
2. United States (73,600 acres) (California and Oregon)
3. Germany (29,049 acres) (Ahr, Baden, Pfalz, Rheinhessen, Württemberg)
4. New Zealand (10,648 acres) (Martinborough, Marlborough, Central Otago)
5. Italy (10,082 acres) (Friuli region; sub-regions Veneto, Alto Adige)
6. Australia (8,693 acres) (Victoria)
7. Chile (7,127 acres) (Central Valley, Limari Valley, Maipo Valley, Casablanca Valley)
8. Argentina (4,450 acres) (Rio Negro, Patagonia)
9. South Africa (2,520 acres) (Western Cape, Walker Bay and Elgin regions)

## **PINOT NOIR IN CANADA**

Despite its reputation as a difficult grape to grow, Pinot Noir has proved remarkably versatile in Canada, with good quality examples emerging from contrasting conditions in each of the country’s regions.

Pinot Noir is one of the few grape varieties that is grown in all of Canada’s wine regions, with their vastly diverse climatic conditions. It is planted in:

- British Columbia’s warm, dry southern Okanagan Valley;
- in the province’s cooler, wetter, coastal areas (including Vancouver Island);
- in cool-climate Ontario, including a somewhat warmer island sub-appellation lying on the same latitude as northern California (Pelee Island);
- in cold-climate Quebec, where vines must be buried in winter; and
- in the cool, maritime conditions of Nova Scotia on the Atlantic coast.

As of the latest data there are approximately 11,000 acres of pinot noir planted across Canada.

It's not that all the plantings of Pinot Noir across Canada necessarily produce high-quality or even good-quality wine. But the great majority are very good, and a creditable proportion can be described as excellent. Pinot Noir is also widely used for making rosé and traditional method sparkling wines. The character and style of individual wines reflect climatic and vintage conditions, together with vineyard and cellar decisions.

## **WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN THE GLASS (BY REGION):**

### **France**

Burgundy is known as the original cultivation area for pinot noir, so these wines are in very high demand. In this region, pinot noir wines are usually very herbaceous and light. Earthy aromas dominate, including smells like 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. They are one of the hardest wines to adapt to after drinking American wine, however once you do, you will find them delightful.

### **USA**

- **California** (*Sonoma, Mendocino, and Santa Barbara Counties*)

A hot area for growing pinot noir, these wines offer a giant leap in flavour and intensity; more fruit-forward. Flavours will range from sweet black cherry to black raspberry with secondary aromas of vanilla, clove, cola, and caramel. The higher priced wines from Sonoma tend to experience longer time in French oak which adds a vanilla flavor.

- **Oregon** (*Willamette Valley*)

Oregon pinot noirs are usually lighter in color and texture and a bit tarter from those made in California. You can expect flavours that are fruity and light and tasting anywhere from cranberry and pomegranate to dark cherry. Although there is quite a range of intensity to Oregon pinot noir depending on how much you spend.

### **Germany**

The great pinot noirs (aka Spätburgunder) from Germany hail from a region called the Ahr, which is located next to the border of France and is warmer than other wine regions in Germany. For this reason, the pinot noir grapes can ripen with fruity flavors. These wines tend to offer more raspberry and sweet cherry aromas together with a healthy portion of earthiness. German pinot noirs carry an affordable price tag.

### **New Zealand**

On the southern island there is a plateau called Central Otago that gets enough sunshine throughout the year to produce rich, dark Pinot Noir wines in a style similar to its California counterparts. The exception being that the New Zealand wines offer stronger baking spices and gamey-meaty aromas along with loads of red fruits on the palate with a cola-like finish.

### **Italy** (*Friuli region; sub-regions Veneto, Alto Adige*)

Pinot Noir grows best across northern Italy where the climate is much cooler. Northern Italian pinot noirs (aka Pinot Nero) have similar earthy notes as in France, but they get a bit riper. These wines are darker, rich and earthy. The earthy flavours lean toward smoke, tobacco, white pepper, and clove. Italian Pinot Nero tends to have more color extraction and higher alcohol. Some Italian pinot noirs are a good value (starting around \$20) while others range upwards (to \$70).

### **Australia**

Pinot Noir does not grow very well in Australia except for some locations in Western Australia and around Mornington Peninsula in Victoria. You can expect sweeter fruit notes leaning towards blueberry and even blackberry but in a spicy-gamey tinge similar to New Zealand in the aroma.

### **Chile** (*Casablanca, Leyda Valley and San Antonia Valley*)

The quality of Chilean Pinot is amazing for the price. Although it is only slowly gaining popularity in Chile, there is a large selection of Chilean pinot noir in wine shops around the world. Stylistically, Chilean pinot noir is more akin to Oregon Pinot Noir in general in that it is brighter and earthier than most California Pinot Noir. There are typical Chilean herbal components too. The aromatics can sometimes have a Burgundy like earthy and floral notes (violets, roses and vanilla) while the palate is more on the fruity side.

### **Argentina**

This is a brand-new growing region along the Rio Negro in Argentina which is a vital part of the Patagonian landscape. The cooler climate in Patagonia is ideal for wines like Pinot Noir and Merlot. This area is booming because of the popularity of its wines, but it still only represents less than 2% of Argentina's vineyards. Look for appellations like Rio Negro and Neuquén on the label to find great tasting pinot noir. Argentinian Pinot Noir exudes cherry, strawberry and vanilla, and tends to be high in acidity due to the high elevation, cool climate it's grown in.

### **South Africa**

South African pinot noir is still under the radar, even though their quality and range has gotten better over the years. The cooler coastal areas in the south are where Pinot Noir does well, especially in the Walker Bay and Elgin regions, benefiting from the cooling breezes of the Atlantic Ocean. Stylistically, the wines fall into the cool-climate category of Pinot Noirs, more akin in general to those of Burgundy, the Loire Valley, or Germany than the fuller, more alcoholic expressions typical of California.

### **WINEMAKERS CAN UTILIZE CLONES TO ACHIEVE THE WINE THEY STRIVE TO CREATE:**

If winemakers want to grow a crowd-pleasing variety like Pinot Noir, and they want their new plant to closely resemble its parent, they might clone it by lopping a portion off an existing Pinot Noir vine, and either planting it directly into the soil, or grafting it onto another vine.

Of course, Pinot Noir is both ancient and planted all over the world. As a result, the grape has changed with distance and time, and its far-flung clones have mutated in tandem. There are now approximately *1,000 clones of Pinot Noir*.

The chart below helps us to visualize the flavors, style, body, and tannins of 7 of the most popular Pinot Noir clones.

| <b>CLONE</b>    | <b>STYLE</b> | <b>FLAVOURS &amp; AROMA</b>   | <b>BODY</b> | <b>TANNINS</b> |
|-----------------|--------------|---|-------------|----------------|
| Dijon Clone 113 | Elegant      | Plum, cherry, raspberry & cedar   | Medium      | High           |
| Dijon Clone 114 | Perfumed     | Pomegranate, cola, spice, & blueberry   | Med - Full  | Medium         |
| Dijon Clone 115 | Well-rounded | Rose petal, red cherry, anise, black raspberry                                      | Med - Full  | Low            |
| Dijon Clone 667 | Toned        | Dark cherry, raspberry, black tea & 'Christmas spice' (nutmeg, allspice, and clove) | Medium      | Low            |
| Dijon Clone 777 | Velvety      | Black cherry, cassis, blackberry, licorice & pipe tobacco                           | Full        | Medium         |
| Pommard Clone 5 | Earthy       | Earth, dark fruit, mushrooms & allspice   | Medium      | High           |
| Wädenswil (2A)  | Floral       | Cherry, raspberry & rose petal  | Medium      | Medium         |

## WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT IN THE TASTING FLIGHT:

The tasting flight consists of 8 wines ranging in assessment from non-medal all the way to gold medal. The wines selected represent:

- 7 separate Pinot Noir regions (including 2 separate regions of Canada)
- 5 countries
- 4 continents

This flight was specifically designed to expose our palates to wines from a variety of terroirs that are currently available in our marketplace (and within our limited budget).

## FOOD PAIRING:

Pinot Noir, due to its light to medium body and bright acidity and silky tannins, makes a great pairing with tuna, pork, salmon, and other tender meat dishes. Pinot Noir is also an excellent red wine choice with vegetarian dishes.

Try these appetizers with Pinot Noir.

- o Charcuterie
- o Stuffed mushrooms
- o Asparagus wrapped in bacon
- o Red pepper hummus and pita
- o Cranberry nut goat cheese bites
- o Meatballs
- o Savory cheesecake
- o Pigs in a Blanket (yes, I am not kidding!)
- o Comté (aka Gruyère de Comté) – *made just 50 miles east of Burgundy (“what grows together, goes together”)*

Try these appetizers with Pinot Noir.

- o Mushroom & Truffle Duxelles pizza
- o Spiced Duck with Confit Ragu
- o Risotto with Chanterelle Mushrooms
- o Grilled Salmon with Bacon, Green Beans and Farro
- o Cremini Mushrooms and Polenta (with Goat Cheese & Herbs)

Bring out your ‘inner Chef’ and have fun experimenting with your own ideas! It’s Pinot Noir! If your pairing is a failure, toss out the food and enjoy the wine!

## REFERENCES:

- Jancis Robinson – The Oxford Companion to Wine
- Andrew Dornenburg and Karen Page – What to Drink with What you Eat
- The Wine Diplomats – [www.winediplomats.com](http://www.winediplomats.com)
- Wine Folly – [www.winefolly.com](http://www.winefolly.com)
- Wine Enthusiast – [www.wineenthusiast.com](http://www.wineenthusiast.com)
- VinePair - [www.Vinepair.com](http://www.Vinepair.com)