



The Wine Corner

Best of Sonoma County, Part Two

By Pierre DuMont

If you read last week's column you can skip the first two paragraphs.

Recently the Sonoma County Vintners Association put on a huge tasting at Kendall-Jackson Winery in Santa Rosa. The "Taste of Sonoma" event was one of the largest and most interesting wine events I have ever participated in. Over 100 wineries from all over the county were pouring their wines often 5 or 6 different wines per provider. The quality was astonishingly high as I had come to expect from Sonoma County. After many years of living in the shadow of its big brother Napa County I feel Sonoma has really come into its own. Certainly, in terms of the experience of wine touring. When friends come to visit, I never take them to Napa to taste. It has become wildly expensive and terribly crowded. Better to ramble around the scenic roads of Sonoma County looking for gems.

One thing that was evident from this tasting is that **Pinot has hit it big**. The grape was everywhere with most regions of the county producing it extensively. Pinot was closely followed by Chardonnay by far the most popular white grape. Throw in some fine Zinfandels, Cabernets and Syrahs and the result was an exceptional and varied day of

tasting. The following wines and the ones I reviewed in Part One represent the best of the tasting and even more, represent the best of Sonoma County.

- **2021 Arista Pinot Noir Russian River Valley**

This is a very natural wine bottled unfiltered and unfined. It has a pale to medium ruby color and spicy notes of baking spices, earth, and leather over a core of red and black berry fruit. The medium bodied palate is elegant and nuanced with spicy character and a grainy, fresh frame, continuing to blossom on a long, detailed finish. These wines are made to age and should improve for a decade in the cellar.

- **2021 Sangiacomo Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast**

Sourced from five different vineyards, the Sangiacomo Pinot Noir has singular, alluring scents of violets, rose petals, cranberries and red cherries- this is incredibly layered, deep and detailed. The medium-bodied palate is packed with plum fruit, spices, earth and amaro layers, supported by a fine grain and seamless freshness, finishing long and layered. A great effort.

- **2021 Bricoleur Pinot Noir Founder's Block**

This is the second release from Bricoleur vineyards. It has a medium ruby color and scents of cranberries, forest floor and spice. It's light bodied, smoothly textured but firm, with great freshness to lift the savory finish. Perfect accompaniment to beef bourguignon.

- **2020 Pride Claret Reserve**

The Pride vineyard straddles the county line and this wine is 81% Sonoma and 19% Napa fruit. The cepage is 72% Merlot and 28% Cabernet Sauvignon. The Pride Claret has aromas of cassis, blueberry, tobacco, earth with floral notes. Medium-bodied, seamless and fleshy bursting with black fruit, it's a layered, concentrated wine with rich tannins and a long, savory finish. This is only going to get better in the cellar.



Guests relax at the Sonoma County Vintners Association Wine Tasting.

- **2020 Merry Edwards Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast**

The lovely nose has notes of currants, blueberries, cured meats and pepper. Medium-bodied, silky and intense, it blossoms in the mouth with tons of spices, flowers, fruits and earth flavors, expertly framed by tannins and seamless acidity, finishing long and flavorful.

- **2019 Notre Vue GSM Blend**

A blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre from the Chalk Hill AVA the wine shows notes of blackberries, blueberry jam and currants with touches of herbs and black pepper. Full-bodied and powerful in the mouth, everything is big yet in balance on the palate, with velvety tannins and just enough freshness to support, finishing long and spicy.

- **2019 Cartograph Pinot Noir Estate**

This lovely wine was new to me. The Russian River fruit has a deep nose and shows cherry fruit with a nice precision, notes of forest floor and a touch of vanilla oak, this is a broad, charmingly fruity and elegant Pinot with a silky texture, very fine tannins and a clean, smooth finish. It is drinking beautifully now but should improve in the cellars for some years to come.

- **2020 Sonoma-Cutrer Chardonnay Founders Reserve**

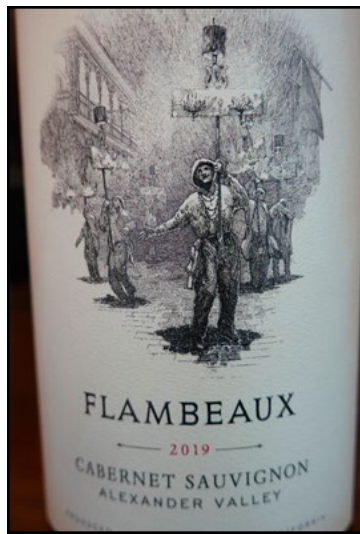
Sonoma-Cutrer is an iconic Chardonnay producer celebrating their 40th anniversary. The Founders Cuvee is their selection of the best barrels and their most outstanding wine. It is powerful yet elegant with a direct delivery of creamy fruit aromas. There is lemon, pastry, oak and spice but the wine remains sharply focused throughout. You get a full-bodied white with a laser focus and bright acidity to close.

- **2019 Balletto Pinot Noir Sexton Hill Vineyard**

Pale ruby-purple, the Balletto Pinot Noir is gorgeous, with deep tones of cranberry, and plums plus accents of lavender, honey and black tea. The medium-bodied palate explodes with concentrated, layered flavors supported by grainy tannins and seamless freshness, it finishes very long, detailed and flavorful. Try with grilled salmon fillets.

- **2021 Kanzler Pinot Noir Russian River Valley**

The Kanzler Pinot Noir has a lovely nose of mushroom, potpourri, licorice and earth with loads of floral nuances and a core of black and red berries. Medium-bodied and silky, it's big and round in the mouth with a long, lingering juicy finish. Perfect partner to roast chicken.



2019 Flambeaux Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley

- **2019 Flambeaux Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley**

Flambeaux are the dancing torchbearers of New Orleans Carnival and the wine is named to honor the owner's New Orleans roots. The wine combines notes of tobacco, earth, plum and dark chocolate on the nose. It's full-bodied, velvety, and open knit, drinking beautifully now but with the requisite stuffing and balance to go another decade or longer.

- **2018 Thirty-Seven Petite Verdot**

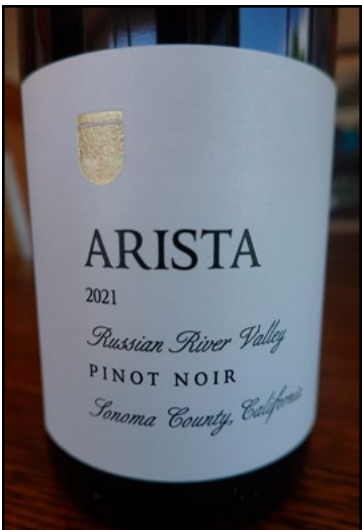
I'm glad to see Petite Verdot, a minor blending grape from Bordeaux, showcased in its own bottling as it makes interesting wine. It offers up elements of cassis, chocolate, and coffee bean in the glass. Full-bodied, firm and expressive the palate displays a slightly tight edge that will loosen in time and be fantastic when paired with grilled meats and chops. Just give it a little more time in the cellar and enjoy it past its 10th birthday.

- **2018 Gary Farrell Pinot Noir McDonald Mountain Vineyard**

This wine hails from the Sebastopol Hills area of the Russian River Valley a cool-climate growing area. It shows aromas of eucalyptus, tobacco, cherries, cedar and dried flowers. The stunning palate boasts a concentrated core of wild, savory fruit framed by firm tannins and acidity that begs you to take another sip on the long finish. This complex, well-made wine will live long in the cellar.

- **2019 Rams Gate Pinot Noir Silver Eagle Vineyard**

This Russian River Pinot Noir has alluring, botanical-toned aromas of cassis, amaro and fir with a core of pomegranate, cranberry and blueberry. The medium-bodied palate is ultra-silky and energetic, loaded with perfumed red fruit, and it has a long, nuanced finish.



2021 Arista Pinot Noir Russian River Valley



Owners of Thirty-Seven Wines pouring their wines.

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