



**“The First Duty of wine is to be Red . . . the second is to be a Burgundy”  
Harry Waugh**

**In California we call it Pinot Noir; in France it’s called Burgundy.**

The French claim ownership of the first plantings of Pinot, and many claim that it originated before the Romans, meaning more than 2000 years ago. The grape itself, difficult at best, is almost like a child going through the terrible two’s—it’s thin skinned, needs perfect growing conditions, lots of TLC, and the soil can’t be too rich. Growers have called the grape capricious, difficult, aggravating, unruly, heartbreaking, and challenging. Even the Burgundians admit to the difficulty of growing this grape. So why go through something this difficult? The rewards of a great Pinot Noir are marvelous, and the great ones will be seductive, aromatic, complex gems which will age for years. Think finesse!

Pinot Noir insists on a cool growing climate to permit a long hang time on the vine, but it also needs hot, dry days to develop full flavors. The best Pinot Noirs from California come from areas that have hot, dry days, with late afternoons bringing in the fog and cooling breezes from the Pacific Ocean. For this quarter’s selection we have chosen Pinot Noir from three different appellations with three distinctively different tastes, and each of them will elicit strong debate about which is the best growing area for Pinot in California. Our selection from the Russian River Valley, known for producing ripe, accessible fruit, is Patz and Hall. From the Anderson Valley, located 120 miles North of San Francisco, our selection is a first time producer—Londer Winery. Domain Chandon, known mostly for its sparkling wines, produces its elegant Pinot from the Carneros/Napa area.

There are many mysteries surrounding this highly praised grape, which make people who are passionate about Pinot Noir, wax poetic about it for hours. While the Cabernet grape is big and robust, the flavors of Pinot are subtle, supple, sensuous and round. Lovers of Pinot Noir come up with more wine verbiage than any other grape that is grown—the lists become so long that it’s almost comical.

To me the words that I use to describe Pinot Noir are words that I use to describe emotions and people, such as pleasurable, sensual, feminine, subtle, complex, flavorful, aromatic, dense, earthy, silky, and sexy.

Other common descriptors are raspberry, black cherry, ripe cherry, smoky, thyme, sage, bacon, strawberry, tea, mint, violets, Asian spices, and countless more. Again, you can choose your own descriptors for these wines.

Five Reasons why PlumpJack loves Pinot:

1. Drinking a great one can be like a spiritual experience.
2. Food choice versatility—from lamb and pork to chicken and fish.
3. Pinot forces us to think instead of being hit in the head with power.
4. We love the challenge of evaluating California Pinot versus French Burgundy.
5. It’s elegant, expensive, and even when we can’t afford them, we still buy them.

## **2001 Patz & Hall, Russian River Valley**

**\$27.99 Net**

*Here are the facts:*

Location of Winery: No winery, but partners are in Napa

Owners: James Hall, Anne Moses, Donald and Heather Patz

Vineyards: Saralee's, Catie's Corner, Pie Shaped Piece, Vin Alchemy, & Thomas Road

Climate: Mild to hot during the day with lots of fog and cool breezes from the ocean

Approximate age of vines: Unknown, but extremely low yields with 20% whole cluster pressing

Cases Produced: Exact quantity unknown, but very limited production

Winemaker: James Hall

Alcohol: 14.2%

Tasting Profile: Voluptuous, forward fruit, raspberry, strawberry and blackberry; medium-bodied

Aging Potential: Drink now (it's yummy) or hold 3-5 years

Varietal Components: 100% Pinot Noir

Fun Fact: When I think of Patz & Hall, it reminds me of Hall and Oates? The four owners have spent a combined 80 years experience in the wine biz—which is a wealth of knowledge and experience. You won't find a better price any where for this gem.

## **2001 Londer Vineyards, Anderson Valley (Mendocino County)**

**\$25.99 Net**

*Here are the facts:*

Location of Winery: No winery, but all partners reside in California

Owners: Larry & Shirlee Londer, Michael & Linda Golub, Sterling & Frieda Haidt, Cliff & Penny

Kupperberg, and Rob & Ann Spears

Vineyards: 16 acres with 5 different Pinot clones

Climate: Very hot days with morning fog clearing early and returning late afternoon

Approximate age of vines: Four years

Cases Produced: 300

Winemaker: Greg LaFollette (Formerly of Flowers and currently Tandem)

Alcohol: 14.5%

Tasting Profile: Lots of deep red cherry flavors and very aromatic, good structure of tannin with nice toasty oak; medium bodied.

Aging Potential: Drink now or hold 3-5 years

Varietal Components: 100% Pinot Noir

Fun Fact: Yet another doctor, ophthalmologist, can't resist the urge to grow grapes and produce wine.

Skeptical about another wine label at first, we were immediately impressed with the wine. You won't be able to find this wine at another retailer for such a great price.

## **2000 Domaine Chandon, Carneros/Napa**

**\$24.99 Net**

*Here are the facts:*

Location of Winery: Oakville, Napa County

Owners: Moët & Chandon

Vineyards: Hand-selected fruit from multiple vineyards in Carneros

Climate: Warm days with cool breezes from San Pablo Bay

Approximate age of vines: 15+

Cases produced: Unknown

Winemaker: Wayne Donaldson

Alcohol: 14.0%

Tasting Profile: Light-bodied with beautiful cherry hues; aromatics reveal cinnamon, fig, nutmeg, toasty oak; smooth finish

Aging Potential: Drink now or cellar for 1-2 years

Varietal Component: 100% Pinot Noir

Fun Fact: The grapes were initially used for their sparkling wine program. After further reevaluation, they decided the quality was so far above par that they chose to make Pinot Noir.