

14 Exciting California Pinot Noirs—New reviews of impressive single-vineyard Pinots from the North Coast Posted: February 11, 2013

This selection of newly released Pinot Noirs focuses on single-vineyard wines from some of the top growing regions in Sonoma and Mendocino counties. Many of the vineyards here may sound familiar; producers from across the state seek out grapes from these sites for their labels. While vineyard-designated bottlings can carry high price tags, they are a good way to explore how *terroir* affects a vineyard, since the wines often express the distinct character, texture and flavors specific to that site. Hirsch Vineyard, planted on a ridge overlooking the Pacific Ocean in what is now called the Fort Ross-Seaview AVA, provided fruit for this report's top-scoring wine, the William Selyem Pinot Noir. Anaba winemaker Jennifer Marion uses grapes from Sun Chase Vineyard, which is located at the confluence of the Petaluma Gap, an area that spans the southern edge of the Sonoma Coast AVA and is named after the gaps in the surrounding mountains that allow in the cool marine air. Sojourn, Semper and **Small Vines produced outstanding Pinots that show the differences that can exist between vineyards in the same appellation.**

Some of the producers who make Pinots from the coast, such as Semper, also look to the Russian River Valley for grapes. Dehlinger focuses mainly on Russian River fruit, and its Goldridge Vineyard bottling (which has no affiliation to the Gold Ridge Vineyard) is produced from a section of its estate vineyards planted on deep sandy loam soils. The Sequana Pinot Noir comes from the sustainably farmed Sundawg Ridge Vineyard in the cool-climate Green Valley AVA, the foggiest section of the Russian River Valley. Fog is often present in the mornings in Anderson Valley, Mendocino's home for Pinot Noir. The grape does well in the long, narrow valley, whose relatively cool temperatures are moderated by ocean breezes. Davies Vineyards, founded by the Davies family of Schramsberg Vineyards, produced two standout wines from the challenging 2010 vintage.

SMALL VINES Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast MK Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$72

Exhibits rich, ripe and spicy blackberry and wild berry fruit, with a touch of anise and black licorice, ending with a tight mix of mineral, dusty earth and dark berry. Drink now through 2020. 150 cases made. —J.L.

SEMPER Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Gold Ridge Vineyard 2010 Score: 92 | \$85

Rich, intense and vibrant, built around vivid blackberry, wild berry and raspberry, with fine-grained tannins giving the flavors traction and length. Drink now through 2020. 180 cases made. —J.L.

WILLIAMS SELYEM Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Hirsch Vineyard 2010 Score: 92 | \$75

Pure, rich and harmonious, with an expansive core of ripe plum, raspberry, fresh earth and mineral, tightening up on the finish. Drink now through 2023. 401 cases made. —J.L.

ANABA Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sun Chase Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$65

Firm and rich, displaying a dense core of spice, fresh earth, blackberry, cola and fennel. Gains depth on the persistent finish. Drink now through 2019. 543 cases made. —J.L.

DAVIES VINEYARDS Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Ferrington Vineyards 2010 Score: 91 | \$50

Firm, offering ripe, vivid, mineral-laced black cherry, plum and raspberry fruit. Deftly balanced, full and persistent, with a long, expansive finish. Drink now through 2020. 282 cases made. —J.L.

DEHLINGER Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Goldridge Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$48

Graceful and elegant, with spicy black tea, black cherry, fresh earth and subtle mineral and herb notes, ending with a watermelon-strawberry touch. Drink now through 2020. 1,015 cases made. —J.L.

SEMPER Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Silver Eagle Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$85

Offers a pure mix of dusty blackberry and wild berry, with mineral, cedar and crushed rock accents, ending with tannins that give the flavors traction. Drink now through 2021. 190 cases made. —J.L.

SEQUANA Pinot Noir Green Valley of Russian River Valley Sundawg Ridge Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$50

Fresh and snappy, offering notes of vibrant black cherry, raspberry, plum, black tea and spice, with a subtle touch of spice and cedar. Ends with firm, ripe tannins. Drink now through 2020. 679 cases made. —J.L.

SOJOURN Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sangiacomo Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$48

Intense and vibrant, powerful yet graceful, offering a mix of black licorice, cola, fresh earth and black cherry. Deceptively elegant and detailed. Drink now through 2020. 975 cases made. —J.L.

DAVIES VINEYARDS Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Londer Vineyards 2010 Score: 90 | \$50

Exhibits pure, rich layers of blackberry and wild berry, floral and spice notes, with touches of black licorice and cedar. Gains on the finish. Drink now through 2020. 286 cases made. —J.L.

TOM EDDY Pinot Noir Mendocino County Manchester Ridge Vineyard 2009 Score: 90 | \$55

The spicy cola and dried berry aromatics lead to a trim, complex, detailed mix of flavors, ending with lingering fresh earth and dried berry notes. Drink now through 2020. 143 cases made. —J.L.

WILLIAMS SELYEM Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Ferrington Vineyard 2010 Score: 90 | \$65

Pure and snappy, with tight, vivid raspberry, anise, spice and blueberry flavors, maintaining focus and gaining depth. Drink now through 2020. 726 cases made. —J.L.

WILLIAMS SELYEM Pinot Noir Yorkville Highlands Weir Vineyard 2010 Score: 90 | \$58

A supple, graceful style, with pure and vivid notes of delicate plum, raspberry and black cherry, displaying fine depth and persistence. Drink now through 2019. 589 cases made. —J.L.

SEMPER Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Ellenbach Vineyard 2010 Score: 89 | \$85

Offers understated elegance and a subtle mix of blackberry, mineral, wilted rose and raspberry notes, culminating in a detailed, nuanced finish. Drink now through 2021. 200 cases made. —J.L.