



## Second Thoughts on Pinot, All Good

By [ERIC ASIMOV](#)

June 24, 2008 5:36 pm

In my recent post on the Eyrie Vineyards I complained that too many American pinot noirs are no longer versatile enough to serve as bridge wines, as they are too big and often too sweet to go with more delicate foods. Naturally, I hedged by saying exceptions abound, and of course they do. So I thought I would talk about some of the other American pinot noirs that I enjoy and that I think still strive for the classic pinot noir characteristics of finesse and elegance.

Several names come to mind right away. I'm especially partial to pinot noirs from the Santa Cruz Mountains, and two producers in particular. Mount Eden Vineyards is a historic winery better known for its wonderful estate chardonnays, but it also makes a small amount of pinot noir that is spicy and graceful and goes beautifully with food. Try it out if you can find it! I feel the same, by the way, about the Mount Eden cabernet sauvignon.

Rhys Vineyards is one of the newest producers in the region, and I can tell you having gotten to know the wines that they are really, really good. I can't wait to see how they'll age.

I can't talk about California pinot noir without mentioning Calera, which long before pinot noir became fashionable set standards that are still rarely matched. While Calera is best known for its single-vineyard wines, from the wilds of Mount Harlan, I've paradoxically been enjoying Calera's Mount Harlan cuvée, a mélange of the single vineyard wines that I find balanced and cinnamon-spiced.

There are oh-so-many others. From the Sonoma coast look for Failla, and Peay Vineyards, Fort Ross vineyard and, especially, Littorai. From the Central Coast there's Au Bon Climat from the Santa Maria Valley and Longoria Wines from Santa Barbara County, while from Sonoma Valley there's Hanzell Vineyards.

I've also had good pinot noirs from the Anderson Valley from Lazy Creek Vineyards and Littorai.

From Oregon, I'm a big fan of Soter Vineyards, and I should mention as well Brick House and Domaine Drouhin.

Not that my American pinot noir studies are by any means complete. A couple of people, commenting on the first post, mentioned pinot noirs from the Finger Lakes, which I intend to check out more thoroughly. And I've also been hearing good things recently about both Copain pinot noirs, which I haven't tried in a few years, and Marguerite Ryan, which I've never tried. All subjects for continuing research.