



# Avalon Northwest Wine and Gourmet News

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## Tasting Tips for Oregon Wine



by Cole Danehower  
Oregon Wine Report

OK, who do I think I'm kidding? I mean, does anyone really need tips on tasting Oregon wine? Just pull the cork, pour the vino, and swallow . . . doesn't that just about cover it?

Well . . . yes and no. Tasting wine is a different thing from drinking wine. Tasting is the process of evaluating the different sensory experiences from a wine, and is generally done to make some sort of an evaluative judgment about the relative qualities of the wine being tasted. Drinking is generally the act of enjoying the flavor of wine, often within a social or culinary setting. Believe it or not, there is actually a process to tasting that can increase your drinking enjoyment of Oregon wine.

Most of us don't usually "taste" wine in the formal sense---we open, pour, and drink. But tasting and drinking go together, in fact they should go together---it's just that "tasting" requires more attention than "drinking," and to get the most out of "drinking" Oregon wine you should first take some time to "taste" Oregon wine.

So let's start tasting!

### Tasting Tip #1: Take tasting seriously . . . but not too seriously.

Tasting doesn't have to be daunting. You don't have to go into the guts of organoleptic theory and practice in order to get the most out of your Oregon wine. Don't ruin your tasting experience by rabidly concentrating on each procedural detail of the book-learned tasting process. You've probably read those hoity-toity tasting procedures in the wine books. They offer good and valuable procedures for carefully considered professional-style wine tasting. I'm going to presume that you can do your own version of the swirl, sniff, sip, and spit routine---that's not what these tasting tips are about. If you need a brushing

up, my favorite books on the subject are **How to Taste** by Jancis Robinson, **Essential Winetasting** by Michael Schuster, and Pat Simon's **Wine-Tasters' Logic** (the latter two were reviewed in depth in Oregon Wine Report #8).

The first tasting tip is that all you really need to do is invest a little attention and give a little concentration to your Oregon wine. Taking the intent of tasting seriously---not obsessively---will do two important things for your ultimate enjoyment of Oregon wine: tune your mind and condition your palette to the wine. It starts before you even open the bottle . . . it starts with the wine you choose.

### Taste Tip #2: Think about the wine you've selected before you open it.

Don't just pull the cork! Take the bottle you've selected in your hands, read the label, and go back in your mind to past experiences with the varietal you're about to open, and even past bottles from the producer you've chosen. It only takes a moment, but recalling your previous encounters with similar wines starts to focus your awareness and put you in a more receptive frame of mind for what is inside the bottle.

For instance, last night I opened a bottle of Chardonnay from Belle Pente, a smaller high-quality Oregon producer. I paused before I opened it to remember the last time I'd had a Chardonnay from this producer. I remembered what I thought of the wine: crisp, spicy, refreshing. Then I recalled the most recent Chardonnay of any kind that I'd had and how it tasted and what I had eaten with that wine. I began to create in my mind an idea of what I was about to taste.

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**Owen Roe Sineann  
New Wines  
Available now!**



Baby Poux Cab, Cab Franc, Sweet Sydney, Dubrul Cab and Merlot, Pinot Gris

## Reserve Pinot Noir Club- 3 bottles

### Beaux Freres Belles Soeurs Wild Thing Pinot Noir 2000 \$49.99

A blend of Beaux Frères Vineyard fruit and purchased fruit from the Muirfield Vineyard, this full-bodied, boisterous, dense, strongly-flavored Pinot Noir is the most Rhone-like Pinot they have yet produced. Spicy, with notes of black fruits, new saddle leather, vanilla, licorice and earth, this big wine stains the palette.

If you are looking for wimpy Pinot Noir, you should steer clear of this beast, definitely a scrumptious "wild thing."

### Patricia Green Cellars Pinot Noir Estate 2000 Estate \$29.99 AND Shea \$39.99

WINE SPECTATOR just gave PGC's Estate PN 90 points and hailed her as the great winemaker she is. We've sent you this wine for March and also, her great Shea 99, alas, sold out, except for the few bottles we have for the Wine Club.

There may not be a site more heralded in Oregon than Shea Vineyards. This is an impeccably tended vineyard on Willakenzie soil that produces some terrific fruit. This is what Pinot Noir is supposed to be about! The nose is complex and redolent with cherry, sweet raspberry, blueberry and toast. The wine is a beautiful soft red color. The flavors are captivating, showing pure fruit at many levels and lingers with terrific balance and distinctly floral notes on the back of the wine. This is a stunningly beautiful Pinot Noir. 135 cases made, and sold out. JY



*"That distinct Patty Green depth of flavor is present... layers of subtly different fruit and spice flavors wend around the palate ...."*

## Other Pinot Noirs We Like This Month

### Antica Terra Pinot Noir Croft 2000 \$35.99

Very limited - An outstanding wine. Big nose with strawberry, cedar, black fruit, lushious gushing fruit flavors on the palate with hints of pepper and licorice, and a long, vanilla oak finish.

Marc Peters never fails to please! Antica Terra began a decade ago with the purchase of a rugged 28 acre parcel in the Amity Hills region of the Willamette Valley. The vineyard sites on a gently sloping hillside of well-drained soil, underlain by sandstone and siltstone, formed from old alluvium- la antica terra. A variety of Pinot noir clones were densely planted in 1990, and the vineyard was significantly expanded in 1999. Yields are kept low to develop concentrated flavors, as well as to hasten ripening before the fall rains.

Antica Terra's prized Pinot Noir 2000 will be out next month- check with us for availability, We'll be sending it to the club if we can get enough!

### Raptor Ridge Meredith Mitchell Vineyard Pinot Noir 2000 \$35.99

Don't miss this one! In a recent blind tasting of 2000 Pinots from Oregon, this wine was the fav. This wine has a fat nose with char and toast and strawberry and cherry.

A dark, succulent, silky wine with a nose that just never ends, the flavors are of blackberry and black cherry fruit, hints of chocolate, coffee, cassis, cream, yet never misses the mark of Pinot Noir. Finish was a little short, but it was cold and just opened. Truly worth trying. Scott and Annie Schull are dedicated to artisan wine-making and its shows! JY

### Elk Cove Pinot Noir 2000 \$20.99 sale price

Big toasty nose, almost sweet fruit, sweet black cherry hit, wonderful rich mouth feel, finish was long, with coffee, barrel toast, char flavors- a real crowd pleaser . Don't miss at this \$5 off a bottle intro price, JY



## Big Reds Club— Featuring Sineann Winery

### Sineann Block 1 Cabernet 2000 \$69.99

So limited I didn't even put this one in the newsletter about the new Owen Roe wines, only 40 cases made, this is David's richest, most incredible Cab. He's only sold this wine to a few of his most prestigious restaurant accounts, and now to Avalon's Wine Club members!

This wine is made from the oldest block of Cabernet grapes in Washington State— the same vineyard as Woodward Canyon uses for its Old Vine Cab (a coming attraction for the Big Reds Club). It's from the oldest part of the Champoux (Mercer Ranch) vineyard and Lay down 10-12 years, no prob, if you can resist. He says it beats his Dubrul Cab for complexity and longevity. And yes, Dubrul is coming to the Big Reds Club too! JY

### Sineann Baby Poux Cabernet 2000 \$29.99

The wine has great structure, good blackberry, Bordeaux -like character, with cassis, cedar, and coffee, chocolate in the flavors. It has good weight and silky well balanced tannins.

This is a wine to drink in the next 4-5 years, A wine with excellent weight and structure, mouthfilling, for those more everyday occasions, for drinking while you wait for the Block 1 to mature. JY



**Sineann**  
1998 Cabernet Sauvignon  
Columbia Valley-Block One Vineyard  
Alcohol 13.8% by volume

*"as David puts it,  
"It's silk!...."*

## Other Big Reds We Like This Month

### Rock Block Syrah (Domaine Serene) \$39.99

Made under the label "Rock Block", this wine is made from purchased fruit from the Oregon side of the Seven Hills Vineyard in the Columbia Gorge.

Big, easy drinking, rich, with a warm, nose pleasing scent and long soft spicy finish. Dark purple color foreshadows the nose of blackberry jam, cooking spices and slight smoked meat. Additional aromas are of toast, vanilla, and rich earth. The flavors are of rice, rich plummy blackberry and boysenberry followed by white pepper, black olive and slight cassis. The fine silky tannins support the long elegant finish which entices you back for another sip. 226 cases produced.



### Penner Ash Syrah 2000 \$35.99

It's so exciting to see Penner-Ash introduce this wine. Only 100 cases made, a wine to show off to friends and enjoy. Ron and Lynn are very excited about this new release, as are we. It is a huge gob of black cherry, smooth and viscous, creamy notes of vanilla, cassis, subtle layers of char and toast and lots of big black plum, cherry, berry. Deep purple color, dense black fruit with heavy roasted coffee notes, oak-vanilla flavors. Lush, round, elegant character with spicy finish. Absolutely decadent. JY



### Sineann Zinfandel Pines Vineyard \$29.99

This block of 14 year old vines is contiguous with the 100 year old "Old Vine" vineyard. This is a huge wine and is for real monster sized wine lovers. It is dark, with plummy, deep flavors and texture. An over the top David O'Reilly special! JY



## New Discoveries Club

### Abacela Tempranillo \$29.99

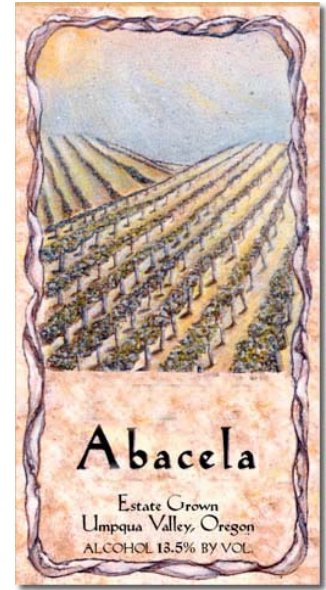
Earl's signature wine, the wine he started Abacela to make, a stunner. His best ever, a wine that is going to place him on the map as a must have Oregon wine.

A big, dark wine with fruit, floral notes and leather on the nose and blackberries and plums on the palate followed by a long complex finish. The wine is rather backward now but will develop bottle boutique and age well. Match up with steak, duck, in fact meats of any kind as well as other hearty, spicy or peppery foods. JY

### Seven Hills Syrah Walla Walla Valley \$37.50

The aroma is of red fruits and smoky Syrah varietal character, surrounded by complex oak tones of spice and vanilla. There's a great balance on the palate, with a natural harmony and brightness between fruit, acidity and tannins.

Crafted to drink earlier than their Walla Walla Valley release, seeking softer tannins and very broad, full mid-palate flavors. JY



## Other New Discoveries We Like This Month

### Croft Bailey Pinot noir Reserve 98 \$49.00

**Wine and Spirits February 2002:**

All about velvet, a wine for sipping in a dark, blue-lit room while watching Mullholland Drive. But moody as it is, there's nothing forboding about it. Instead, it's just plush, cool, refined, seeming to shimmer in a red persimmon fruitiness. The fruit is succulent, the creamy tannins fine-grained, the feel composed yet informal.

Clive Coates' "The Vine" says: Medium color. Go'od, fresh, stylish fruit on the nose. Ripe tannins. Medium-full body. Good grip. Attractive fruits if no great personality or elegance. Succulent, though, and balanced and positive at the end. **Very good plus.** Age 2005-2012.

### Croft Bailey Pinot Noir 99 \$34.00

**Wine and Spirits, February 2002**

While the wine is more delicate than the '98 Proprietor's Reserve, its light frame is filled with brisk red boysenberry fruit. The simple, dry and lasting flavor makes a fine counterpoint to roast salmon with horseradish sauce.

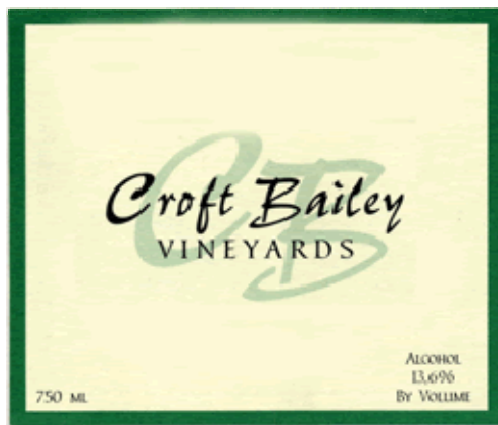
### Table Rock Syrah \$15.99

This wine is filled with lots of fruit, big cherry flavors and toasty oak. Some of the grapes used in Table Rock are used in Willamette Valley Vineyard's high-end label, Griffin Creek. There is about 5 percent of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon in each bottle.

This wine is an extraordinary good value for the price. Check it out!



**"Rated  
"Outstanding" by  
Wine Press  
Northwest  
magazine...."**



## Pinot Gris Club

**Adelsheim  
Pinot Gris 2000  
\$14.99**

This smooth, delicious wine is rich with ripe fruit, dried pineapple and tropical notes with juice apples. Perfectly balanced acidity leads to a big, broad finish.

Chardonnay is Washington's top white wine, but in Oregon, Pinot Gris is king. In fact, 1,442 acres, or 14 percent, of Oregon's vineyards are planted to this crisp, food-friendly wine. Between its ability to become a delicious, approachable wine and the fact it's a mutation of Oregon's more famous grape, Pinot Noir, no wonder it's so popular. Adelsheim Vineyard, one of Oregon's oldest wineries (founded in 1971), also produces one of its best Pinot Gris.

**O'Reilly  
Pinot Gris 2001  
\$12.99**

This wine was going to be blended into the Owen Roe Pinot Gris, but the Casablanca fruit turned out so spectacular that David decided to bottle this separately and at a great price.

It's 25% Casablanca fruit and 75% St Columban Vineyard, everything you'd want in a gris- nice nose, pleasant gris character fruit, and a clean finish that goes well with food.



***“Perfectly  
balanced acidity  
leads to a big,  
broad finish.”***

## Dessert Wine Club

**Hood River  
Zinfandel Port  
Half size bottles**

WPNW Review (Winter 2000): Outstanding - Inviting aromas and great berry flavors along with chocolate, spice, licorice and raisins. This is a delicious drink.

Avalon's most popular port, winner of the Gold Medal at the NW Enological Society annual tasting.

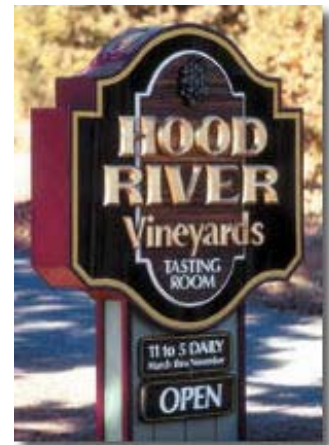
Hood River Vineyards owner and winemaker Bernie Lerch keeps the spirit of exploration and discovery alive along the Columbia River with experiments using new grape varieties and unique wine blends. One thing you can't call Bernie Lerch: boring.

In fact, stopping at Hood River Vineyards in Hood River, Ore., is a little like taking a grand tour of European wine regions, as Lerch and his wife, Anne, grow grapes and make wine historically connected to no fewer than four countries, including France, Italy, Spain and Portugal.....

For more info about the winery, check out our articles about them on the website.

**Hood River  
Cherry Dessert Wine  
\$20.99 new vintage**

A concentrated dessert wine with the flavor of fresh Oregon cherries in a refreshing but intensely flavored finish. A real crowd pleaser, a nice wine for sipping after dinner.



## Best Values Club

### Hip Chicks do Wine Shardoneaux \$9.99

Renee Neely and Laurie Lewis are the hip chicks, and they make some of the best party wine!

Renee and Laurie carefully choose Oregon grapes and custom crush their fun wines. Their first offerings have been a hit at our store, and the wine is fresh, fruity, easy drinking, and targeted at young people ages 21 to 35.

They have an unusual winery in a warehouse in downtown Portland. Their wine tastings are a must-do for hipsters of all ages.

### Siskiyou Pinot Noir 2000 \$12.99

One of those small wineries whose products sometimes go unnoticed, this winery's Pinot Noir is always a best buy and is one of the most popular Oregon Pinots purchased for "everyday" consumption at the store.

The nose is light with hints of toast and strawberry fruit, the flavors are of strawberry, cinnamon, and spices. The finish is pleasant and simple. An easy to drink Pinot Noir that is a crowd pleaser at a reasonable price.



## Tasting Oregon Wine continued .....

From page 1.....

Mind you, it wasn't a specific expectation . . . I wasn't setting myself up for disappointment by creating a mental image of the perfect Chardonnay. Rather I had put in my mind a generalized sense of what the "Chardonnay experience" was like. In other words, I was now more focused, even eager, to accept what the wine offered me. I wasn't distracted by non-wine thoughts; I was ready for the wine!

For Oregon wines, I believe this tasting tip to be extra important.

Oregon's most famous wine is Pinot noir, but a Pinot is not a pinot by any other name. Pinot noir differs dramatically in style from region to region and winemaker to winemaker. Taking that reflective moment to mentally place the Pinot you're about to taste within its context will result in a better tasting experience.

Oregon Pinots tend to have a different style than California Pinots or Burgundies. Knowing this, you can start fine-tuning the framework of your mind's expectation more accurately when you take that moment to think before opening. You can remember that as a generalization, most Oregon Pinot noirs you've had have tended to be of lighter style than the Californians . . . perhaps a bit more tart, and even more elegant than their southern cousins. Or perhaps you've found them to be fuller and more fruity than many Burgundies, or lacking the French earthiness.

Contemplating your previous Pinot experiences first, will give you a more focused context within which to start tasting the contents of that bottle you're about to open.

### Taste Tip #3: Take time to taste over time.

OK, so pull that cork and pour that wine. Go ahead and do all the basic things that help you with the wine: look at the color,

smell the aromas, swirl it in your mouth . . . whatever works best for you. But don't do it just once and consider yourself done.

Don't rush the tasting experience. Linger over the wine. While there may be a certain poetic appeal to this advice, there are sound reasons to not just sip and spit (or swallow, as the case may be) and they are particularly applicable to Oregon wines. Wine changes as it is exposed to air and as its temperature shifts. If you take a red wine from the cellar, immediately open and taste it, you will miss out on much of what the wine is. Indeed, you will probably misjudge the wine entirely! If you take a white wine from the 'fridge, immediately open and taste it, you will likewise be doing the wine an evaluative injustice.

Take a Southern Oregon Bordeaux-style blend, for instance. Often these wines can have a weedy or herby character upon opening, especially if they are rather young. But let the bottle sit open overnight and frequently the wine will taste much softer and fruitier the next day. Similarly, many Willamette Valley Pinot noirs just about require many hours to show at their best--more than once I've had my initial judgment of a Pinot changed significantly when I re-tasted the wine a day later (in fact, tasting the same wine over two days is standard practice in the Oregon Wine Report's reviews).

Of course, the relative youth of the wine under question has a lot to do with how it will change over time. But in nearly every case within my scope of experience, Oregon's best wines tend to be at their best NOT upon opening, but after a few hours of rest and exposure to air. So take that time. Taste it once immediately after you've opened it. Taste it again a few hours later. Even taste it a third time a full day later. The resulting experiences will tell you much about the wine's personality, and help serve as a guide for how and when you might want to serve it.

Continued on the website.....

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Our Customer give us  
our best ideas- Always!



Head chocolate taster Britton Yates

Avalon started eleven years ago as a bed and breakfast in the Oregon wine country, then evolved into a retail store in Corvallis, OR, where it continues today. I put our products on the web in 1999, here we are in cyberspace!

Housed in a hundred year old historical building, the Corvallis Arms Hotel, Avalon is a wine and gourmet shop focusing on Oregon and Northwest wines and gourmet foods. We also have a web site office in rural Alpine, in a 102 year old farmhouse in the middle of the foothills of the coastal range, just south of Green Peak Mountain, west of the Willamette Valley wine growing region. When you are shopping, If you'd rather talk to us than order with our e-commerce system,

E-mail us at [avalon@avalonwine.com](mailto:avalon@avalonwine.com)

or call at 541-752-7418.

We'd love to hear from you! -----Jean, Ann, Carl, Teresa

### Optima English Picnic Baskets

Check out the website- the ultimate in quality, great wedding gift, take to outdoor concerts, tailgating, to the park.

Beautiful china, crystal, and all the accessories in an heirloom quality willow basket with all leather trim.



### Broadley 2001 Futures on Sale through March

Broadley's wines are known for great depth and length, with plenty of spice and pepper and heavy red fruit. If you like Archery Summit, Beaux Freres and Ken Wright wines, chances are you will be a fan of Broadley Vineyards. Broadley varieties include Claudia's Choice and Marcile Lorraine, using estate grown grapes, and a reserve, made with grapes grown a stone's throw away at Alpine Vineyards.

Though the end of March, we have their very hard to get Marcile Lorraine and Claudias Choice 2001 wines as fututres at very low prices. We also have pre-sales of the Claudias Choice and Marcile Lorraine 2000 Pinot noirs. The 2001 Pinot Noir reserve is a steal at \$19.99. Check out our website for more info, or give us a call!



**Claudia Broadley of Claudias Choice Fame**