

30 All-American Pinot Noirs

BY THE EDITORS OF WINE ENTHUSIAST



Photo by Sara Littlejohn

The lightest and most ethereal of the noble red grapes, as well as one of the most fickle and demanding in the vineyard, [Pinot Noir](#) has always been a darling of the wine world. From its spiritual home in [Burgundy, France](#), to the variety of New World wine regions that have eagerly adopted the grape with tremendous success, it has a global reputation for producing some of the world's greatest wines.

But Pinot Noir has seen seriously impressive growth within the United States, both in acreage and adoration. With more than 65,000 acres grown across the country, it's now the third most planted wine grape, behind Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, respectively.

While commonly light to medium in body and marked by red fruit and earthy characteristics, wines made from Pinot Noir can exhibit a fairly wide range of aromas, textures and flavors. New World bottlings tend to be a bit more fruit-driven than their Old World brethren, with rich berry sensations that are framed by a plush yet silky mouthfeel and additional notes of sweet oak and baking spice.

The 30 wines highlighted here, all of which offer high quality for the price and are ready to drink now, will start you on the path to American Pinot bliss.



Clockwise: Williams Selyem 2017 Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); Roar 2017 Sierra Mar Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); Gary Farrell 2016 Lancel Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); Siduri 2017 Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); Joyce 2017 Submarine Canyon Pinot Noir (Monterey); and MacRostie 2016 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley) / Photo by Sara Littlejohn

California

California is the leading domestic Pinot producer, with approximately 43,000 acres planted, a figure that has only increased year over year since 1998 to its current peak as the third most-popular variety in the state.

Williams Selyem 2017 Pinot Noir (Sonoma County); \$39, 98 points. This is a perfumed and seductive wine made from a range of sites across the county. Fresh acidity is seamlessly integrated between textured layers of black cherry, forest floor and

cardamom. The overall experience is balanced and undeniably beautiful. ***Editors' Choice.*** —*Virginie Boone*

Roar 2017 Sierra Mar Vineyard Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia Highlands); \$58, 97 points. Rich and ripe in aromas of red cherry, caramel and oak, this bottling is made elegant and complex from the crushed slate and stony qualities that thrive throughout. A concentrated Bing cherry flavor rings on the bone-dry palate, lifted by mint and more chiseled stone. This is amazingly ripe and delicious, yet hewn with impressive minerality. ***Editors' Choice.*** —*Matt Kettmann*

Gary Farrell 2016 Lancel Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$60, 96 points. This is a boldly layered red, savory in earth tones of forest and cardamom. Boysenberry and strawberry flavors combine with a nervy edge for a lush yet fresh package that works on every level. A thirst-quenching thread of acidity persists from start to finish. —*V.B.*

MacRostie 2016 Pinot Noir (Russian River Valley); \$46, 94 points. This has pretty opening aromatics of cinnamon and nutmeg embroiled in rose and lavender, a bright, enticing and exotic beginning to a seamless experience. Salty oak, tea and Asian spice rub up against rhubarb and pomegranate freshness that helps support silky tannins. ***Editors' Choice.*** —*V.B.*

Joyce 2017 Submarine Canyon Pinot Noir (Monterey); \$25, 93 points. This is a great entry-level wine from Russell Joyce, starting with aromas of candied Bing cherry, earthy forest floor and umami-laced shiitake mushrooms. The palate is bright and snappy with raspberry, marjoram, bay leaf and pine needle flavors, framed by taut tannins and brilliant acidity. ***Editors' Choice.*** —*M.K.*

Lafond 2016 SRH Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills); \$27, 93 points. Intriguing aromas of red cherry, mulberry, turned earth and rainy gravel show on the nose of this bottling by one of the region's earliest producers. The palate is dark and earthy with flavors of boysenberry, star anise, rhubarb and cardamom pods, all wrapped in fresh acidity. —*M.K.*

Merry Edwards 2016 Pinot Noir (Sonoma Coast); \$48, 93 points. Sultry red fruit is seasoned in cardamom and baking spice with a lovely lilt of orange peel that accentuates the underlying acidity. Thick and concentrated on entry, the wine settles into a velvety smooth and floral expression of coastal crunchy fruit. —*V.B.*

Siduri 2017 Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County); \$27, 93 points. Winemaker Adam Lee's first crack at a Santa Barbara County blend is a hit, and he plays in the lighter end of the Pinot Noir spectrum as well. Aromas of crushed slate, red cherry and rose petals lead into a bouncy palate that's tart in flavors of pomegranate and raspberry. ***Editors' Choice.*** —*M.K.*

Kendall-Jackson 2017 Grand Reserve Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley); \$26, 92 points. K-J's Grand Reserve is well worth the upcharge from the Vintner's Reserve.

This seductive and delicious wine is practically irresistible for its combination of abundant ripe-fruit and baking-spice flavors. It offers an indulgent, luxurious texture of melted tannins and mellow acidity. —*Jim Gordon*

Laetitia 2016 Reserve du Domaine Pinot Noir (Arroyo Grande Valley); \$44, 92 points. Rich black-cherry, creamy vanilla and a tart red-plum kick make for a dynamic, soft and alluring nose. The palate is also rich, yet balanced, with a black cherry flavor that's lifted by clove and star anise. —*M.K.*

Robert Mondavi 2017 Pinot Noir (Napa Valley); \$28, 92 points. Impressive at the price point and production levels, this shows a nice nose of strawberry, rose and lavender, following through on the palate with seamless texture and balanced earthiness. It remains light bodied and enjoyable in the glass. ***Editors' Choice.*** —*V.B.*

Three Thieves 2017 Pinot Noir (California); \$11, 91 points. Baking spice aromas and ripe, juicy fruit flavors make this full-bodied wine easy to appreciate. It follows on the palate with toasty oak nuances and satisfying notes of red and black cherries. A good structure of fruit, acidity and moderate tannins keeps it well balanced. ***Best Buy.*** —*J.G.*



Clockwise: Brick House 2016 Les Dijonnais Pinot Noir (Ribbon Ridge); Hyland 2017 Old Vine Single Vineyard Pinot Noir (McMinnville); Styring 2015 Signature Pinot Noir (Ribbon Ridge); Winderlea 2016 Crawford Beck Vineyard Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); Left Coast 2016 Truffle Hill Estate Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); and Patricia Green Cellars 2017 Volcanic Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills) / Photo by Sara Littlejohn

Oregon

Pinot Noir is the defining red grape of Oregon. It's by far the most planted variety throughout the state, with around 19,700 acres of vines that amount to nearly 60% of the state's total wine production.

Brick House 2016 Les Dijonnais Pinot Noir (Ribbon Ridge); \$52, 94 points.

Fresh, aromatic and juicy, this deliciously complex wine incorporates the extra texture of biodynamically farmed grapes, adding details and length. Citrus, berry, a dash of Dr Pepper soda and a solid foundation of stone make for a firm, age-worthy wine. It spent 15 months in one-third new French oak. —*Paul Gregutt*

Hyland 2017 Old Vine Single Vineyard Pinot Noir (McMinnville); \$45, 94 points.

Hyland has blended multiple clones for this Old Vine cuvée, and to good effect. A lush, tightly woven fabric of mixed berries, spicy plum and stewed cherries brings accents of bramble and underbrush. There's a seam of graphite, and the tannins carry a hint of dark chocolate. Lovely already, or drink over the next decade. *Editors' Choice.* —*P.G.*

Patricia Green Cellars 2017 Volcanic Pinot Noir (Dundee Hills); \$42, 94 points.

This is a blend designed to showcase the volcanic Jory soils of the Dundee Hills. It's a compelling wine, with chiseled flavors of raspberry fruit and wet rock. The definition, focus and length are exceptional, and despite its youth it's a wine that's already beginning to display its full potential. *Editors' Choice.* —*P.G.*

Left Coast 2016 Truffle Hill Estate Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$42, 93 points.

This is a striking, focused wine that drives deeply through layers of black cherry, dark chocolate, earth and dried herbs, with a touch of nougat on the lingering finish. Drinking nicely in its youth, this should continue to develop in the bottle through 2025. *Editors' Choice.* —*P.G.*

Styring 2015 Signature Pinot Noir (Ribbon Ridge); \$35, 93 points.

Another terrific vintage for Styring starts off with this well-priced wine powered by black fruits and baking spices. It's layered and smooth, with flavors flowing into buttery tannins that are ripe and polished. Just a hint of stem adds texture and detail, with a finishing whiff of sandalwood. *Editors' Choice.* —*P.G.*

Broadley 2017 Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$22, 92 points.

This elegant, sophisticated wine dramatically out-performs its price point. The luminous color, pretty floral aromatics and subtle integration of fruit all suggest a wine that could easily bear a reserve label. Raspberry and cherry fruit, sweet spices, polished tannins and supple acidity pull it together nicely, even at such a young age. *Editors' Choice.* —*P.G.*

Drouhin Oregon Roserock 2016 Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$35, 92 points.

A superb value, this is a dark, supple, even sensuous wine with deep fruit flavors of blueberry and cassis. Notes of dried Mediterranean herbs and a dark dive into baker's chocolate contribute to a complex weave of flavors. There's real polish and

power here, though this is among the winery's lowest-priced Pinots. ***Editors' Choice.*** —P.G.

Evening Land 2016 Seven Springs Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$35, 92 points. Svelte and smoky, this is a sexy bottle of Pinot Noir. The fruit is supple and seamless, with plums, marionberries, figs and chocolate. Aged for one year in 25% new French oak, it's firm and rippled with touches of olive and mushroom. This exceptional value is simply a riot of flavor. ***Editors' Choice.*** —P.G.

Lange 2016 Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$35, 92 points. Lange prices its reserve well below much of its Pinot Noir lineup, making this an exceptional value, as the grape sources and winemaking remain the same. Juicy blackberry fruit, buoyed with racy acids, comes with barrel notes of clove and wood smoke. The depth and detail are absolutely reserve level quality. ***Editors' Choice.*** —P.G.

Winderlea 2016 Crawford Beck Vineyard Pinot Noir (Eola-Amity Hills); \$53, 92 points. According to winery notes, these grapes got significantly riper in 2016 than the previous vintage—to good effect. The wine is focused and intense, with juicy berry, blood orange and tangy acidity highlighting the fruit. Tannins are firm and lightly earthy, as per this AVA's signature, with a touch of coffee and graphite from aging in 27% new French oak. ***Editors' Choice.*** —P.G.

Lachini 2015 The Grape Republic Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$25, 91 points. Designed for immediate drinking pleasure, this delicious wine delivers complex flavors of berry, root beer and sandalwood, with further details of smoky tea. It's moving gently along the aging curve and rests currently in a prime spot for drinking—smooth and rich, with fruit just now beginning to trend into secondary flavors. ***Editors' Choice.*** —P.G.

Samuel Robert 2017 Vintner's Reserve Pinot Noir (Willamette Valley); \$16, 90 points. Once again this wine way outperforms many of its price-point peers. Pretty cherry candy fruit flavors are bolstered with supple, bright and well-modulated acids. It's young, fresh and fruity, but has a little something extra that carries it further along through a delicious finish. ***Editors' Choice.*** —P.G.



Left to right; Nathan K. 2016 Pinot Noir (Finger Lakes, NY); Savage Grace 2016 Underwood Mountain Vineyards Pinot Noir (Columbia Gorge, WA); and Bel Lago 2016 Pinot Noir (Leelanau Peninsula, MI) / Photo by Sara Littlejohn

Other U.S.

California and Oregon aren't the only states producing pleasurable Pinot Noir.

Nathan K. 2016 Pinot Noir (Finger Lakes, NY); \$33, 92 points. A heady mix of ripe red berries, rose, blood orange rind and forest floor starts off this delightful Pinot, with bits of cinnamon spice and earth lingering in the background. Aged in neutral French oak, pure fruit tones shine on the palate. Fresh strawberry and ripe cranberry flavors revolve around a tangy line of acidity that propels the whole silken experience along. A delicate cherry-pit astringency brings some grip to the close. —*Alexander Peartree*

Hosmer 2017 Pinot Noir (Cayuga Lake, NY); \$20, 91 points. Ripe cherry and berry aromas are at the fore of this wine, with hints of violets, moss and pink peppercorn. While light bodied in feel, it's not lacking intensity on the palate. A tart red-fruit profile is elongated by smooth, supple tannins and integrated acidity, ending on earthy and floral accents. *Editors' Choice.* —*A.P.*

Kerloo 2016 Underwood Mountain Pinot Noir (Columbia Gorge, WA); \$55, 91 points. Pale in color, the aromas fascinate, suggesting notes of dried stick, forest

floor, fresh herb and cherry. Plump, juicy fruit flavors follow, showing an exquisite sense of balance and impressive length, with a lightly smoky finish. —*Sean Sullivan*

Savage Grace 2016 Underwood Mountain Vineyards Pinot Noir (Columbia Gorge, WA); \$35, 91 points. Aromas of strawberry, cherry and underbrush lead to an exquisitely balanced, drawn-out palate, full of juicy, flavorful fruit that brings a sense of delicacy. The tannins give a light squeeze. It's as good an example as I've had of the variety from this appellation. *Editors' Choice.* —S.S.

Bel Lago 2016 Pinot Noir (Leelanau Peninsula, MI); \$25, 90 points. Alluring aromas of violet and pomegranate radiate on the nose of this wine. Smooth, juicy and ripe, the palate brings flavors of cranberry, tobacco and vanilla supported by suede-like tannins. A cigar box accent lingers on the finish. *Editors' Choice.* —F.A.

Dr. Konstantin Frank 2016 Old Vines Pinot Noir (Finger Lakes, NY); \$22, 90 points. The grapes for this wine are partially sourced from the winery's Keuka Lake estate vineyards that were planted in 1958, with the remainder coming from an estate vineyard on Seneca Lake. There's an earthy, woody element to the nose, like a fresh whiff of rooibos tea, but plenty of fruit rides underneath. Crunchy cranberry and blueberry flavors revolve around tightly coiled acidity, with a pleasing clench of tannins providing solid structure. *Editors' Choice.* —A.P.

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