

Resident wine expert Sandra Silfven on all things vino

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Your Thursday wine: MacRostie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

By [Sandra Silfven](#)



California winemaker Steve MacRostie is a pioneer in the production of small-lot, cool-climate Sonoma Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays. (Image courtesy of www.macrostiewinery.com)

STEVE MACROSTIE has marked many milestones over his long career in the California wine business, but today probably ranks pretty high for him. It's the soft opening of a dream tasting room and hospitality center. The MacRostie Estate House sits on a hill overlooking a vineyard and the famous Westside Road in Healdsburg, a mecca for top Pinot Noir and Chardonnay producers.

MacRostie, 68, founded MacRostie Winery and Vineyards in 1987, contracted with a Who's Who of growers for small-lot Pinot Noir production and benchmark Chardonnays, and established his own vineyard in 1997 — Wildcat Mountain — in the rugged Petaluma Gap on the borderlands between the

Carneros and Sonoma Coast AVAs. His tasting room has always been in a warehouse on Eighth Street in the town of Sonoma — well, not any old warehouse. It's home to other top producers too.



Since the sale of MacRostie Winery and Vineyards in 2011 to Lion Nathan (now known as Distinguished Vineyards & Wine Partners), many changes have been under way to showcase these topflight Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs and further refine the winemaking. Steve is still coming to the “office” every day to work alongside the talented winemaker Heidi Bridenhagen and talk with growers — he just doesn't have to be the bean counter anymore.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: The winery is still contracting with an impressive roster of grower families including the Duttons, Sangiacomos, Martinellis and Bacigalupis, as well as Steve's own Wildcat Mountain Vineyard. Five sites are at the core of MacRostie's vineyard program: Steve's own Wild Cat Mountain, the MacRostie Estate Vineyard, Dutton Ranch, Sangiacomo Vineyard and Goldrock Ridge Vineyard.

The new MacRostie Estate House, with an official opening yet to come, has a 13-acre Pinot Noir vineyard named for Steve's wife Thale and a state-of-the-art boutique winery.

The MacRostie style is crispness, complexity and vineyard character. You will find the Chardonnays delicate and intense — like fine tapestries of fruit woven with oak and braced with acidity, while Pinots are striking with rich, generous, spicy fruit expressive of the growing site. All wines are closed with screw caps.

Two MacRostie wines are sold in the Metro Detroit market: MacRostie Sonoma Coast Chardonnay and MacRostie Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir. I recently tasted these two plus more. All are fairly priced considering the pedigree.

MacRostie Chardonnay Sonoma Coast 2012, \$27: If this is MacRostie Chardonnay 101, your palate is in for an education. It's just about like an essence of Chardonnay — it's that intense, concentrated, juicy and structured. It's made off a handful of Sonoma Coast vineyards including Sangiacomo, Saralee's, Dutton Ranch, and Steve MacRostie's own Wildcat Mountain. Aromas are green apple, pear, jasmine and floral notes. Texture is creamy, acidity is firm. Flavors are rich — a mix of tropical citrus, apple, ripe pear and a kiss of vanilla caramel off the oak barrels. Most of the wine in the final blend is fermented and aged in oak.

MacRostie Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2012, \$30: This Pinot is so delicious it's addictive like candy — on the nose think intense raspberry, cherry, cinnamon and a kiss of spice, followed by smooth tannins in the mouth, firm acidity and so much cherry fruit it's like a piece of pie. It's utterly delicious and is produced off a variety of vineyards in the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast AVAs including Steve MacRostie's own Wildcat Mountain.

MacRostie Chardonnay Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast 2012, \$38: This intense, pale gold beauty is produced off the sparse, volcanic soils of the coastal Wildcat Mountain where the vines are blasted by cold westerly winds off the Pacific. The juice pressed out of these grapes is concentrated

and complex. On the nose, the wine is honey, jasmine, green apple, and smoky-spicy oak. In the mouth, flavors are concentrated with jasmine, apple, grapefruit, lemon peel. It's a wine that cries out for food — broiled salmon, pork tenderloin, roasted chicken, turkey. Only 32 barrels were produced.

MacRostie Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2012, \$32: The mix of fruit that makes this wine rock includes grapes from the coolest areas of Sonoma for that gooseberry note and natural acidity, and from the warmer vineyard Saralee's for that ripe honeydew melon character and richness. It's a complex wine — delicate, packed to the brim with fruit, balanced by firm acidity with wonderful oak nuances that are not overwhelming. It's a song of yellow apple, pear, ripe honeydew melon, tangy white-stone fruit. All French barrels are used for fermentation.

MacRostie Chardonnay Sangiacomo Vineyard Carneros 2012, \$44: Steve MacRostie only made seven barrels of this wondrous stuff off the legendary Sangiacomo Vineyard, which still has pre-Phylloxera blocks of vines. It is fermented and aged in oak — all of it. The fruit is so big and intense, and pretty, it can wear the oak like a mantle and still not taste like a wooden stave. It's a gorgeous wine, flavors are intense but not heavy — there's a soft honeyed sweetness in the midpalate that is pure charm. It's delicate, feminine.

MacRostie Pinot Noir Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Sonoma Coast 2012, \$48: Steve MacRostie owns this mountaintop vineyard along with Nancy and Tony Lilly. The wine is intense but still zipped-up tight, urging buyers to cellar it for a while. Aromas of cherry, cola, blackberry and mushroom erupt from the glass. In the mouth, tannins are smooth, and the firm acidity wraps itself around the berried, cocoa flavors.

MacRostie Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2012, \$42: This beauty is cherry, persimmon, cola, tobacco and spice, wrapped up in soft, supple tannins, firm acidity and smoky, spicy French oak. It's grown on the western reaches of the Sonoma Coast appellation at Dutton's Hallberg Ranch and Mirabel Vineyard, and a small-lot site called Hogan's Run. That persimmon — yeah! It really shows.

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