

VARIETAL FOCUS:

PINOT BLANC

Lance Cutler

PINOT BLANC is the Rodney Dangerfield of white wine: It gets no respect. It has neither the unctuous resonance of Chardonnay nor the zesty complexity of Riesling. Even its cousin, Pinot Gris, has brighter fruit and tangier acidity. Pinot Blanc is more of a restrained pleasure with medium body and shy fruits. It is a simple thirst-quencher that is equally at home on a summer afternoon or paired with a wide variety of foods.

Pinot Blanc is another of the many mutations of Pinot Noir that most likely originated in Burgundy, where it is still permitted in Grand Cru vineyards although it is seldom used in blends. It found its true home in Alsace, where it comprises 21 percent of all vineyard plantings. It is used primarily for Crémant d'Alsace, but many wineries produce dry wines from the grape as well, often blended with Auxerrois.

Pinot Blanc found a second home in northeast Italy, where it is called Pinot Bianco. Planted in Friuli and the Alto Adige, it's produced in a wide variety of styles—from sparkling wine to refreshingly acidic wines made without oak. In Germany and Austria, where the grape is known as Weissburgunder, wines are often aged in oak to broaden the mouthfeel and finish. Pinot Blanc is grown in many places in the New World, including California, Oregon and British Columbia, Canada, although many of the older plantings have turned out to be the Melon de Bourgogne grape. It is also produced in small amounts in Slovenia, Croatia, Argentina and Uruguay, among others.

For this Varietal Focus, we decided to concentrate on dry white wines. We selected Oregon's Willamette Valley, where both **Thomas Houseman** of **Anne Amie Vineyards** and **Anne Hubatch** of **Helioterra Wines** stir lees while the wine is in barrel to produce better texture. **Drew Voit** of **Harper Voit Wines** also seeks greater texture but prefers his wines to rest on lees without stirring. In the Okanagan Valley, winemakers use a variety of styles to make their Pinot Blancs. **Matt Dumayne** at **Okanagan Crush Pad** focuses on texture-driven wines, **Sandy Leier** from **Sandhill Wines** uses Burgundian techniques with American oak barrels, and at **St. Hubertus & Oak Bay Winery**, winemaker **Bill Pierson** and owner **Andy Gebert** work to achieve a brighter Riesling-like style. In Mendocino, Calif., **Jason McConnell** uses his estate grapes to make an easy-drinking style at **RIVINO Winery**. **Jim Klein** at **Navarro Vineyards** also uses Rivino Vineyard fruit, along with some newly planted estate grapes and a bit of Chardonnay. **Randy Meyer** of **Barra Winery** uses a fair amount of Melon de Bourgogne, which gives his **Girasole Vineyards'** wine a different fruit profile than the other Mendocino Pinot Blancs.

Lance Cutler has been a working winemaker in Sonoma Valley for 40 years. He has been a contributing editor for *Wine Business Monthly* for 15 years. His unique perspective on winemaking has led to our Industry Roundtable series and our Varietal Focus series. Lance is also the author of five Jake Lorenzo books and *The Tequila Lover's Guide to Mexico*.



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DATE	TIME	TEMPERATURE	WINE	GRAPE	VINEYARD	CLIMATE	SOIL	PLANTING	IRRIGATION	PRUNING	HARVEST	YIELD	QUALITY	MARKET	PRICE	PROFIT
15/12	10:00	18.5	Chardonnay	Pinot	Block 1	Warm	Loam	Standard	Low	Light	Early	12.5	High	Export	15.0	2.5
16/12	11:00	19.0	Pinot Noir	Pinot	Block 2	Warm	Loam	Standard	Low	Light	Early	13.0	High	Export	16.0	3.0
17/12	12:00	19.5	Pinot Noir	Pinot	Block 3	Warm	Loam	Standard	Low	Light	Early	13.5	High	Export	17.0	3.5
18/12	13:00	20.0	Pinot Noir	Pinot	Block 4	Warm	Loam	Standard	Low	Light	Early	14.0	High	Export	18.0	4.0
19/12	14:00	20.5	Pinot Noir	Pinot	Block 5	Warm	Loam	Standard	Low	Light	Early	14.5	High	Export	19.0	4.5

VARIETAL FOCUS:

PINOT BLANC

WILLAMETTE VALLEY

Just 850 tons of Oregon's 2017 grape harvest were Pinot Blanc, which is less than 1 percent of the total 91,342 tons harvested. Pinot Gris, by comparison, accounted for 13,785 tons or 15 percent of the harvest. The Willamette Valley winemakers in this Varietal Focus pointed out that they were already making a lively, fruity wine with abundant acidity, using their Pinot Gris. Rather than make a wine that was similar to, and thus competed with, one they already had, they decided to concentrate on texture when it came to Pinot Blanc. They tamed the fruit character by fermenting in used barrels and keeping the wine on its lees. They maintained acidity by refusing to allow malolactic fermentation.



HELIOTERRA

VARIETAL FOCUS:

PINOT BLANC

ANNE AMIE

2016 Twelve Oaks Estate Pinot Blanc

Thomas Houseman is a son of the South who made his way to New York to pursue a career in modern dance but ended up at **CSU Fresno** and earned a degree in enology. He got a job at **Fetzer Vineyards** and followed that with a stint at **Husch Vineyards** in the Anderson Valley. He jumped at a chance to make wine in New Zealand; and when he returned to the United States, he took a job as assistant winemaker at **Ponzi Vineyards**. In 2006, after four years at Ponzi, he accepted the winemaking position at Anne Amie.



Wine goes to neutral French oak and stainless steel barrels for fermentation, which is carried out at 50° F. Juice is usually around 3.1 pH, so no acid is added. We will bump to 300 ppm YAN at Brix drop, using DAP, Superfood and **MicroEssentials** Trace. Lees are stirred bi-monthly and the wine sits on gross lees until the *cuvée* is assembled, usually 9 months.

“We cold-stabilize using cream of tartar and cold temperatures. We heat-stabilize using bentonite as necessary. The wine is sterile-filtered because we do not go through malolactic. Our Pinot Blanc gets a screw cap closure with a 302 liner. The wine ages in bottle for a full year before release.”

ACCORDING TO HOUSEMAN:

“The idea behind this Pinot Blanc was to make a wine that was about sur lie, rather than primary fruit characteristics. The focus is on texture, not fruitiness, and my inspiration was the wines of Muscadet and Chablis. The wine is completely dry, but the sur lie quality (even without malolactic) provides good mid-palate weight, along with bright acidity. The wine feels rich and textured.

“Our **Twelve Oaks Estate Vineyard** sits at 650 to 700 feet. The Laurelwood soils are like a cupcake made of volcanic soils into which the roots must find a footing, while a thin layer of wind-blown soil sits like frosting on top. Vines are spaced 8 feet by 1 meter. While we have both Clone 5 and 7 in the vineyard, only Clone 7 is used for this wine because it better lends itself to the style we are attempting. We use 3309 and 101-14 rootstock. The vineyard is dry-farmed and **LIVE** certified.

“We pull leaves on the morning side to encourage airflow and sunlight. These vines have more canopy area than our Pinot Noir. We mechanically leaf after bloom and clean up by hand pre-*veraison*. We drop fruit for airflow and to make sure no clusters are touching. We cultivate every other row, turning in green manure cover crop. Production averages 3.5 tons per acre.

“Picking is more about flavor than chemistry. We look for flavors to change from Granny Smith to Golden Delicious, from citrus to stone fruit. The canopy yellows, skins start speckling and softening, and the pulp starts to separate from the seeds. We can usually get fully ripened fruit under 22° Brix. We sort both in the field and on an incline conveyor to the press.

“Grapes are whole-cluster pressed with no SO₂, and we allow the juice to brown. Juice is settled for at least 48 hours at 38° F without using enzymes. The wine gets racked, and we add VL yeast alternating between 1, 2 and 3.



THOMAS HOUSEMAN

TASTING NOTES

HOUSEMAN: Aromatically, there is a Juicy Fruit gum quality to it. There is stone fruit and kaffir lime. It has a bit of feijoa and a bit of quince. There is a powdery, mineral quality of dusty road and a saline note. It is dry. I like the length and focus of it. There is some citrus and a lot of sur lie texture. It straddles the line of being linear and focused with structure and acidity but has the width from sur lie. It has texture without being oily.

VOIT: The nose is sweet and herbaceous with a tarragon, spearmint character. You get a hint of stone fruit and citrus on the nose, which becomes stronger on the palate. There is a varietal spice character. I get texture from the lees on the palate. There is sweet citrus and yellow stone fruit on the palate and then moves to underripe apricot, peach and pear, with linear ripe stone fruit. The tension between acidity and breadth is beautiful without being "lees-y."

HUBATCH: I echo what they have said, but I also get lemon curd and some lemon meringue pie. The stone fruit and minerality really pop. I love the generous aromatics on this wine. It keeps you guessing what the flavors will be. There is a bit of bâtonnage character that comes on throughout the wine in the middle, the front and the finish. I like the underripe fruit character. On the palate, I love the bracing acidity that is nicely balanced out by a touch of oak and the lees weight on the mid-palate.

MEYER: Potent apricot and peach with some vanilla cream. Slight nutmeg and a nice "Flintstone vitamin" character that I like. Unique wine with out-of-the-norm flavors.

MCCONNELL: I got lavender and some almonds, along with stone fruit. This had a great acid finish with tart apple flavors.

KLEIN: Very perfumed and then a sour apple character that carried through. The vitamin character strikes me as yeast nutrient. It is a pretty little wine. Like all the wines in this flight, you can tell they are picked at low maturity.

LEIER: Sweet dried apple aromas, lemon and confectionary notes. Concentrated fruit, candied lemon on palate with medium-plus acidity. Dried orange peel, slightly pithy on finish.

PIERSON: Nutty aromas with very ripe baked orchard fruit followed by flavors of pear and orchard fruit.

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HELIOTERRA

2017 Willamette Valley Pinot Blanc

Anne Hubatch grew up in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. She earned a degree in geology and environmental studies at **UW Madison** before moving to Portland, Oregon where she became fascinated with the wine industry. She worked in a variety of roles for eight years and learned from many great Oregon winemakers, including **Eric Hamacher (Hamacher Wines)**, **David Adelsheim** and **Dave Paige (Adelsheim Vineyard)**, **Joe Dobbles (Dobbles Family Estate/Wine By Joe)** and **Alfredo Apolloni (Apolloni Vineyards)**. Hubatch introduced her first solo vintage in 2009 when she launched **Helioterra Wines**.



“I pick mostly on flavor but also target pH; I look for a 3.1 pH on average. I want to wait for flavor but preserve the acidity. Maintaining acid is more difficult at the Redman site, where ripening is earlier and the flavors tend toward floral and tropical, so acid drop may precipitate picking. At Yamhill, we look for light golden skins and the development of flavors of graphite and wet concrete, along with green papaya. That vineyard holds acidity very well.

“Grapes are sorted in the vineyard. Grapes are whole-cluster pressed with no destemming. No SO₂ is used at pressing. We underload the press, tumble the grapes first and use a longer press cycle, trying to minimize tannin extraction and maximize juice extraction. The juice browns and is settled for 24 to 48 hours at 40° F. No acid additions are necessary, but we will use micro-nutrient, DAP and bentonite, and sometimes we include **Optiwhite**. We rack to stainless steel tank, stainless barrels and neutral oak barrels. I inoculate with five different yeasts. Fermentation temperature varies between 55° F to 70° F, depending on the vessel.

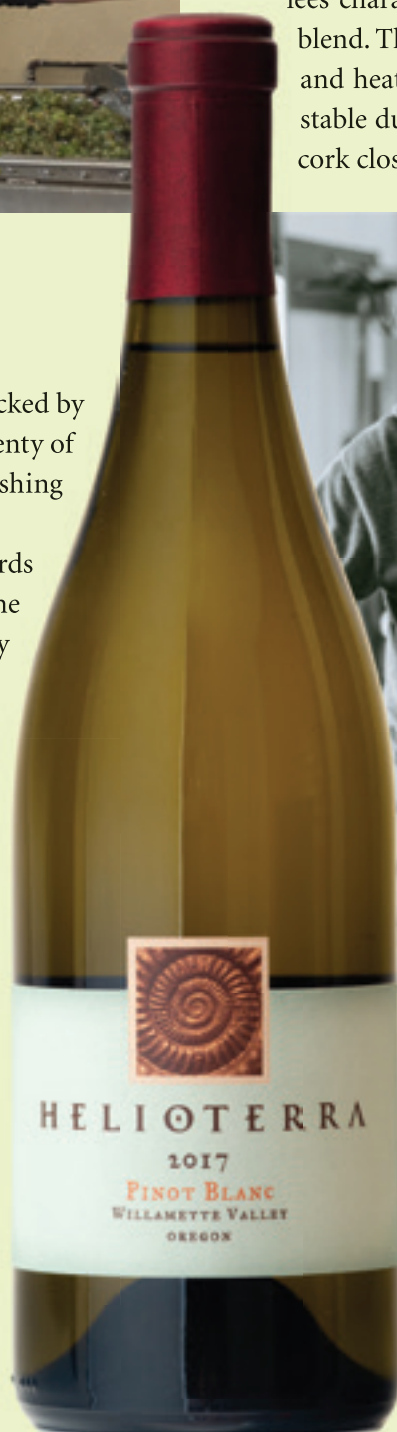
“About 30 percent of the wine is fermented in neutral French oak barrels, and lees are stirred every two weeks. We will increase stirring if we need more lees character. This continues for five to six months. We rack only to blend. The wine is cold-stabilized traditionally in tank or with **Celstab**, and heat-stabilized using bentonite although most times it is already stable due to the earlier bentonite addition. We cross-flow filter, use a cork closure and age the wine for six months before release.”

ACCORDING TO HUBATCH:

“Stylistically for Pinot Blanc, I like acidity and aromatics backed by texture and complexity. I am trying for a lively wine with plenty of texture on the palate and enough acidity to provide a refreshing finish.

“The grapes for this wine come from two separate vineyards with very different soils, providing different levels of vigor. The **Redman Vineyard** is comprised of Willakenzie sedimentary soils, sits at an elevation of 500 feet and is a much warmer location, often harvested two weeks earlier than **Yamhill Valley Vineyards**. Yamhill is primarily sedimentary clays with basalt intrusions. It has larger clusters, and the fruit is more savory, with stone fruit character and has better acidity. Both locations feature the Colmar clone. The Yamhill site is own-rooted, and the Redman site is 3309 rootstock. Everything is dry-farmed, LIVE certified and **Salmon Safe**.

“Some fruit is dropped to maintain flavor and even ripening, with more fruit being dropped at the Yamhill site. Leaves are pulled twice throughout the growing season to allow sunlight and encourage airflow in the fruit zone. We want some sun to reach the clusters but not enough to burn the fruit. The Redman site produces 2.5 to 3 tons per acre. Yamhill carries a bit more, closer to 3.5 to 4 tons per acre.



TASTING NOTES

HUBATCH: Aromatically, I get a lot of minerality, a range of concrete and crushed stone combined with some citrus-like kaffir lime. I get a calcareous, briny component. There is a white floral sweetness reminiscent of white peach, along with underripe peach and pear notes. On the palate, there is amplified juicy acidity, a lot of length and some lemon citrus and spice quality and broader fruit notes. The "leesiness" comes through a little bit, but there is a lot of mid-palate broadness. It is very dry; I love the length.

HOUSEMAN: It has that dusty road quality. There is a bit of reduction with star fruit on the nose and a savory quality that reminds me of Vegemite, dry apricot and quince paste. I really like where it is going on the nose. It is ripe and underripe at the same time, which is really fun. I love the acidity. More quince comes across on the palate. It is broad with underripe pineapple, lime zest and grapefruit. I love the acidity on this.

VOIT: I get the same dusty profile on the nose, like dusty concrete. There is some Golden Delicious apple on the nose with some green pear. On the palate I get dried tropical or dried fruit tones that come through like dehydrated apple. Baked pineapple is a strong note for me and candied yellow melon rind. It has some citrus pithy tones and great acidity.

MEYER: It had a candied, dry fruit profile. I picked up bread dough, crisp acidity and a bit of apple skin. I also got some soy or Marmite yeast autolysis on the palate, which might have been yeast- or oak-related.

MCCONNELL: This was the lightest and most delicate wine in the flight. It was yeasty and soft with more orange than lemon, along with some white peach. It was very muted and delicate. I'd probably love this wine ice-cold and refreshing.

KLEIN: I had this lemon peel, candied fruit aroma. There were green, low-maturity flavors with a hint of vanilla from some kind of barrel-aging that I found very attractive. These wines are holding up better than the Canadian wines we are seeing at the same age.

DUMAYNE: A very plush, ripe and heavier style. It's big on caramel and baked fruit tones. It's softer on the palate. Not the most concentrated. I get some oxidative/bruised fruit notes with a short finish.

LEIER: Aromas of ripe orchard fruit, bruised apple, pear and straw. Low to medium acidity on the palate with flavors of ripe apple and pear. Light body with a fresh, citrusy finish.

PIERSON: It is ripe and nutty with subtle citrus, some floral and definite flint. The flavors are ripe with citrus and stone fruit.



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HARPER VOIT WINES

2018 Harper Voit Pinot Blanc Surlie

Drew Voit spent the formative years of his winemaking career at **Domaine Serene** and **Shea Wine Cellars**, where he worked with some of the best vineyard sites in the Willamette Valley. Ten years ago, he started his own Harper Voit Wines, seeking out great vineyard sites, beautifully farmed fruit and long-term relationships with growers. Voit also consults for several wineries in the Willamette Valley and operates a custom winemaking operation for small, ultra-premium brands.



ACCORDING TO VOIT:

“I am looking for a bone-dry wine with focused bright acidity and a strong mineral and briny character. I want to present a definite lees character that provides rounded texture with tension between the acidity and that autolytic character—without using malolactic fermentation.

“This **Meredith Mitchell Vineyard** has soil that is a mixture of broken basalt and marine sediments. Elevation is 450 feet, and rows are planted 9 by 5 feet. The vineyard uses Colmar Clone planted on 101-14 rootstock. The shallow soils create a very low-vigor vineyard, but one that has high acid retention. The vineyard is dry-farmed and biodynamic with minimal leaf-pulling. Fruit-dropping is minimal due to the low vigor, resulting in just 2.25 tons per acre yields despite the continued strengthening of the vines; it’s a result of the biodynamic farming practices.

“The vineyard ripens late, so I am usually waiting for flavor development and acid drop. Brix is always low at this site, but I am waiting for pH to climb above 3.0. I look for the flavor to move off the green spectrum, but I want to

pick before flavors move fully to stone fruit because I know the finished wine will present flavors farther along the ripe spectrum than those when tasting the fruit.

“Grapes are picked by hand with no sorting. We whole cluster-press, using no SO₂. We handle the grapes with the intention of minimizing tannin phenolic extraction. We allow juice to brown and will fine with bentonite and casein gelatin. We settle the juice for 24 hours at 45° F. The juice is racked to 500 L puncheons (75 percent) and French oak barrels (25 percent). We add **Cross Evolution** yeast, but no acid additions are made. MicroEssentials Powder and Trace are added at 2° to 3° Brix drop. Wine ferments between high 50° Fs and mid-60 °Fs. We like these warmer fermentation temperatures because they help reduce fruitiness, which complements our style goals. Post-fermentation, we top up to remain as reductive as possible. We want yeast autolysis with minimal oxidation, so we never stir the lees. Wine sits on lees for nine months as we wait for the desired texture to develop.

“We rack right before bottling, seed with K₂CO₃ and bulk-chill for cold stability, adding bentonite if necessary. Wine is cross-flow and then sterile-filtered. We finish with **Diam** corks and bottle-age one to two months prior to release.”



PHOTOS: CAROLYN WELLS-KRAMER PHOTOGRAPHY

TASTING NOTES

VOIT: It's recently bottled, so there's a bit of sulfur influence on the nose. I get a flinty, low-level, reductive lees-y note, and then some citrus zest and sour fruit, along with yellow melon rind. There is a low-level spice tone that I think is autolytic that I like. On the palate, we are focused on texture. The acid drives it, and there is breadth from the lees-aging. It has a salty, briny tone on the palate, and it finishes without phenolic interference.

HUBATCH: The aromas are a bit disjointed from the bottling. I get a lot of mandarin orange backed up with jasmine and some clove baking spice. There is some of those orange "circus peanut" candies in here. The saltiness comes off, like corn chips in the beginning, that's blown off. It is extremely textural, very mouth-filling and round with yellow melon cantaloupe and unripe stone fruit. It has a lot of length, and it really pops mid-palate. It has a soft finish.

HOUSEMAN: This has the most reduction in the flight. What leaps out at me is ripe apricot. There is yellow plum, Golden Delicious and buttered toast. I get ripe pear and really like what it is doing aromatically. It has focused acidity, is pithy with a broad mid-palate and flavors of citrus zest, lime zest, underripe kiwi and a wonderful long finish. I like it quite a bit.

MCCONNELL: Perfumed nose of violets, dried blueberries and dried apricots. There was a lot of flavor and aroma. At the same time, it was dry and tart even though there is a sweetness to the flavor.

KLEIN: Tastes like Gravenstein apple cider. Nice and tart with an almost lemon rind finish.

MEYER: Had a very impressive mouthfeel extract. It had to be sur lie-aged. Whatever winemaking technique was used here, it really produced an excellent mouthfeel while still being tart and crisp. There is a nice, slight dried-flower perfume, as well as green pear character. I get little stone fruit and some lemon grass.

DUMAYNE: High SO₂ with delicate fruit notes underneath. Green acid, but it carries the length of the wine.

LEIER: Pastry and lemon notes on the nose with herbs and green apple. Some green character on the palate: tomato vine, lemon and lime flavors. Medium body with vibrant acidity, leaving a tart, green apple finish.

PIERSON: There are some ripe medicinal aromas, along with floral character. The flavors are ripe with citrus and baked apple.



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VARIETAL FOCUS:

PINOT BLANC

OKANAGAN VALLEY

While winegrapes are grown in several parts of British Columbia, Canada, the Okanagan Valley is the largest region and accounts for 84 percent of British Columbia's vineyards. The climate is extreme—winter temperatures are as low as -4° F and summer temperatures can reach up to 104° F. The growing season is short, defined by hot temperatures and long days. Rainfall averages between 8 to 12 inches annually, depending on where you are in the valley, so irrigation is essential, but these dry conditions and low humidity reduce pest and disease pressure. Pinot Blanc accounts for just 5 percent of white wine production in British Columbia.



ST. HUBERTUS & OAK BAY WINERY

PINOT BLANC

ST. HUBERTUS & OAK BAY WINERY

2017 St. Hubertus Vineyard Pinot Blanc

Andy Gebert was a plumber in Switzerland when he joined in the army to fulfill his required military service. He decided to come to Canada in 1985 to help his brother, **Leo**, who had purchased 76 acres of historic vineyard—it was originally planted in 1928. They chose to focus on cold-climate varieties, farm organically and use estate fruit exclusively. Gebert learned about wine by tasting, and hired accomplished winemakers, like **Bill Pierson**, to handle the day-to-day production. St. Hubertus & Oak Bay Estate Winery now produces 14,000 cases annually.

ACCORDING TO GEBERT:

“We want to produce a brighter, lighter ‘Riesling’ version of Pinot Blanc. We want straight-forward fruit aromas of apple, lemon and peach, yielding to a juicy palate where ripe fruit flavors break through before the acidity reins it back into a long finish. It is meant to be clean, fresh and fruit-driven wine.

“Our soils are sand-based with gravel but with more clay as you near the lake. The vineyard is at 1,000 to 1,300 feet elevation. Vines are planted on SO4 rootstock, using clones imported from France long ago. We farm organically and are transitioning to **Canadian Organic Standards** through

the **Pacific Agricultural Certification Society** (PACS). The vineyards are irrigated, and crop size is around 5 tons per acre. We remove leaves from the north side to promote airflow through the fruit zone and green-drop in August or September.

“We pick primarily based on flavor, looking for bright fruit citrus flavors, along with some tropical notes, with a lessening of green apple character, including an acid drop. We look for brown seeds and make sure to pick before it snows. Usually grapes come in between 22° and 23° Brix with .75 TA.

“Grapes are machine-harvested and pressed, separating free run from press juice. We usually do not use SO₂ but will if grape conditions require it. Juice is settled at 57° F for 48 hours. It is racked to stainless steel tanks where yeast is added. We add enough nutrients to maintain a healthy fermentation. The wine ferments at 70° F in stainless steel, but we have one new oak barrel fermentation that we use in the blend for extra flavor and subtle complexity. The barrel sits on lees but with no stirring. The tank portion is racked after fermentation, and then we do a clear racking off settled lees. The final racking comes at bottling.

“The temperature in the winery cold-stabilizes the wine, and we use bentonite for heat stabilization. The wine is sterile-filtered. We have had enough problems in the past with bad corks to now use screw caps. The wine receives six months’ bottle age before release.”



Andy Gebert (left) and his brother Leo

TASTING NOTES

PIERSON: The nose is bright with citrus, stone and flinty aromas. The palate is a lovely fruit basket with a touch of toast that is balanced by the acidity.

DUMAYNE: Focused citrus pith aromatics. Good balance. The slight RS helps with the texture and pops the finish nicely. Good solid fruit core with great juicy acidity. Very solid wine.

LEIER: Bright aromas of fresh orchard fruit and integrated toasty oak on the nose. Some flinty notes on the palate and citrus fruits with a round, smooth mouthfeel. Nicely balanced with good acid, leaving a clean finish.

MEYER: I really enjoy the crisp mineral freshness on this wine. It reminds me of Gravenstein apples. Citrus notes were present. It was bright and lively, the zippiest of the three with a really clean finish.

MCCONNELL: This was the brightest of the flight. There was some wet granite and stone fruit with some melon on the end. It was well put together and really clean.

KLEIN: I agree that it is nice and clean with a potpourri, dry flower. I thought it had quite a bit of oak. It is fresh and sweet with a mineral freshness.

VOIT: It is slightly reductive with a sweet corn silk character. It is fairly herbal on the nose with peppermint and tarragon. There is some citrus and pear on the palate. It is very clean, not lees- or oak-driven at all. It is dry and bright with lime, mandarin orange and green pear.

HOUSEMAN: I get reduction. There is lime zest, buttered corn, buttered toast and hot eraser. It is crisp and bright, but with some phenolics that make it a bit short with some bitterness on the finish. It has really good acid, is very tight, but there is a tiny bit of apricot, hinting at a warm growing season.

HUBATCH: There is an almost margarita character here: a lime zest, saltiness and tequila accent. There is some lemon zest and a lot of citrus, but not a lot of fruit. It is zippy on the palate and a little astringent from phenolics. I got some clove and a bit of stone fruit. It has great acidity but is a little clamped and short on the finish.



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PINOT BLANC

SANDHILL WINES

Sandhill Pinot Blanc 2017

Sandy Leier is a native of the Okanagan and grew up playing in family orchards, developing an affinity for agriculture. She received a degree in chemistry from **UBC Okanagan College**, which led to a research job. She became interested in the wine business and applied for a position at **Andrew Peller Limited** in 2006, working as a winemaker for **Calona Vineyards** and later **Wayne Gretzky's** Okanagan wines. She was named winemaker of Sandhill Wines in 2017.



“We want to maintain acidity and fruit flavor, so we target 22° Brix. We watch Brix and total acidity and look for the seeds to harden. Grapes start with a sour, green pithy taste. As that flows into the apple and the straw realm, we pick.

“Grapes come to the winery and receive 50 ppm SO₂ in the fruit bins. If necessary, the grapes pass through a chiller on the way to the press. They are pressed after we have added some enzyme. We run a two-and-a-half hour press cycle and separate the free run juice from the press portion. The juice is settled for two days at 45° F. We clean rack off the lees but add lees back until we hit approximately 180 NTUs. We add up to 1.5 g/L of tartaric to the juice before yeasting. **Anchor VIN 13** yeast is added to bolster the fruit and focus of the wine, and we use **Dynastart** in the yeast culture. Once fermentation has started, we will add Thiazote pH and **Fermaid K** if needed and then feed again at one-third Brix depletion.

“We rack 30 percent of the juice to new and second-use American oak barrels. We use American barrels to differentiate from our Chardonnay, which is in French oak. The American oak gives us some spice and texture. Fermentation in barrels reaches 65° F. The main portion of Pinot Blanc ferments in stainless steel between 58° F and 60° F. We stir the lees in both tank and barrel weekly for three months, rack the wine and then continue stirring weekly for another three months. We rack one last time to blend before bottling.

“The wine is cold-stabilized by chilling in tank after seeding with cream of tartar. It is heat-stabilized, using a minimal addition of bentonite. The wine gets cross-flow-filtered to 0.2 microns just before bottling. We seal the wine with screw cap to help retain fruit character and age the wine approximately 30 days before release.”

ACCORDING TO LEIER:

“We always strive to make wines that are balanced and focused that showcase varietal characteristics. Our Pinot Blanc exhibits apple, pear and toasted oak aromas and flavors. We want a wine with intensity that has body in the mid-palate with balanced acidity for a clean, lingering finish.

“The geology at Sandhill is glacial, which means very deep sand with some coarser sandy loam. The vineyard grows at an elevation of 1,200 feet. Vines are planted in 4 feet by 8 feet spacings. Everything is Clone 54, half of which is own-rooted; the other half is on SO4 rootstock. The vineyards are irrigated and farmed traditionally. We pull leaves on the shade side to improve air flow but do very little on the sun side to prevent burning of the grapes. Conditions tend to be hot and dry, which give the vines enough stress, so we drop fruit to our target yield of 3 to 3.5 tons per acre.



TASTING NOTES

LEIER: Vanilla and baked apple, toasty oak and pear on the nose. Flavors of golden apple, melon, toast and straw. Textured, but delicate and refreshing with citrus, spice and pear on the finish.

DUMAYNE: Nice toasty notes. It could use a touch more integration, but there's an appealing mandarin, orange pith and marmalade aroma. Silky texture. A softer style. The oak is a good framing of warmer fruit. Much better integrated on the palate. Excellent glycerol notes. Very oily.

PIERSON: There is fresh orchard fruit with baked apple and light toasty caramel on the nose. The palate has that baked apple, light citrus, stone and caramel, along with a creamy texture.

HUBATCH: It has some grassy, straw, Sauvignon Blanc-like character. It is coupled with some interesting sweetness of vanilla and sarsaparilla and citrus. On the palate, I got a lot of shortbread and pastry qualities. It was sweet and very ripe with melon flavors. The finish was short and truncated.

HOUSEMAN: There is reduction. There is lime zest with good acidity, but it is very phenolic. It is very ripe, oily and slightly hot. It has apricot and stone fruit flavors, but this ripeness tightens the wine, shortens the finish and gives more phenolics.

VOIT: I agree, especially about the phenolic aspect and riper profile. There is a touch of oxidation or ripe fruit of peach and apricot. It is intense on the palate, but the phenolics on the finish stick out.

MCCONNELL: On the nose I get almonds with cinnamon overtones. There seems to be quite a bit of malolactic, giving the wine a butterscotch character. It seems more like a Chardonnay than a Pinot Blanc.

KLEIN: I see it differently. It has fresh citrus, lemon peel with bitter orange and an edgy acidity, giving good length on the palate. It is very dry.

MEYER: I got almond and honey character and ripe apple. It has a spicy, nutmeg character. There is a toasted bread note. It is soft on the palate. It is a more heavy-handed style.



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VARIETAL FOCUS:

PINOT BLANC

OKANAGAN CRUSHPAD

Narrative Pinot Blanc 2017

Matt Dumayne was born and raised in Auckland, New Zealand. He took wine courses in Hawke's Bay and worked for eight years under the guidance of **Grant Taylor**. For 10 years he worked at various wineries in Oregon and California. He moved to the Okanagan Valley in 2011 and joined Okanagan Crush Pad Winery in 2012. Currently, he is head winemaker, as well as consulting for other wineries.



“Since we want to retain acidity, we watch pH and total acidity but also focus on flavor development. We wait for the green apple flavors to turn grapefruit/citrus, moving toward tropical. Grapes are partially green with others golden at harvest. Grapes are hand-picked, whole-cluster sorted and whole-cluster pressed. We add 10 ppm SO₂ and use a long, slow press cycle. Juice is settled for a day at 60° F. We use no hard chilling so as not to kill native yeasts. We rack to **Nico Velo** concrete tanks and stainless, where wine ferments between 65° F and 72° F. We use higher temperatures because we want to build glycerol. We only add nutrients if YAN is low (which is rare) or if H₂S is present. We do not stir lees, but the wine sits on gross lees for the majority of its life.

“We rack a few weeks prior to bottling but do no cold or heat stabilization. Wine is filtered through **MicroFlex** to one micron. Coming from New Zealand, I am most comfortable using screw cap closures. We like to bottle-age the wine for one year but will release sooner if market demands dictate that.”

ACCORDING TO DUMAYNE:

“We want to produce a wine that is fresh and lively, true to the varietal and, most importantly, to the Okanagan region. Grapes come from a 32-year-old vineyard and produce a wine that is mineral-driven with great texture. Texture is our main focus, and we ferment in concrete to enhance that texture and the minerality of the wine. We don't want any external flavor influences, such as oak, acidification or chaptalization.

“Our vineyard consists of glacial till over sandy loam at a 1,300-foot elevation. Vines are planted in 4 foot by 4 foot spacings on SO4 rootstock but with 32-year-old vines. We aren't certain which clones were used. The vines are irrigated and farmed organically, but not certified. We drop fruit to two clusters per shoot, leaf-pull post *veraison*, and fruit drop to hit target yields of 2.5 to 3 tons per acre. We use infrequent deep-water cycles to encourage root growth.



TASTING NOTES

DUMAYNE: Grapefruit, apple and citrus notes. Slightly lifted Creamsicle. Lush texture with good length, some oxidative notes are starting to show, but the acidity is tart and focused.

LEIER: Bright citrus and fresh pear aromas with subtle notes of toast and flint. The palate is round with beautiful minerality and smooth texture. The flinty character comes through on the palate with spiced pear, lemon and a long finish.

PIERSON: It has a very bright nose with citrus and a wild floral component. In the mouth the flavors are restrained with citrus, creamy lees and some mineral flavors.

KLEIN: It is nutty and tart with a slight herbaceousness. I thought it might have been barrel-fermented.

MEYER: I get a nutty, toastiness, along with a cut hay character. There is some ripe pear and a hint of kiwi. Definitely some oak in there somewhere. It is medium-bodied with a fairly dry finish and good acidity.

MCCONNELL: I get a kind of metallic taste and a small amount of malolactic character. It has a lot of acid that seems to have been added. I also get a roasted almond taste.

HOUSEMAN: There is less stone fruit than the Oregon wines. Seems off-dry. I like the acidity and length, but it has more bitterness than it should.

HUBATCH: It is reductive and ripe. Very ripe, intense aromatics and flavors, again of shortbread and lemon curd. It seems over-the-top, but with good acidity. It is astringent on the back palate. It has citrus and acid, but not a lot of fruit.

VOIT: Ditto reduction and lean profile aromatically. There is nice focused acidity, but the wine is very tight and fairly phenolic.



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VARIETAL FOCUS:

PINOT BLANC

MENDOCINO COUNTY

Thirty years ago, little Pinot Blanc was grown in California, just 2,500 acres. Since then, things have gotten much worse: Currently, only 425 acres are remain throughout the state, and Mendocino County has just 25 total acres of Pinot Blanc.



GIRASOLE VINEYARDS

Barra Girasole of Mendocino Redwood Valley Vineyards

RIVINO

Mendocino

Winery	GIRASOLE VINEYARDS	RIVINO WINERY	NAVARRO VINEYARDS
Wine	2018 Girasole Vineyards Pinot Blanc	2017 RIVINO Estate Pinot Blanc	2018 Pinot Blanc
Winemaker	Randy Meyer	Jason McConnell	Jim Klein
Style Goals	Semi-dry with clean, crisp flavors of apple, melon and citrus. No oak influence with good mouthfeel. A balanced wine that is not too sweet and not too dry.	Light and crisp with naturally high acid and low alcohol. Citrus and stone fruit with a clean finish.	Tropical fruit with peach. Dry with mineral elements, blended with Chardonnay for length and weight.
AVA	Mendocino County	Mendocino County	Mendocino
Vineyard	Redwood Valley Vineyards	Rivino Estate Vineyard	Rivino Vineyard and Navarro Home Ranch
Vineyard Data			
Predominant Geology (soil type)	Pinole, redvine soil	Alluvial river bottom	70% Russian loam, 30% Boontling loam
Elevation	825 feet	600 feet	560/260 feet
Vine Spacing	6 feet x 10 feet	7 feet x 8 feet	5 x 8 feet and 3 x 8 feet
Rootstock	St. George	3309	SO4
Clones	Old vines unknown from Wente; in 2015 clone 54 or 55	59	ENTAV-INRA 54, FPS 6
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Irrigated	Irrigated	Irrigated
Farming (organic, Biodynamic, traditional)	California Certified Organic (CCOF) and vegan friendly	Traditional	Traditional at Rivino, sustainable at Navarro
Production	4 tons per acre	6.5 tons per acre	6 tons per acre at Rivino; 1.5 tons per acre at Navarro
When to Pick	TA, pH, Brix, color and taste; Look for viscous pulp, ease of berry removal from pedicel	Brix and taste; looking for a split of harder greener clusters and softer yellow clusters to give a nice balance; usually around 21° Brix	Target Brix for lower alcohol; concentrate on flavor; watch fruit condition
Vineyard Practices	Crown-suckering, shoot-thin and shoot-position; pull leaves, vertical trellis, deficit irrigation; cover crops cultivated with hoe plow; pomace cooked and turned back to vineyards	Pull leaves on morning sun side and try to keep deer away	Pull leaves on morning side, cane-cut and first leaf-pull mechanically; Home Ranch pull leaves
Winemaking Data			
Sort	Field-sorted	None	No
SO₂	20 ppm at crusher, 30 ppm post-primary fermentation	30 ppm	None at crush, 50 ppm after fermentation
Crush, Destem, Press	Destem straight to press	Whole cluster press	Crushed, destemmed and pressed immediately
Settling	48 hours at 50° F then add 2 lbs. bentonite after racking off lees	3 to 5 days at 40° F	48 hours at 42° F
Yeast	Maurivin AWRI 350	Elixir	QA23
Nutrients	Fermaid 2133 organic	If needed	Argilact (bentonite casein) pre-fermentation, DAP and FermK at 20 percent fermentation
Acid Addition	3 g/L	None	Rivino add 1.5 g/L to 6.6 g/L and 3.3 pH; Home fruit no addition
Fermentation Temperature	60° F to 62° F	Start 55° F, drop to 40° F then raise slowly back to 55° F	52° F to 55° F
Fermentation Manipulation	Laffort Fresharom to lower SO ₂ usage	Slow and cold	None
Tank Types	Stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
Barrel Fermentation	None	None	Moved to neutral puncheons on light lees post-fermentation
Barrels Used	None	None	500 L Tonnellerie Billon puncheons, 4 to 10 years
Stir Lees	No	No	Twice a month
Racking	Once post-primary to get off heavy lees	After primary fermentation	Off light lees and to bottle
Cold Stability	Add KHT and chill to 31° F	28° F for 6 weeks or as needed	10 to 14 days at 32° F
Heat Stability	Bentonite 3 lbs. per 1,000 gallons	Bentonite at juice stage	Bentonite
Filtration	Sterile-filtered	Plate and frame to sterile	DE, .45 micron at bottling
Closure	Screw cap	Engineered cork	Micro-agglomerated cork
Bottle Age Before Release	2 weeks	Few months to get through bottle shock	6 weeks

VARIETAL FOCUS:
**PINOT
 BLANC**
 DATA SHEET

Oregon

Winery	ANNE AMIE VINEYARDS	HARPER VOIT WINES	HELIOTERRA WINES
Wine	2016 Twelve Oaks Estate Pinot Blanc	2018 Harper Voit Pinot Blanc Surlie	2017 Willamette Valley Pinot Blanc
Winemaker	Thomas Houseman	Drew Voit	Anne Hubatch
Style Goals	Focus on sur lie rather than primary fruit. Inspiration was Muscadet and Chablis. It has mid-palate weight, along with bright acidity. Completely dry but the sur lie coupled with ML makes it feel rich and textured.	Bone dry with focused acidity and strong mineral, briny character. Nine months lees aging to round out texture and add richness and autolytic character without ML.	Like acidity and aromatics backed by texture and complexity. Trying for a lively wine with texture on the palate and enough acidity for refreshing finish.
AVA	Yamhill-Carlton District, Chehalem Mountains	McMinnville/Willamette	McMinnville Hills and Ribbon Ridge
Vineyard	Twelve Oaks Estate Vineyard	Meredith Mitchell Vineyard	Yamhill Valley Vineyards/Redman Vineyard
Vineyard Data			
Predominant Geology (soil type)	Laurelwood	Broken basalt and marine sediments	Sedimentary clays w/basalt intrusions/Willakenzie sedimentary soils
Elevation	650 feet	450 feet	500 feet
Vine Spacing	8 feet x 1 meter	9 feet x 5 feet	Varies
Rootstock	101-14, 3309	101-14	Own-rooted/3309
Clones	Clone 7	Colmar	Colmar
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Dry-farmed	Dry-farmed	Dry-farmed
Farming (organic, Biodynamic, traditional)	LIVE certified	Biodynamic	LIVE certified, Salmon Safe
Production	3.5 tons per acre	2.25 tons per acre	2 to 3.5 tons per acre
When to Pick	When flavors change from Granny Smith apple to Golden Delicious; Skin starts speckling, and flesh separates from seeds; More about flavor than chemistry	Look for flavor development and wait for acidity to drop; Brix is always low	Pick predominantly on flavor while targeting a pH of 3.1
Vineyard Practices	Pull leaves morning side to encourage airflow and expose to sunlight; Hedge higher to fill vine space; No clusters touching; Cultivate every other row, Turning in green manure cover crop	Minimal leaf-pulling and fruit-dropping	Some fruit drop to maintain flavor and ripening; Leaves pulled twice during growing season
Winemaking Data			
Sort	In field and on incline conveyor to press	None	Sort in vineyard
SO₂	No SO ₂ until post-fermentation	None at pressing, only after primary fermentation	None at pressing, added post-primary fermentation
Crush, Destem, Press	Whole cluster press, brown out the juice	Whole cluster press	Whole cluster press
Settling	At least 48 hours at 38° F	24 hours at 45° F	24 to 48 hours at 40° F
Yeast	VL alternating between 1, 2 and 3	Cross Evolution	Five different yeasts
Nutrients	Bump to 300 YAN with DAP, Superfood and MicroEssential Trace	MicroEssentials Powder and Trace at 2° to 3° Brix	Micro nutrient and DAP, sometimes Optiwhite
Acid Addition	None	None	None
Fermentation Temperature	50° F	High 50° Fs to mid-60° Fs	55° F to 70° F, depending on vessel
Fermentation Manipulation	Air, if necessary	None	None
Tank Types	Barrels and stainless steel	75 percent 500 L puncheons; 25 percent 228 L barrels	Stainless tanks, stainless barrel, oak barrels
Barrel Fermentation	Yes	Yes	About 30 percent
Barrels Used	Neutral 5 to 10 years old	4 to 9 years old	5 to 10 years
Stir Lees	Yes, bi-monthly	No	Every 2 weeks
Racking	Stays on gross lees until cuvée is assembled	Rack right before bottling	Only at blending
Cold Stability	Add cream of tartar and chill	K ₂ CO ₃ seeding and chill	Chill in tank or Celestab
Heat Stability	Bentonite	Bentonite during fermentation and prior to bottling if necessary	Bentonite
Filtration	Sterile-filtered	Cross-flow- and sterile-filtered	Cross-flow-filtered
Closure	Screw cap with 302 liner	Diam cork	Cork
Bottle Age Before Release	1 year	1 to 2 months	6 months

Okanagan Valley

Winery	OKANAGAN CRUSH PAD	ST. HUBERTUS & OAK BAY WINERY	SANDHILL WINES
Wine	Narrative Pinot Blanc 2017	2017 St. Hubertus Pinot Blanc	Sandhill Pinot Blanc 2017
Winemaker	Matt Dumayne	Andy Gerbert	Sandy Leier
Style Goals	Fresh and lively. Mineral-driven with no oak, unnecessary manipulation, acidification or chapitalization. Textural-driven wine is the main focus.	A clean, fresh fruit-driven wine with apple, lemon and peach aromas. A juicy palate with ripe fruit flavors until acidity reins it back into a long finish.	Focus on varietal character and balance. Want a wine with intensity that has body in the mid-palate with balanced acidity for a clean lingering finish.
AVA	N/A	Okanagan Valley/S. Kelwona Slopes	Okanagan Valley
Vineyard	Black Dog Vineyard	64% St. Hubertus, 36% Oak Bay, (both estate vineyards)	Sandhill Estate Vineyard
Vineyard Data			
Predominant Geology (soil type)	Glacial till over sandy loam	Sand-based with gravel, becoming more clay-based approaching the lake	Deep sand with coarser sandy loam
Elevation	1,300 feet	1,000 to 1,300 feet	1,200 feet
Vine Spacing	4 feet x 4 feet	3 feet x 8 feet and 8 feet x 5 feet	4 feet x 8 feet
Rootstock	SO4	SO4	Half own-rooted, half SO4
Clones	Unknown (30-year-old-vines)	Unknown	Clone 54
Irrigation or Dry-farmed	Irrigated	Irrigated	Irrigated
Farming (organic, Biodynamic, traditional)	Farmed organically (not certified)	Organic	Traditional
Production	2.5 to 3 tons per acre	5 tons per acre	3.3 to 3.5 tons per acre
When to Pick	Flavor development most important; Brix less important than acidity and pH	Pick primarily based on flavor, looking for bright citrus fruit, along with tropical fruit flavors; Look for brown seeds and pick before snow	Look for minimum 22° Brix; Sample Brix and TA; Taste for flavor development
Vineyard Practices	Fruit dropped to two clusters per shoot; leaves thinned at 60 percent veraison	Remove leaves from the north side; Green drop in August or September; Use irrigation to keep vines healthy	Leaf removal; drop fruit to get target yield
Winemaking Data			
Sort	Cluster-sorted	Machine-harvested	None
SO₂	10 ppm at press; maintain 20 ppm post-fermentation	30 ppm in juice pan	50 ppm in fruit bins
Crush, Destem, Press	Whole cluster press	Destemmed and lightly crushed to press; free run separated from press fraction	Destemmed then pressed; free run separated from hard press
Settling	One day at 60° F	48 hours at 57° F	2 days at 45° F
Yeast	Native	EC1118	Anchor VIN 13
Nutrients	Dependent on YAN and H ₂ S detection	Fermaid K&O at one-third and two-thirds of ferment	50g/hL FermaidK and 25 g/hL Thiazote pH at one-third ferment
Acid Addition	None	None	1.5 g/L tartaric to juice before yeasting
Fermentation Temperature	65° F to 72° F	70° F	58° F to 60° F
Fermentation Manipulation	None	N/A	None
Tank Types	Nico Velo concrete tanks and stainless steel	Stainless steel	Stainless steel
Barrel Fermentation	No	1 barrel	30 percent barrel-fermented
Barrels Used	N/A	New	New and second-use American oak
Stir Lees	No	No	Weekly for 3 months
Racking	Wine sits on gross lees until it is racked for bottling	Rack off lees post-ferment, clear rack in December and racked to bottle	Rack after stirring lees for 3 months then again at blending
Cold Stability	No	Chill in tank	Chill and seed with cream of tartar
Heat Stability	No	Bentonite at 3lbs. per 1,000 gallons	Bentonite
Filtration	MicroFlex	Cross-flow- and sterile-filtered	Cross-flow-filtered
Closure	Screw cap	Screw cap	Screw cap
Bottle Age Before Release	One year; sooner if market demands	6 months	1 month

PINOT BLANC

RIVINO

2017 RIVINO Estate Pinot Blanc

Jason McConnell is a mechanical engineer from Canada, who was working in construction management when he was transferred to Northern California. He met his wife, **Suzanne Jahnke-McConnell** (also Canadian), whose father owned the **Schrader Ranch Vineyard** just south of Ukiah. They dabbled with homemade wines from the vineyard and in 2008 took the plunge with RIVINO Winery. RIVINO is 100 percent estate-vinted and -bottled. The estate has just over 200 acres planted to vines.



ACCORDING TO MCCONNELL:

“We would like our Pinot Blanc to be light and crisp with naturally high acid and low alcohol. We emphasize pear, citrus and stone fruit character with some chalky minerality. We want our wine to be bright and refreshing with a lingering acid finish. This Pinot Blanc is designed to be great with or without food.

“This block of Pinot Blanc grows on fertile alluvial river bottom soil that has lots of clay loam, so it retains moisture very well. It sits at 600 feet in elevation. The vines are planted 7 feet by 8 feet on 3309 rootstocks with Clone 59 exclusively. The vineyard is

drip-irrigated and traditionally farmed. The vines are vigorous and can handle high crop loads of grapes, usually averaging 6.5 tons per acre. We pull leaves on the morning sun side, cane-prune and do the first leaf-pull mechanically. We get large, tight clusters that tend to ripen evenly, especially because we harvest at lower sugars. We irrigate right up to harvest to keep the leaves green and the canopy healthy. We do not want any yellowing in our leaves.

“We determine when to pick based on Brix and taste. We will have a split of harder green clusters and others that are softer and golden. Grapes usually come in around 21° Brix. We find this mix gives the wine a nice balance; and while we like to say we pick based on taste and science, the biggest factor is deer. We have a lot of deer, and Pinot Blanc is their favorite grape. When they start eating the grapes, **Jim Klein** tells us to pick his grapes for the **Navarro Vineyard**. When Jim picks, we all pick. It has worked great up to this point, so why change?

“Grapes are machine-picked at night and are not sorted. We add 30 ppm SO₂ and go directly to the press while still cold. We add bentonite and settle the juice for three to five days at 35° F. We rack clear post-settling to stainless tanks and add **Elixir** yeast. We add no acid and only add nutrients if we detect H₂S in the fermentation. We like to ferment slow and cold. Typically, we start fermentation at 50° F then lower it to the mid-40s. When we reach 3° to 4° Brix, we’ll let the temperature climb slowly to 55° F. At 0.4 residual sugar, we add SO₂ and stop fermentation. Our Pinot Blanc fermentations usually take two months to finish.

“We use no oak barrels for this wine. We rack when primary fermentation has stopped. We cold-stabilize by chilling tanks down to 28° F for six weeks, or as needed. Bentonite at the juice stage takes care of heat stability. Wine is plate- and frame-filtered and then sterile-filtered. We bottle with some natural CO₂, which we think brightens the wine and keeps it lively. We use engineered corks and age the wine a few months to allow it to get past bottle shock.”





RIVINO

Pinot Blanc tasting at RIVINO (left to right)

Jason McConnell, RIVINO; Jim Klein, Navarro Vineyards; Lance Cutler, WBM; Randy Meyer, Girasole Vineyards

TASTING NOTES

MCCONNELL: Aromatically, it has a bit of citrus and nectarine without a lot of spicy notes. What I enjoy about Pinot Blanc is that I don't get a whole multitude of flavors out of it. It is more one-dimensional. It has high acid and some white peach. It is clean, which I enjoy. No other varieties are blended in. It's clean and pleasant to drink.

KLEIN: I get green apple and some distinct minerality. There is a briny character. It is a palate-cleansing wine, perfect for summer. It doesn't have layers of flavor. It is simply a briny, palate-cleansing, straight-forward wine.

MEYER: I enjoy that chalky character. I get green pear and a hint of lemon-lime citrus. I like the sugar/acid balance. I think the hint of RS helps the drinkability. The color is nice and clean and bright. It is a light, crisp style without the crazy aromatics of a Sauvignon Blanc, for example. I like the balance.

DUMAYNE: Nice plush stone fruit. Good tropical notes. Quite a ripe style with ripe bananas. The entry is sweet, texture is lush, and the RS dominates a little. Phenolic structure is sound.

PIERSON: I get citrus, pith, floral, stone, flint and honey on the nose. In the mouth there is fresh citrus, along with a subtle sweetness.

LEIER: Pale lemon color. Bright citrus notes on the nose with hints of honey and mandarin. Some minerality on the palate, medium intensity, body and acidity. Smooth, even palate with toasty, yeasty notes. Finishes light but not dry.

HOUSEMAN: Across the board, there are more aromatics in this flight than the other two, almost to the point where it comes off as different fruit. This has lifted candied fruit, like fruit cocktail. Very nice nose with some crushed shell as well. Good acidity. It is crisp and round and comes off as off-dry. The palate is like fruit salad, and the fruit seems ripe.

HUBATCH: This is the most savory of the three in this flight with a crushed stone and seashell brininess. There is a vegetal kelp character that morphs into a bit of funk. I got that cherry and fruit salad. On the palate, I love the texture of this wine. I wish it had more acidity. It has stone fruit, muskmelon and cantaloupe flavors.

VOIT: It is very fruity and floral with a mixture of greenness. There is a heavy ripe melon character. The stone fruit flavors are apricot-driven on the palate. It is distinctly off-dry but nicely balanced.

PINOT BLANC

GIRASOLE VINEYARDS

2018 Girasole Pinot Blanc

Randy Meyer is responsible for making wine from more than 9,000 tons of grapes annually at **Barra Redwood Valley Cellars**. A graduate of **UC Davis** with a degree in fermentation science, he worked at **Korbel Champagne Cellars** for 23 years. He served as senior winemaker with **Draxton Wines** for eight years. In June 2019, Meyer started as director of winemaking and operations for **BARRA of Mendocino/Girasole Vineyards**, as well as the Barra Redwood Valley Cellars' custom crush facility.



ACCORDING TO MEYER:

“Our goal for Girasole is to produce a fresh, crisp, brightly balanced version of Pinot Blanc at a reasonable price point. We get flavors of apple, melon and citrus by picking a bit riper. There is no oak influence, and we strive for good mouthfeel and balance—a wine that is neither too sweet nor too dry and finishes with a crisp, dry finish.

“Girasole comes from a vineyard that has Pinole and Redvine soil. It sits at an elevation of 824 feet. Rows are planted using 6 foot by 10 foot spacing; all vines are on St. George rootstock. The old vines are unknown clones but believed to be the very aromatic Melon Clone (which is not a true Pinot Blanc). The 8 acres planted in 2015 use Clone 54 or 55. The vineyard is irrigated and certified by the **California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)**.

“There is a tremendous amount of hand work done on the vines, including crown-suckering, shoot-thinning, shoot-positioning, fruit-dropping and leaf-pulling. Vines are vertically trellised. Cover crops are planted in the fall,

and cultivation is performed with a hoe plow. No pesticides, herbicides or non-organic fertilizers are used in the vineyard. Pomace is turned to compost and returned to the vineyards. We irrigate to keep the vines healthy and green, cut canes late to facilitate picking and harvest yields about 4 tons per acre.

“We pick based on the sugar balance but watch TA, pH and Brix progression during ripening. We look for a viscous pulp and the ease of berry removal from pedicel. We prefer a riper style and wait for flavors to develop, knowing full well that we will need to make acid additions, especially to the Melon Clone grapes.

“Grapes are hand-picked and field-sorted. We destem straight to the press without crushing but add 20 ppm SO₂. Juice is cold-settled for 48 hours at 50° F and then racked. Bentonite is added at 2 pounds per 1,000 gallons after racking. Low solids are very important because we can't afford problems with H₂S due to being organic. We make our acid additions as much as 3 grams per liter if necessary. We use **Maurivin** AWRI 350 yeast for its high ester character. Fermaid 2133 organic nutrient is added at 20° Brix. We use **Laffort** Fresharom to help lower our SO₂ usage. Wine ferments at 60° F to 62° F. These higher temperatures give us better mouthfeel.

“Wine is fermented in stainless steel tanks. No oak is used in the process. Post primary fermentation, the wine is racked off heavy lees.



GIRASOLE VINEYARDS

We shoot for a residual sugar in the range of 2 to 3 grams per liter. Cold stability is achieved by chilling the wine with an addition of KHT. Heat stability is achieved using more bentonite. Wine is cross-flow- and sterile-filtered. Bottles are sealed by screw cap and aged for two weeks before release.”

TASTING NOTES

MEYER: There is a considerable amount of stone fruit with that minerality, which defines Pinot Blanc. It has unripe apricot, some pear notes and almond husk. There is not a lot of stone fruit or tropical character, but there is some pear. The acidity is firm, and the RS adds mouthfeel and weight.

MCCONNELL: I get more orange and lemon on this. This has less acid than the Navarro, and that ends the finish more quickly. There is some green pear and some stone fruit. It has higher alcohol. It is clean and refreshing.

KLEIN: It is a riper style. We’ve moved into dry pear and orange zest. It is not cloying, but there is a definite sweetness that helps the wine finish with a punchy juiciness rather than crisp acidity.

DUMAYNE: High SO₂ on the nose. A bit lactic and cheesy. The length is great, and the texture is superb. Some deeper brown apple characters but without oxidative notes. Juicy and mouthwatering with great balance.

PIERSON: Bright citrus, mostly lime with apple. Nice acidity. Lovely citrus on the palate with a fresh, bright, acid finish.

LEIER: Pale lemon color. Sweet ripe stone fruit aromas with fresh peach, sweet lemon, pear and a hint of fresh herbs. Nice intensity, medium body. Slight astringency on the finish with nectarine lingering on the palate.

VOIT: Extremely aromatic and terpene-driven. I would be shocked if this was 100 percent Pinot Blanc. It is citrusy and grapefruity on the palate, but I can taste those terpene characters through on the palate. I think there is Muscat or Gewürztraminer in here. It is bright and acidic, but the fruit is so generous that it presents as sweet, even if the wine is not.

HOUSEMAN: I wrote Muscat twice. It has that Juicy Fruit gum thing and fruit cocktail. It tastes like there is some Muscat in here, and it is phenolic as well. It is fruit-forward. It reminds me of a white Alsace blend. It’s pretty, and I like it. It has lots of melon with nice acidity, very generous fruit and a tiny bit of heat.

HUBATCH: It is nicely done, but it is more an aromatic white wine than Pinot Blanc. I enjoyed the wine. It was fresh and clean with pear, peach, white floral and a little apricot. Lots of aromatics that popped. Very clean on the palate with white peach, apricot, jasmine and great citrus. It is well-balanced, a little off-dry, very clean and focused.



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NAVARRO VINEYARDS

2018 Pinot Blanc

Jim Klein views himself as a winegrower more than a winemaker. After graduating from UC Davis, he made wine in the Santa Ynez Valley, New Zealand, Napa Valley and the Golan Heights in Israel. He joined Navarro Vineyards in 1992 and won the title of Winemaker of the Year from the **San Francisco Chronicle** in 2002. He chose to live on the ridgeline above the Anderson Valley to get a feel for how the weather affects the grapes every day of the year. He continuously looks for new varieties, blends and techniques and has consistently produced well-made, delicious wines at Navarro for close to 30 years.



ACCORDING TO KLEIN:

“With this Pinot Blanc I am looking for minerality without overt fruit, so I want the wine to be dry with mineral elements. The variety gives some tropical fruit, peach and pear character. We harvest cool, trying to avoid bitter flavors from heat. We blend in a bit of Chardonnay for length and weight on the palate.

“These grapes come from two different vineyards. Rivino Vineyards accounts for 71.4 percent, and 21.4 percent comes from a newly planted section on the **Navarro Home Ranch**. We have also added 7.1 percent Chardonnay. The Rivino property is Russian loam, sitting at 560 feet elevation. Vine spacing is 7 feet by 8 feet on 3309 rootstock using clone 59. The Navarro Home Ranch has Boontling loam, sits at 260 feet and is planted in 5 foot by 8 foot and 3 foot by 8 foot spacings. Clones are ENTAV-INRA 54 and FPS 6, and both are planted on SO4 rootstock. Both vineyards are irrigated. Rivino is farmed traditionally, while Navarro is farmed sustainably. At Rivino they pull leaves on the morning sun side, cane-cut and do the first leaf-pull mechanically. At the Home Ranch we pulled leaves. Production at Rivino was around 6 tons per acre. At the Home Ranch, this first harvest came in at 1.5 tons per acre.

“When determining the time to pick, I target Brix for lower alcohol, concentrate on flavor and watch fruit condition. I look for the absence of green flavors. I want to see some peach stone fruit character and even some tropical mango character. At Rivino, the deer know when the grapes are ready, and we need to harvest before they do.

“Grapes at Rivino are machine-harvested at night to gondolas. The grapes are cold, which is important. We receive the grapes and go immediately to press. We add no SO₂ and allow the juice to brown. We settle for 48 to 72 hours at 42° F with Argilact (bentonite casein). We rack to a stainless steel tank, then lees-filter the lees and add them back into the mix. We adjust the acid with 1.5 g/L to 6.6 g/L and 3.3 pH. We add DAP and FermK



at 20 percent fermented. We inoculate with QA23 because it ferments cold and clean and *always* finishes. Fermentation temperatures were kept between 52 and 55° F. After fermentation, the wine is moved on light lees to 500 L **Tonnellerie Billon** puncheons that are four to 10 years old. The wine rests for four months with the lees being stirred twice a month. The Home Ranch fruit was whole-cluster pressed to oak ovals, where it fermented in the low 50s for 30 days. Then we added SO₂ and chilled the wine.

“We blend the lots in January. I added about 7 percent Chardonnay (Selection 76 on SO4, no

ML, neutral barrels) for mid-palate weight and length. The wine was chilled to 32° F for 10 to 14 days to achieve cold stability, and we used bentonite for heat stability. We DE-filtered and went through .45-micron filters to bottle. We used micro-agglomerate corks (**Ganau UNIQ**), and the wine was bottled for six weeks before release.”

TASTING NOTES

KLEIN: There is stone fruit and some minerality, along with length, probably from the Chardonnay. There is even a touch of Meyer lemon. I get a briny, bright, palate-cleansing feature that I find desirable. It hangs in on the finish with a bit of fresh fig.

MEYER: This beautifully displays the delicacy of Pinot Blanc. It has a lightness and refreshing nature. There is strong stone fruit, but it is balanced and buffered by that firm acidity. The finish is really refreshing. The acid gives length, and there is a wonderful varietal minerality and chalkiness.

MCCONNELL: It has lemon zest up front with good acid along the way. That Chardonnay seems to round it out, where it has a little more mouthfeel and body than the other wines in this flight. My favorite part is when you get to the end: The acid keeps holding on and makes for a mouthwatering experience.

DUMAYNE: High SO₂ on the nose, but nice tropical and pineapple notes underneath. Good concentration and length with fruit that carries nicely onto the palate. The acid balance is great, but there is a touch of astringency.

PIERSON: It is ripe with citrus, tropical, apple and pear. In the mouth there are subtle hints of citrus with orchard apple and pear. I think I pick up some oak influence.

LEIER: Yellow apple and pear on the nose with some citrus notes. The palate is delicate and refreshing with lemon, toast and a hint of vanilla. Fresh, bright acidity with citrus on the finish. Clean and focused wine.

HUBATCH: Bursting with fresh fruit aromas. There is some citrus, a bit of watermelon rind and a hint of barrel toast. It is fresh and clean with some floral character. On the palate, it was balanced and pretty. Very complete wine with terrific acidity and freshness. I get a bit of carbonic acid on the finish and some brininess. It is the driest of the three.

VOIT: Slight honey and floral character on the nose. There is a mixture of sweet herbal and a touch of mushroom. It seems very Alsatian in style. There is lovely citrus and green pear on the palate with slight phenolics. It is extremely balanced with spice tones on the finish. Beautiful wine.

HOUSEMAN: It is bright and powdery in a powdered sugar way. It is floral with a honeysuckle quality. I get a tiny bit of fruit cocktail and ripe pear. I love the acidity. It has well-made phenolics. I get mandarin slices and ambrosia salad. I like the floral character a lot, along with the saline quality. It was the driest of the three, and I really enjoyed this wine.



RIVINO

PINOT BLANC is a versatile grape variety that can be made in a variety of wine styles. All the Oregon winemakers opted to focus on texture while maintaining some fruitiness and balanced acidity. The wines shared a sense of place and style while offering a variety of flavors. The Okanagan wines were more winemaker-centric: individual winemaking choices had direct influence on the finished wines with some wines being fruitier and others more textured. In Mendocino, there was a clear difference between the wines made primarily with true Pinot Blanc and the one produced using the Melon clone.

Based on this varietal focus, winemakers can pretty much do whatever they want with Pinot Blanc. Almost half of the grapes used in this varietal focus were machine-harvested. Wines were fermented in a variety of vessels, including stainless steel, concrete, puncheons, French oak barrels and American oak barrels. Fermentation temperatures ranged from low (45° F) to high (72° F). Some wines settled on lees, others were stirred, and still others were racked clean.

Whatever the place and however the winemakers chose to vinify, the Pinot Blanc wines in this Varietal Focus were perfect for easy drinking. They offered apple, pear and citrus aromas, along with a flinty or smoky backbone. Flavors flowed into stone fruit, more exotic citrus and some tropical flavors. All the wines showed admirable acidity and good length. No one element overpowered another.

In short, there is a subtlety inherent in Pinot Blanc that can be charming. The wines are equally at home on a dinner table with a fine meal or on a blanket at a sandy beach on a summer day. It is hard to imagine food that would not pair well with Pinot Blanc. The wine is adaptable for almost any occasion and available at prices that all should be able to afford. [WBM](#)