


winemaking

Varietal Focus
Pinot Noir
from Hallberg Vineyards

Lance Cutler

Meet the Author: **Lance Cutler** has been a working winemaker in Sonoma Valley for 40 years. He has been a contributing editor for *WineBusiness 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*.



THIS IS THE 25TH VARIETAL FOCUS presented by *WineBusiness Monthly*. The Varietal Focus series was designed by a winemaker for other winemakers. Each story is a huge undertaking, involving multiple wineries and winemakers from different regions. Meticulous detail is given to vineyard and winemaking practices, tastings are held, photos are collected and tasting notes are included. We have worked with primary varieties like Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as less renowned varieties like Tempranillo and Malbec.

Initially, we would select a variety, then pick three regions known for that variety, and invite three wineries from each region to participate in the story. We wanted to know specifics about the vineyards, and we learned about each winemaker's fermentation regimen because we were curious about the key variables. If all the wines were the same variety, which made the biggest difference: the vineyard, the winemaker, or the region?

We found that all the variables were important and that they seemed varietally dependent. Different vineyards within the same region could account for profound differences, especially with Grenache and Syrah. Regional distinctions stood out for varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon and Pinot Noir. Winemaking regimens always had a major effect, but rarely overwhelmed the vineyards or regions.

For this Varietal Focus we decided to change direction. This time we concentrate on a single vineyard, Hallberg Ranch in the Russian River/Green Valley appellation. Seven winemakers made a variety designate from Hallberg Ranch and all of them agreed to participate in this Varietal Focus. They include Keith Hammond from **Emeritus Vineyards**, Ryan Kunde of **DRNK Wines**, Leslie Renaud with **Martin Ray Winery**, Fred Scherrer from **Scherrer Winery**, Theresa Heredia from **Gary Farrell Winery**, Adrian Manspeaker with **Joseph Jewell Winery** and Jon Priest with **Etude Winery**.

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

Hallberg Ranch

KIRK LOKKA EATS DIRT. It's not like he makes a meal of it, but while standing in a soil pit at his Hallberg Vineyards site he will first point to the layer of Goldridge sandy loam topsoil and then to the Sebastopol sandy clay loam lying underneath. "If you taste them," he insists, "you'll see they taste different. That definitely influences the grapes."

Lokka should know. He has been growing grapes in Sonoma County for 44 years. He started at Sonoma-Cutrer in 1981 as a foreman. Quickly promoted to vineyard manager, he then spent 23 years overseeing more than 1,200 acres of estate vineyards. Lokka and Sonoma-Cutrer owner Brice Jones had their eyes on the Hallberg Ranch property for years, and were convinced it would be perfect for Pinot Noir, but Don Hallberg wouldn't sell.

In 1999, Brown Foreman purchased Sonoma-Cutrer. The next day Hallberg showed up to tell Lokka and Jones that he was finally willing to sell. Jones brought in some of the original Sonoma-Cutrer partners, and he and Lokka purchased the 115-acre property.

"Pinot Noirs are sensitive to location," explained Lokka. "The best Pinot Noirs are grown on hills with good drainage in cool areas. Hallberg sits on a ridge straddling the Russian River and Green Valley appellations. The Goldridge loam and the Sebastopol clay loam provide great drainage, and the elevation running between 175 to 280 feet gets wet air flow from the ocean, so Hallberg is cooler than other sites in the area. It was a spectacular piece of property and we thought perfectly suited to growing Pinot Noir."

Jones and Lokka purchased the property in 1999. They spent that year pulling out apple trees. The first 30-acre planting of Pinot Noir was in 2000, followed by a 52-acre planting in 2001 and another 30 acres in 2002. While at Sonoma-Cutrer, Lokka performed loads of rootstock trials. He wasn't looking for overly vigorous rootstock because he was committed to close plantings of one meter by two meters, which would give Lokka 2,023 vines per acre. He decided to go with 101-14 and a bit of Schwartzman in the 5-acre parcel that had low pH.

Back in 1999, clonal selection for Pinot Noir was limited. Lokka acquired 777, 667, 115 and Pommard. Bigger Pinot Noirs were in style those days, so they planted a lot of 777 because its higher tannins yielded bigger wines. Pommard gave texture and 115 contributed floral character. Lokka also had two Burgundy selections he had taken; one from Romanee-Conti called Elite and another from Richebourg called Cruz. He cleaned up both to be sure they had no virus before planting.

Lokka acquired more clones and planted something different each year, like 828 from Archery Summit, 627 and 37 from Rich Kunde and a half-acre of Hyde selection. The 37, Hyde and Cruz were similar, with very small clusters, dense fruit and dark color, but they were shy about production, usually less than 2 tons per acre. Recently, he has added Swan clone, which is intense with tiny clusters, lighter color and less than 1.5 tons to the acre despite ripening late in the season.



Riggs Lokka in a soil pit at Hallberg Ranch

With those first plantings, Lokka used water from their irrigation system because it was almost impossible to start vines in that sandy soil without additional water for the first couple of years. Once established, the vines grew like weeds. In 2008, terrible frost fried everything. The crop was down to 1 ton per acre, but because the crop was so small, the vines took off. Lokka needed to slow down that runaway growth, so he decided not to water them.

In 2009, high temperatures during bloom caused widespread shatter, leaving Lokka with just 1.5 tons per acre. Since vine growth never really slowed down that year, he only irrigated once. After seeing that the vines were not affected by the lack of water in either 2008 or 2009, Lokka decided not to irrigate in 2010. He found that at low Brix, say 22° to 23°, they were achieving all the flavor profiles they wanted with high natural acidity and none of those plummy/raisin flavors. With dry farming they were able to achieve nice solid fruit at 23° Brix—neighboring vineyards couldn't achieve that even at 24° to 25° Brix.

The entire ranch has Goldridge sandy loam, all of which is underlaid with Sebastopol sandy clay loam. The Goldridge soil by itself is not all that fertile, but it drains incredibly well. It varies in depth from one foot to six feet across the property. The Sebastopol clay underneath collects



Kirk Lokka

all the rainfall for the year, so the root system never runs out of water. Nutrients that get flushed through the soil end up captured in that clay, so nutritional levels maintain themselves tremendously. Lokka adds a bit of magnesium and a bit of lime to keep the soil pH up, but that's it for fertilizer. It is well-drained on top and fertile underneath, which is perfect for Pinot Noir, especially when you dry farm.

Lokka loves dry farming for many reasons. "Once the vines have been established in a dry farm regimen, vintage conditions make no real difference. We've been dry farming since 2008. It can be hot and dry, and the fruit will not shrivel. The vines have developed a root system that is so deep, they never run out of water," Lokka said. "On the whole damn place our crop levels have been within 30 tons of estimates for the last seven or eight years. It doesn't matter what is going on, we just don't see much variability at all. There are no disadvantages to dry farming. It saves us money on PG&E and saves water for others by keeping our ground water table up."

Kirk Lokka's son, Riggs, literally grew up at Hallberg Ranch. He worked in the vineyard, got his college degrees, and went into teaching for seven years. In 2020, he returned to Hallberg Ranch as assistant vineyard manager where he introduced several innovative farming techniques.

"We are all about hand labor and putting time and effort into growing premium Pinot Noir. We have a year round vineyard crew, many of whom have been here since we started. When bud break starts, we go through shoot thinning. We pull leaves looking to have dappled light on the clusters. We leave the guard leaves, but tunnel into the center to allow airflow through there. The vines at Hallberg are so healthy that we often need to thin at veraison to keep the crop at three to three and a half tons per acre. Grapes are hand harvested and picked at night, which keeps the grapes cool, the winemakers happy, and the pickers happy," Riggs Lokka said.

The Lokkas utilize dry cow manure from an organic dairy, mix that with their grape pomace and add manure from the sheep they graze on the ranch to create their compost, a process they've utilized for over a decade. The sheep graze out in the vineyard from November until the first week of March.

On 75% of the ranch, the Lokkas till every other row. One of their major issues is gophers and tilling every other row breaks down the tunnels, which are hazards for their workers. The untilled rows create a beneficial habitat for insects. In addition, Hallberg Ranch is farmed sustainably, but they're also taking the next step toward climate adaptation. They want to leave as light a carbon footprint as possible, so this year, they non-tilled 30 acres to sequester more carbon. This allows the carbon to remain encapsulated in the soil instead of being forced out by pressure.

As part of their sustainability plan, they look for ways to make things better. To promote soil health and biodiversity, and as a natural method of pest prevention, they planted two insectaries, 100 manzanita plants, and different oak species to sequester carbon. The insectaries bring in bees, ladybugs and insects that help keep things like mealy bugs (their biggest insect pressure) down to a minimum. Even though grapes are self-pollinating, it appears that since they put the flowers in, the grape clusters pollinate better, and they have not used any insecticide in five years.

Kirk Lokka summed up his time at Hallberg Ranch. "We've been making wine here since 2004. Different locations within the ranch give us different qualities or characteristics from the same clone. For example, the 777 from higher clay content locations is more plum and blue fruits, while the same clone in the sandier locations exhibits more cherry. Even with 110 acres of planted vines, we can go to certain areas and know the character we are going to get. It is nice for our winemakers. There is nothing like working the same land for 25 years."

"Bin To Bottle is a true one-stop shop. The winemaking team has done and seen it all before, and this gives me the confidence to lean on their knowledge, understanding, and expertise with harvest, aging, and bottling logistics. I appreciate that they love small brands and support the requirements of making quality wines in an energetic and garagiste style."

Dan Petroski
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winemaking

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

Emeritus Vineyards

2019 Wesley's Reserve Pinot Noir

Sonoma County native Keith Hammond started making wine at Emeritus in 2007. He has worked with every Emeritus winemaker, although he left in 2016 for some time at Inglenook where he worked with Philippe Bascaules, managing director of Chateau Margaux. He returned to Emeritus in 2017 and worked with winemaker David Lattin until ascending to the winemaker position in 2023.

According to Hammond:

“The grapes for this wine come from one specific block in the center of Hallberg Ranch. There is a gentle slope undulating from the highest point on the ranch to the lowest. This block is located mid-slope between those two points. The block is split between Clone 667 and Clone 115. For this wine I used 90% Clone 667 and 10% Clone 115. The 667 lends a dense, brooding forest floor character along with fruit and structure, while the 115 contributes a lovely floral quality.

“Due in part to our dry farming practices, the grapes at Hallberg Ranch obtain physiological ripeness at lower sugar levels than irrigated vineyards. This allows for a more complex expression of the fruit coupled with lower alcohol and no need for water dilution in the fermenter. To determine when we pick, I focus mostly on Brix and acid, watching whichever is moving faster the most. I also pay close attention to the flavor of the fruit, seed color and skin turgor.

“It is my goal to produce a wine that is distinct with density, structure, and good tannin. I like to highlight the wild, almost purple nature of the 667 fruit profile along with its underbrush, forest floor nature. A small amount of whole cluster brings diversity and prominence to the tannin. I want a high amount of flavor and structure with low to moderate alcohol.

“Grapes are harvested at night into 1/3 ton bins. Grapes are hand sorted with 15% whole cluster added to the rest which is destemmed with care to preserve whole berries. Forty ppm SO₂ is added. Grape temperature is usually around 57° F and the grapes are cold soaked for five to six days with no active chilling. We destem directly to tank using no pumps. We run a test panel towards the end of cold soak and add 1.1g/L acid before fermentation to counteract stem inclusion. We use no nutrients. During cold soak we do a gentle pump-over once a day for five to ten minutes just to keep the skins hydrated.

“During the fermentation process they punch-down once a day and twice during peak fermentation, which maxes out at 86° F. We press immediately once our tests show complete dryness, in this case after 13 days on the skins. Free run is separated and settled in a tank for 24 hours before getting racked to barrel for natural malolactic fermentation. We use 100% French oak with 42% new oak. The Wine ages for 10 months and gets racked just once into a bottling tank. The wine is bottled unfiltered, gets sealed with agglomerate cork, and receives two to three years bottle age before it's released.”



Tasting Notes

How the winemaker described the wine:

Hammond said there is an upfront juiciness, which is appreciated. An appealing darkness to the fruit that reminds me of unfarmed forest fruits. That is framed by a background of tannin slightly too young, so the consumer can decide how long to age it. It has structure and density while still being fresh and light.

How the other winemakers featured described the wine:

Boysenberry along with blood orange aromas and crushed herbs. A brambly quality and the whole cluster working really well. Buoyant red fruit along with dark, almost black fruit.

Some pine resin with powdery tannins. A nice, dark fruit core with playful acidity in the mouth. Long and layered, an everlasting gobstopper that keeps going. Aromatically bursting out of the glass.

Hearty core with some gamey character. Wine follows up on palate with vibrancy and acidity. Great promise. On the young side but built for the longer haul. There is a strong core structure, and everything emanates from that. Love the tannin. Juicy with crunchy tannins that play well together.

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

Martin Ray

2021 Hallberg Ranch Pinot Noir

Leslie Renaud graduated from the University of Michigan with a bachelor's degree in natural resources and later worked for the Forest Service in Oregon. Her first position in the wine industry was as a lab technician at Ironstone Vineyards. In 2005, she joined Talley vineyards in San Luis Obispo, graduating from enologist, all the way to head winemaker. Hired by the Foley Wine Group, she moved to Sonoma County to serve as director of winemaking for Foley's Roth Estate. She became head winemaker at Martin Ray in 2019.

According to Renaud:

"I want to make a rich, bright, somewhat savory Pinot Noir with racy acidity, good structure, and fine integrated tannins. I want the wine to have depth and a complex balance of fruit and acid with a solid cherry core. The wine should be drinkable early, but also age well.

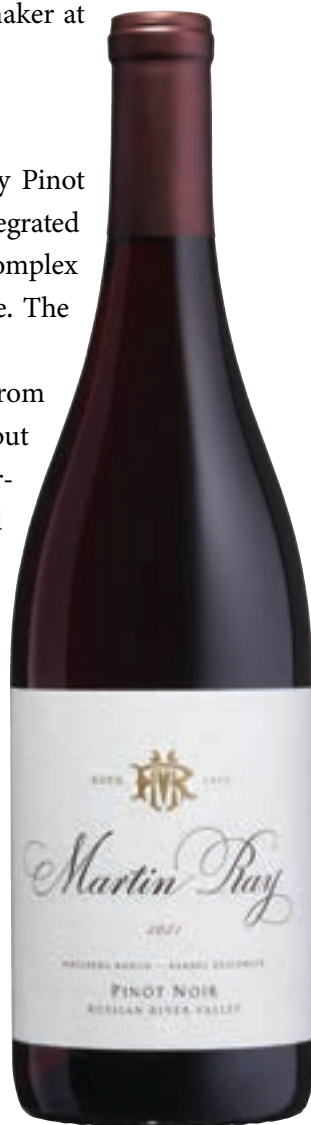
"We get clone 115 from A block and Pommard from M block. Both clones have a savory complexity, but the Pommard is loaded with meaty, savory character, while clone 115 tends to be more linear and acid driven. Hallberg Ranch fruit has an amazing balance of ripe red fruit, herbaceousness (even without stem inclusion) and a savory mushroom-like component. It screams of all things Pinot Noir, and it ages exceptionally well.

"When close to harvest, we taste the fruit every couple of days to track the development of fruit intensity. The fruit character intensifies while the acidity softens. I am looking for that perfect intersection of ripeness and bright acidity. I keep a close eye on the weather and then bribe Kirk and Riggs with wine to get the picking date we want.

"Grapes arrive in ½ ton bins and do not require sorting. The fruit is destemmed to an open-top tank where we add Metschnikowia pulcherrima, a non-saccharomyces yeast that protects the grapes during a four day cold soak at 45° F. We punch-down once a day during cold soak. Native yeast carries out the fermentation. We will add acid after 48 hours cold soak shooting for 3.35 pH and .75 TA. We run YANs and use Superfood as necessary the day after we see real Brix drop. Superfood and DAP are added the next day, and then Superfood only until we hit 10 Brix. The cooling turns on at 85° F, but this year's ferment maxed out at 76° F.

"We press after two successive days of a negative Brix using a basket press. This vintage spent 15 days on the skins. We do not separate free run and press

juice. After settling in tank for 24 hours, the wine is racked to barrel for natural malolactic fermentation. We use 100% French oak (Ermitage and Gamba) with one-third new barrels. The wine barrel ages for 12 months with no stirring of the lees. It is racked in preparation for bottling and then crossflow filtered. We seal with Diam 5 corks and age for six months before release."



Tasting Notes

How the winemaker described the wine:

"It has a cherry core decorated with savory notes. There is a touch of natural herbaceous which is why I don't include stems. The wine has good texture and bright acid."

How the other winemakers featured described the wine:

I get more citrus on this one with bright, crisp red sour cherry fruit. Smells like red cherry pie and has a nice warmth to it. There is a nice dusty quality of Pommard fruit.

Lovely inviting aromas. Fresh in the mouth with good mature fruit. Nicely integrated tannins.

Mild maraschino cherry, with hints of sandalwood and cinnamon. Love the bright cherry nose and the floral notes. Vibrant.

Riper fruit with round cherry flavors. Nice transition on the palate with no harsh edges. Finishes with bright acidity. Weight appropriate mid-palate with good salivary response. Refined tannins and acidity give a soft finish.

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

Joseph Jewell

2019 Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir

Adrian Manspecker grew up in Humboldt County and began making wine in a garage. He studied winemaking at the UC Davis extension program and produced his first Joseph Jewell wine in 2007. Currently, he makes wine from five different vineyards in Humboldt County and six vineyards in Sonoma County.

According to Manspecker:

“I want our Hallberg Pinot Noir to express balance and be more masculine in style, full-bodied and bold, with lean, dark fruit flavors of plums and blueberries mingling with Asian spices and an earthy essence. It rides the line of being fruit forward with hints of earthiness. Our wine offers complex layers of fruit along with a bit of savory funk. The texture is silky smooth with a long zesty finish. It has loads of extraction but retains a lean and light middle with plenty of structure, and it ages beautifully.

“Hallberg Ranch’s dry farming techniques really balance the ripening process. The flavors come together just as the sugars and acids do. Regardless of the year—wet, dry, hot, or cold—the wines tend to work out well. Irrigated vineyards just don’t offer the same synchronicity of elements unless the weather is cooperative. Our grapes come from I block, which is planted to Pommard Clone and C Top block planted to Dijon 777. The Pommard clone adds darker fruits like plum, blackberry and Asian spice along with great structure and tannin. It makes big Pinot Noir. The 777 is a bit lighter in flavor, giving off red fruits like Bing cherry, raspberry, and hints of forest floor.

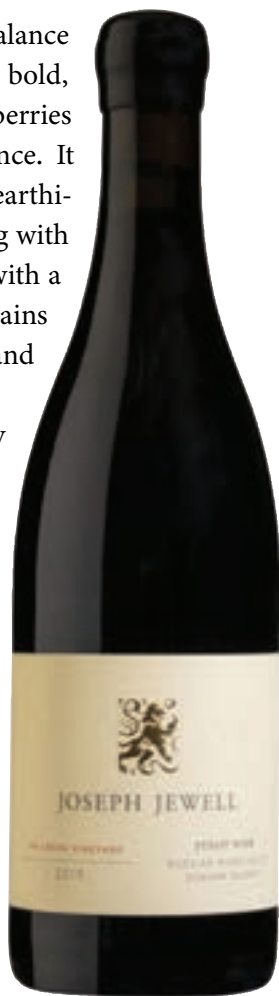
“We harvest based on flavor waiting for the strawberry character to express itself in the 777 and looking for the blueberry/dark fruit to develop in the Pommard. While we monitor sugars, we watch acids closely. Typically, we harvest around 3.40 pH. Tannin development is an important element because we like our Hallberg Pinot Noir to have a velvety mouthfeel. If picked too early, the tannins remain chewy, while late picking makes the wine flabby. We wait for the greenness in the seeds to recede so we can get that lush texture. Then we have to anticipate a bit to get on Kirk’s harvest schedule.

“Grapes were picked at night into ¼ ton bins, so we get less juicing of berries. We cluster sorted and destemmed everything without crushing because we wanted whole berries. Destemmed juice gets 20 to 40 ppm SO₂ and goes to 3 to 4 ton fermenters. We cold soaked for five days at 55° F, punching down once a day. This time in cold soak allowed us to get an accurate reading of our numbers and hopefully helped with color extraction. We made an acid addition on day four of cold soak of 1g/L. We added 1lb/1000 gallons Fermaid O at 15 Brix.

“Fermentation was carried out with native yeast. We punched down twice a day during fermentation and only pumped over if the wine started to smell

funky. The highest fermentation temperature was 82° F. We pressed after three days of negative Brix readings. This wine spent 14 days on the skins. Only free run juice and light press up to 1.2 bar pressure went into this wine. The wine settled in tank for one day before getting racked to barrel for natural malolactic, which finished in four months. We topped every 14 days during malolactic and then once a month post malolactic.

“All our barrels are French oak with 37% new oak. The wine aged in barrel for 11 months. The only racking was about two weeks before bottling. We ran Scorpion tests to make sure the wine was clean and stable, but we did not filter because we didn’t want to strip the wine. We used DIAM closures and aged the wine for 18 to 24 months before release.”



Tasting Notes

How the winemaker described the wine:

“Decent fruit on the nose. Watermelon and cherry with plum. It has medium body with a sweet transition through mid-palate to finish.”

How the other winemakers featured described the wine:

Lots of dark fruit with some watermelon rind. Plush and compact with integrated tannins. Ripe cherry compote with dried flower aroma. Bright red fruit and a ton of tangerine, or blood orange. Great depth of flavor with berry and some graphite. Good extraction that is not overdone. Taste continues throughout the mouthfeel. Agree with the graphite. Also, a perfect gentle reduction from oak. Plush without over extraction. Soft and supple with lighter tannins and less acidity than the other wines. Harmonious wine, the acidity is not bright, but it is there and lends persistence.

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

Scherrer Winery

2014 Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir

Fred Scherrer earned his UC Davis enology degree while working for local Sonoma County wineries in the 1980s. He worked at Fieldstone, Greenwood Ridge, and spent 10 years working with Tom Dehlinger at his eponymous winery. With Dehlinger's encouragement and support he started making Scherrer wines in 1991, moving to his own facility in 1997. Scherrer Winery currently produces 3,000 cases annually, half of which are Pinot Noir.

According to Scherrer:

"I am looking for angles and rounds to be in balance in my wines, also for fruit and non-fruit balance. The wine needs to maintain a strong salivary response from the entry to the finish, while red, dark fruits interplay to a degree, taking turns with loamy, earthy nuances and high-toned floral notes. I like secondary characters like dry flowers or canned peach on top of the Pinot Noir. I insist on a firm structure and want to make wines that improve with aging.

"My Hallberg Ranch grapes come from the middle of a slightly east facing slope. All the grapes are the Elite clone. Hallberg Ranch, with their dry farming regimen, produces grapes offering high-toned perfumes that achieve full ripeness at German Riesling-like pH (3.1 pH). It makes wine like Audrey Hepburn; understated, classy, and ageless. When the wine approaches a decade after the vintage, the structure has softened enough to allow the initial perfumes to mingle with some of the dried flower-like characters from bottle age.

"To pick I want the fruit flavors to pop out of the herbal side and the bracing acidity, seed tannin angles to begin receding (but not fully.) I wait for seed bitterness and green character to start diminishing. When the fruit pops above the savory, green character, I get on the schedule for picking.

"Grapes are delivered in half-ton bins and sorted on a table and then destemmed. (I have recovered from being a whole cluster winemaker.) Fruit comes in about 55 to 60° F and gradually warms to above 60° F when biological activity begins, (two to seven days depending on vintage). Fruit goes to 2 to 3 ton fermenters with any extra staying in T-bins. I add 25 ppm SO₂, unless fruit is botrytis challenged where I may use up to 75 to 80 ppm. I don't add acid to this clone but will use Fermaid K and perhaps DAP just as fermentation temperature rises above cellar temperature. DAP as needed for H₂S sometimes. It really depends on vintage/nutrient status.

"I just work the top few inches until the temperature under the cap approaches 85° F, then I'll punch-down once a day. When the temperature under the cap reaches 93° F I punch-down twice a day. Once peak temperature wanes, back to one time a day. I am trying to maintain whole berries as long as possible to get some kind of carbonic conversion. Post fermentation, I punch-down once a day to mix the tank, raise the lees up into the skins and keep them wet. Fermentation takes about two weeks, while extended maceration goes on for 30 to 40 days.



I press when it tastes right. I want angles and rounds in balance, which is all I have control over at this point. I press slowly all day using a 3-ton bladder press and I don't rotate the press. I rarely go up to 1 bar when pressing. I take the gentle press wine until the main batch is not improved by it. If there is usable press wine, I collect it for other destinations in my program.

Indigenous malolactic occurs in barrel, usually completing the following summer. I will actively delay ML by keeping barrels in a cold cellar. I think the delayed ML in wood integrates oak extractives more subtly into the wine. All my barrels are French oak with one-third new oak.

This 2014 Pinot was aged in barrel for 23 months. Currently, I am aging Hallberg Pinot Noir 30 to 32 months. The wine only gets racked when I am ready to bottle, and it is bottled unfiltered. I use traditional cork closures. I age the wine for 26 months before the first release. Then I do incremental releases as the wine ages.



Tasting Notes

How the winemaker described the wine:

"There are some mystery non-fruit aromas reminiscent of a tilled garden. Plenty of dark fruit with a plush salivary response and solid tannins."

How the other winemakers featured described the wine:

The extra age brings out tertiary liquor flavors like Amaretto or sweet cologne. Complex older fruit profile with plenty of fresh acid remaining. I get that Asian five spice and blood orange. It's a power packed mid-palate that is big and concentrated, but the tannins are soft. Black tea, truffle, watermelon rind. Herbal notes and wild forest floor, a lot going on. A glycerol viscosity reminiscent of cherry cough drops. Spice forward with less cherry than the others. Beautiful evolution. Velvety in the mouth with great structure. I like the volume and mouth feel, and the great sweetness to the mouth-coating tannins.

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

DRNK

2019 Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir

Ryan Kunde was born in Sonoma and represents the fifth generation of the Kunde family. He received a B.S. degree at Arizona State, then returned to California to delve into the wine business. He worked as an intern and then as an employee for various wineries and vineyards while getting his B.S. degree in viticulture and enology at UC Davis in 2011. He founded DRNK Winery with his wife, Katie in 2012.

According to Kunde:

“I am shooting for a classic Pinot Noir with focus and balance. I like both red and dark fruit with plenty of mouthfeel, good structure and a wine that is age worthy. This wine is a blend of clones, each giving the wine a different dimension. With Clone 828, I’m looking for structure and complexity with notes of cola, clove, and spice. Clone 777 is delicate and showy with nice raspberry and red fruit flavor development. If I can get that, I know those flavors will develop in the bottle turning more to strawberry with fine-grained dusty tannins. The Pommard contributes ripe, soft tannin, mid-palate volume, and fruity aromatics as the backbone of the 2019 blend. It provides weight on the mouthfeel and a juicy texture to the wine.

“The great thing about Hallberg Vineyard is its consistency. It ripens well in both cool and hot years, always producing elegant, refined wines that have great color, handle oak well, and age remarkably. The site enjoys cooling breezes from the south and has a long picking window. I monitor the basics, Brix, pH, and TA, as well as weather. I wait for the 777 to taste like ripe raspberries. Seeds should be ripe, brown, and crunchy. Skin tannin should be soft to the taste and touch. With Clone 828 I am looking for the stems to show signs of lignification, then I can think of using some whole cluster.

“Grapes come to the winery in bins. We sort whole clusters by hand over a shaker table and destem the rest (minus what we reserve for whole cluster fermentation). We capture the released juice as a type of saignée, part of which we add back a couple of days later. We do not crush. Whole clusters go on the bottoms, under destemmed fruit when we do whole cluster fermentations. We add 35ppm SO₂ at destemming, then cold soak between 55 to 60° F for five days, using dry ice additions three times a day. Each lot receives two pump-overs within the first 72 hours for homogenization and sampling. We run a juice panel after 72 hours and will make necessary additions if necessary. Fermaid O was added after onset of fermentation and again at 1/3 of completion, occasionally with a small addition of DAP at finishing.

“Native yeast carries out the fermentation most years. Fermentation cap management is in the form of punch-downs up to three times a day at peak

fermentation. Wine ferments in bins that are brought outside at night to keep cool. When fermentations get too hot, we use a cooling fin in the bins. Cap temperature is in the high 80s to low 90s. Fermentation length varies with native yeast, some lasting just a few days after cold soak. We press as fermentation is finishing, usually nearing negative numbers, but while some CO₂ is still being produced.

“Free run juice is racked directly to new French oak barrels. Press juice is settled in tank 24 to 48 hours before getting racked to barrels. I inoculate for malolactic. Barrels are on OXO racks where I periodically taste and roll the barrels when tannins are harsh and stop rolling if they taste yeasty. I use 100% French oak with one third new oak. The wine is aged 18 to 20 months and is racked and blended only the month before bottling. I do a polish filtration to 3 microns. We bottle using natural cork, and age 6 to 12 months before release.”



Tasting Notes

How the winemaker described the wine:

“Nice black cherry color. Initially getting strawberry fruit with some earthiness. There is a graphite thing going on with nice minerality. There is some barrel char and clove spice with cinnamon. Candied cherry flavor with nice weight and round mouthfeel. Nice lingering acidity and mouth-watering, chewy tannins.”

How the other winemakers featured described the wine:

Classic Russian River with cherry core, sandalwood, and lean, bright acid. Good mid-palate weight. Wild red fruit aromas. Black tea and dried rose petal. I love the cedar spice. Agree, classic Russian River with red apple and sandalwood. Full aromas and flavors. Nice balance between richness and maturity while retaining verve and tension. Some forest floor waxy, petrol components. Fruit is balanced, not over the top. Tannins are present but nicely integrated with fruit concentration and bright acidity. Vibrant acidity pairs well with crunchy tannins. Seamless on palate from entry through finish. Cherry cola with a toasty finish.

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

Gary Farrell

2019 Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir

Theresa Heredia started in the lab at Saintsbury for the 2001 harvest. From there, she went to Joseph Phelps Freestone Vineyard where she helped design the winery and develop the winemaking protocols. Gary Farrell tapped her to lead the winemaking in 2012 and she has been there ever since.

According to Heredia:

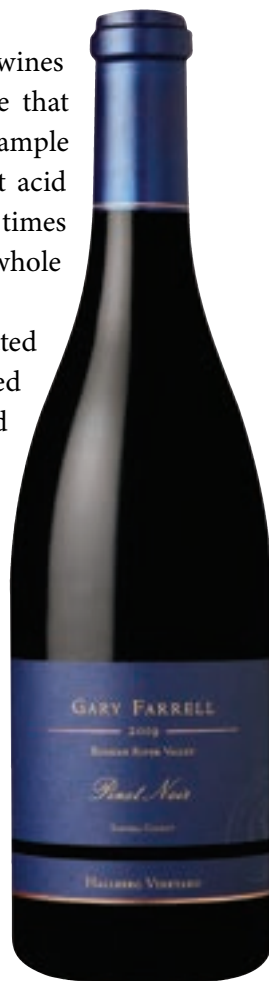
“Hallberg is entirely dry farmed, which produces wines with plenty of tannin to help wines age. Combine that with the cool foggy climate, and you get wines with ample natural acidity as well. The fog allows for excellent acid retention and flavor development. The longer hang times develop lignification in the stems, allowing for whole cluster inclusion in the fermentation.

“We get four different clones from three blocks located on the west side of Hwy 116. The clone 777 planted in this area tends to produce deeply blueish colored wines with copious blueberry, blackberry, and black cherry characteristics. Our block of Clone 828 produces medium sized clusters often scattered with tiny berries (hens and chicks). These tiny berries are super concentrated, so care needs to be taken to not over-extract during fermentation. Clone 777 gives us flavors of mulberry, black raspberry, and blueberry. Clone 667 contributes power and concentration along with more earthy flavors. We have another block of 777 on the east side of Hwy 116 that gives a different red fruit quality with earthy, meaty character and rustic tannins.

“With this wine we are looking to capture classic Hallberg aromas of violet petals, Bay Laurel, fennel, and Mulberry along with black cherry, tangerine, blood orange, and black tea. We look for a strong backbone of acidity with matured tannins that are firm in the wine’s youth with potential to age gracefully into silky, fine-grained tannins. When stems lignify, we use whole cluster to extract more site specificity along with more texture, tannin and increased spice and black tea flavors.

“The most important factors in determining when to pick are flavor, texture, and seed color. I hope to achieve peak flavor concentration at relatively low sugar concentration. At Hallberg I often find those flavors at 22.8 to 23.5° Brix. I look for power packed flavors, firm berry skins with tannins that are not overly astringent, crunchy brown seeds, semi-lignified stems, and vibrant acidity. Then I check the chemistry to make sure it aligns with what I am tasting.

“Grapes come to the winery in ½ ton bins. We cluster sort, destem, and then berry sort on a vibrating table. We add 30 to 40 ppm SO₂ to each bin of grapes post sorting, destemming or directly to whole cluster bins. We cold soak for five to seven days at 40 to 45° F. When using whole cluster, they go on top of destemmed fruit. We run juice panels at 48 and 72 hours and only add acid if necessary. (Potassium in stems can cause a reduction of natural acidity, so we sometimes need to add acid to maintain desired levels during fermentation.) No nutrients were needed with this vintage.



“During cold soak we use bags of dry ice two to three times a day with one punch-down. During fermentation, we go to two to four punch-downs daily, and occasionally one pump-over using a screened tube in lieu of one of the punch-downs (Pump-overs are extremely gentle and used for aeration, cooling the juice, or gentle extraction during peak fermentation). We add BRG yeast looking for kinetics, usually finishing fermentation in four to seven days with fermentation temperatures between 82 and 85° F. Then we do extended maceration without punch-downs for seven to 14 days, until we total 21 to 28 days on the skins.

“When flavors have fully developed, becoming savory with some softening of tannins, we use a basket press. Typically, press wine is added to the free run because I feel it makes the wine more complete. We inoculate for malolactic in the tank the same day the wine gets transferred to barrel. We use 100% French oak with 40% new oak. Of the new barrels, 95% are light toast to respect the

fruit and protect from toasty character. Barrel aging lasts 15 months on primary lees. Wine gets racked to blending tanks in preparation for bottling. We cross-flow filter, seal with DIAM 10 corks, and age for 28 months before release.”



Tasting Notes

How the winemaker described the wine:

“Mix of blue, purple, and red fruit aromas. I get violet petal and a ton of spices like Asian five spice, for example, and oolong tea. On the palate, there is a pop of acidity and the taste of blackberries, black cherries, and some huckleberries. There is an earthiness with dry crushed herbs all nicely integrated. It has big texture with a long, silky finish.”

How the other winemakers featured described the wine:

Raspberry with an acid core. Fruit not exuberant which seems intentional. Lovely wine with crushed red fruit, purple flower and sandalwood. Buoyant and jumps out of the glass. This has a lighter fruit profile with some earthy tones and savory notes. Palate is bright, fresh and lean with acidity. The core of oolong tea jumps out with cherry compote. Earthy and herbaceous notes are more forward than fruit. There is an earthy rusticity, both in the aroma and on the palate. There is a density of fruit without being heavy at all. Whole cluster elements bordering on pyrazine character. Driven by acid from entry to finish. Good balance between freshness, fruit, and non-fruit elements. Tomato, candlewax, and forest floor with bright acidity. Wine will live for a long time.

	DRNK WINES	EMERITUS VINEYARDS	ETUDE WINERY
WINE	2019 HALLBERG VINEYARD PINOT NOIR	2019 WESLEY'S RESERVE PINOT NOIR	2019 HALLBERG VINEYARD PINOT NOIR
Case Production	100 cases	263 cases	300 cases
Price	\$55	\$82	\$70
Winemaker	Ryan Kunde	Keith Hammond	Jon Priest
Style Goals	A classic Pinot Noir with focus and balance. Red and dark fruit with plenty of mouthfeel, good structure and ageability.	Distinct, with density, structure and tannin. Highlight the wild, almost purple nature of the clone. Lots of flavor and structure, with low to medium alcohol	A wine that has perfumed, inviting aromas and substance. Balance richness with acidity and tannin to maintain a plush mouthfeel and good palate persistence.
Vineyard Data			
Vineyard Block		Centrally located, mid-slope	
Clones	Clone 828, 777 and Pommard	Clone 667, Clone 115	Cruz, Clone 115 and 828
Winemaking Data			
When to Pick	The basics: Brix, pH, TA and weather	Watching Brix and acid, fruit flavor, seed color and skin turgor	Try to pick all clones simultaneously; No green flavors/tannins
SO ₂	35 ppm at destemming	40 ppm	
Crush Format	Sort whole-cluster by hand and destem the rest; No crush	Hand-sorted; 15% whole cluster	100% destemmed and berry sorted
Cold Soak	Between 55 to 60° F for five days; Dry ice additions 3x daily	5 to 6 days with no active chilling	4 to 5 days at 55° F; Punch-downs once daily
Yeast	Native yeast	Unknown	Ambient yeast
Fermentation Temperature	High 80s to low 90s	Up to 86° F	86° F
Fermentation Technique	Two pump-overs in first 72 hours; punch-down up to 3x daily at peak	One pump-over daily at cold soak; punch-down once and pump-over 2x daily during fermentation.	One to 2x daily until 10° Brix; Gentle pump-over 1 to 2x daily after
Press Regimen	As fermentation is finishing	N/A	N/A
Nutrients	Fermaid O at onset and at 1/3 completion; DAP at finish	None used	Nutristart pre-fermentation
Acid Addition	If necessary	1.1 g/L before fermentation	None used
Malolactic	Inoculated	Natural MLF	Inoculated
Racking	Free run raked directly to barrel; press settled in tank 24 to 48 hours	Setting in tank for 24 hours, then raked to barrel	Only at bottling
Oak Program	100% French oak; One-third new	100% French; 42% new	100% French oak; 25% new
Barrel Aging	18 to 20 months	10 months	14 months
Filtration	Polish filtration to 3 microns	None	Pad polish filtration
Closure	Natural cork	Agglomerate	Natural cork
Bottle Aging	6 to 12 months	2 to 3 years	6 months

	GARY FARRELL WINERY	JOSEPH JEWELL WINERY
WINE	2019 HALLBERG VINEYARD PINOT NOIR	2019 HALLBERG PINOT NOIR
Case Production	1,094 cases	175 cases
Price	\$60	\$65
Winemaker	Theresa Heredia	Adrian Manspeaker
Style Goals	Capture classic Hallberg aromas with a strong backbone of acidity with matured tannins.	To express balance and be more masculine in style: full-bodied, bold, lean dark fruit flavors with hints of earthiness and a savory funk.
Vineyard Data		
Vineyard Block	Three blocks on the west side of Highway 116	I and C Top blocks
Clones	Clone 777, 828, 667	Pommard from I block; Dijon 777 from C Top block
Winemaking Data		
When to Pick	Flavor, texture and seed color; Usually between 22.8° to 23.5° Brix	Based on flavor, around 3.4 pH with greenness gone from tannins
SO₂	30 to 40 ppm	20 to 40 ppm
Crush Format	Cluster sort, destem, then berry sort on vibrating table	Cluster sorted and destemmed with no crushing
Cold Soak	5 to 7 days at 40 to 45° F	5 days at 55° F; Punch-down once daily
Yeast	BRG yeast	Native yeast
Fermentation Temperature	82 to 85° F	Maxed at 82° F
Fermentation Technique	Two to 4 punch-downs daily; Occasional pump-over in lieu of punch-down	Punch-downs twice daily; Pump-over only if wine smelled funky
Press Regimen	Basket press	After 14 days on skins and 3 days of negative Brix readings
Nutrients	None	None
Acid Addition	Only as necessary	Day 4 of cold soak, 1 lb./1,000 gallons Fermaid O at 15° Brix
Malolactic	Inoculate when wine is transferred to barrel	Native malolactic; topped every 14 days
Racking	At blending	Settled in tank for 24 hours, then racked to barrel; Racked two weeks before bottling
Oak Program	100% French oak; 40% new with 95% light toast	100% French oak; 37% new
Barrel Aging	15 months	11 months
Filtration	Cross-flow	None
Closure	DIAM 10	DIAM
Bottle Aging	28 months	18 to 24 months

	MARTIN RAY WINERY	SCHERRER WINERY
WINE	2021 HALLBERG RANCH PINOT NOIR	2014 HALLBERG VINEYARD PINOR NOIR
Case Production	112 cases	75 cases
Price	\$60	\$80
Winemaker	Leslie Renaud	Fred Scherrer
Style Goals	A rich, bright, somewhat savory Pinot Noir with racy acidity, good structure and fine, integrated tannins. Looking for depth and a complex balance of fruit that can be aged or drunk early.	Angles and rounds to be in balance, with strong acidity, a firm structure and the ability to age.
Vineyard Data		
Vineyard Block	A and M blocks	Middle of a slightly-east facing slope
Clones	Clone 115 from A block; Pommard from M block	Elite clone
Winemaking Data		
When to Pick	Intersection of ripeness and acid; weather; wine bribes to get the right picking date	Want flavors to pop out of herbal, seed tannin to recede and bitterness to fade
SO ₂	N/A	25 ppm unless fruit is Botrytis challenged
Crush Format	No sorting; destemmed into open-top tank	Sorted on a table and destemmed into 2- to 3-ton fermentors
Cold Soak	4 days at 45° F; Punch-down once daily	N/A
Yeast	<i>Metschnikowia pulcherrima</i> , native yeast	N/A
Fermentation Temperature	Maxed at 76° F	Up to 93° F under the cap
Fermentation Technique	Unknown	Punch-down once daily; twice daily as temperature increases
Press Regimen	N/A	After extended maceration of 30 to 40 days; 3-ton bladder press
Nutrients	YAN, Superfood and DAP as necessary	Fermaid K and DAP as needed
Acid Addition	Added after 48 hours cold soak	None
Malolactic	Natural MLF	Indigenous, completing following summer
Racking	Settling in tank for 24 hours, then racked to barrel; Racked again prior to bottling	Only once prior to bottling
Oak Program	100% Ermitage and Gamba French oak; 33% new	100% French oak; One-third new
Barrel Aging	12 months	23 months (newer vintages 30 to 32 months)
Filtration	Cross-flow	Unfiltered
Closure	DIAM 5	Natural cork
Bottle Aging	6 months	26 months

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

Etude

2019 Hallberg Vineyard Pinot Noir

Jon Priest has made wine in California for more than 30 years. A native of California's Central Coast he started in the wine business at Wine Cask Company in Santa Barbara. Stints as winemaker at Wild Horse, Adelaida Cellars, and Taz preceded his move to Etude in 2005. He operates as senior winemaker and general manager for Etude.

According to Priest:

"Hallberg Vineyard is a unique place. Its dry farmed modest crop consistently produces wines of elegance with saturated dark red fruit character, a wonderful lithe texture and structure, with refined tannins and lifted acidity. The wines remain youthful for several years in the bottle and I expect a long aging potential based on the fruit depth and tannin structure.

"We want to produce a wine that has perfumed, inviting aromas and substance. We want red fruit lift, along with floral notes, and we try to balance richness with acidity and tannin. We try not to be heavy handed and are very careful about oak, looking for plush mouthfeel and good palate persistence.

"We use a blend of three different clones. The Cruz clone gives exotic aromas and flavors, good phenolic depth along with saturated red fruit and earthy, spicy characteristics. Clone 115 lends a regal presence with floral lifted aromatics, and a lithe structure. Clone 828 provides lifted red fruit, a bright acid high tone, and good persistence.

"Because our finished wine should have a rich mid-palate, phenolic maturity is important. We prefer bright natural acidity, while avoiding green flavors and green tannins. We taste and test the grapes regularly. If possible, we want to pick all three clones at the same time, and we want them to come in retaining acid and requiring no water additions.

"Grapes arrive at the winery in bins where they were 100% destemmed, and berry sorted before going to open-top fermenters. Cold soak lasted four to five days at cellar temperature of 55° F. A juice panel was run on the second day and no acid was needed for this wine, but we added Nutristart pre-fermentation. Ambient yeast fermented the wine. The tank thermostat was set at 86° F with a maximum fermentation temperature reaching the low 90s.

"We punch-down once a day during cold soak, then one to two times a day through fermentation until 10° Brix, when we do a gentle irrigated pump-over once to twice a day, reducing to once a day as wine approaches dryness. When the fermentation goes dry, we seal the tank for a 21- to 24-day extended maceration. When we are ready to press, we toss the top layer of grapes in case of any oxidation character, and we separate the free run from press juice. We settle the wine overnight before inoculating for malolactic and going to barrel.

"We use 100% French oak with 25% new barrels. The wine ages for 14 months with no racking or stirring of lees until we are ready to bottle. The wine gets a pad polish filtration, is finished with natural cork, and bottle aged for six months before release."



Tasting Notes

How the winemaker described the wine:

"It has a wonderful dark red fruit along with a floral note. I get nice crushed berry, red cherry, almost plum notes. There is a bit of black tea. There is some barrel toast, but it is not dominant. Juicy red fruit explodes on the palate with boysenberry, raspberry cherry and even cranberry. There is a sense of dark minerality and a savory, forest floor note. Acidity is vibrant and balances tannins nicely. Brisk acid, tannin but also a plushness in the mid-palate, and a long finish."

How the other winemakers featured described the wine:

Floral aromas of both red and blue flowers and a hint of umami. Brambly with wild berries. Earthy, but with power packed fruit concentration mid-palate. Ripe dark fruit with herbaceousness and earthy tones. Nice blue fruit note with floral character. Very centered and persistent. Well-structured on the palate with well-integrated tannins extracted to give wine more body. Ripe, but not jammy. Some waxiness and salinity with lower acidity than some others. Plush and inviting. Blue fruit and watermelon rind Broad on the palate and drinking well right now. Ripest style of tasting. The angles come more from tannin than acidity making it the plushest wine of the tasting.

Varietal Focus Pinot Noir

THIS VARIETAL FOCUS was a pleasure from beginning to end. Every participant, from vineyard managers to the winemakers, was gracious, knowledgeable, and passionate about their work. Hallberg Ranch contains a beautiful, mature Pinot Noir Vineyard. Kirk Lokka and his crew prepped the land, planted the vines, and have cared for the grapes for 25 years. With Kirk's upcoming retirement, his son Riggs is poised to take over along with Mari Jones whose title is President (of Fun) and is the driving philosophical force of the business.

Mari Jones says, "We need to be sustainable in every sense, from the way we farm to the type of employer we are to the impact we have on our community and the planet. These things aren't separate from what goes into the bottle, they are essential."

They work hard to lessen their footprint on the planet, focusing on carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and soil health. They have placed owl boxes throughout the vineyard and apply 40 tons of natural compost annually. Through energy and water conservation, their tasting room and winery use approximately the same amount of energy as an average family of four. The North Bay Business Journal honored them as one of the "North Bay's Best Places to Work." In short, they get it.

All the participating winemakers were experienced, knew their Pinot Noir clones, and had developed individual winemaking regimens to best achieve

"We need to be sustainable in every sense, from the way we farm to the type of employer we are to the impact we have on our community and the planet."

Mari Jones, Emeritus Vineyards

their style goals. They were talented, passionate and (best of all) seemed to delight in working with a great vineyard to produce wonderful wine.

The wines were terrific. While they shared a common thread emanating from the Hallberg Ranch vineyard that the winemakers described as an intense range of red to black fruits decorated with forest floor complexity and festooned with spice notes, each of the wines was markedly distinctive. Some winemakers chose to keep the acidity vibrant and at the forefront, while others tamed it into a plush, long lasting finish. Some emphasized the red fruit spectrum, while others brought out blue and black fruit. Complex notes of black tea, forest floor, and citrus populated their tasting notes. All the wines had solid tannic structure that suggested long aging potential.

Winemakers are always looking for special vineyards offering them the chance to make genuinely great wines. Hallberg Ranch does that because it reflects a distinctive terroir. The dry farming practices allow winemakers to pick fully mature fruit at lower sugars, which usually makes adding acid or diluting with water unnecessary. Dry farming also contributes more consistent flavor and character no matter what the vintage brings. This allows the winemakers to hone in on clonal differences for their blends while they develop specific regimens to execute their style.

None of the winemakers crushed the fruit, but all of them destemmed and some mixed whole clusters into that destemmed fruit. All seven winemakers used some sort of cold soak, but a few allowed native yeast to ferment while others opted for specific commercial yeast to do the job. Winemakers pressed before dryness, after dryness and a few opted for extended maceration. Both native and inoculated malolactic regimens were used. All winemakers used French oak, but carefully monitored the amount of new oak so as not to overwhelm the Hallberg Ranch fruit character and complexity.

Through several tastings the wines showed the consistent Hallberg Ranch characteristics as a solid framework but allowed for each winemaker's style to express itself. Drinking individual bottles with a meal revealed a favorite component of these wines. Whether decanted (highly recommended) or not, the wines opened and changed in the glass continuously, revealing delicious layers of flavor and complexity. The wines got better with each sip, and the only disappointment came with the realization that the bottle was empty.

This tasting left no doubt that Hallberg Ranch is a terrific Pinot Noir vineyard, and it invites the question, "Do great vineyards make winemakers famous, or do famous winemakers make vineyards great?" For this writer, the point is moot. We are always best served when great vineyards and winemakers work together to pursue excellence. This vineyard and these winemakers have done that. **WBM**

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