



# ANOTHER bouquet

**This year's Pinot Noir Masters saw judges tackle almost 300 bottles to discover some worthy winners among the high volume of entries. By Patrick Schmitt**



Left: The Modern Pantry provided plenty of natural light. Above: Sebastian Payne MW

**LONG BEFORE** Hollywood delivered a eulogy to Pinot Noir in *Sideways*, Burgundy's red grape has held a special position among wine lovers. Revered for its pretty aromas, smooth-textured sweet fruit, and an almost weightless sensation in the mouth, Pinot Noir can create a vinous experience no other grape can

## The tasters agreed that below £10, Pinot Noir is best without oak influence

emulate, and, as a consequence, the world's most expensive wine: La Romanée-Conti.

However, as with any noble grape, there's a wide range of styles depending on not just where it's grown, but who has handled it, and for whom. And following a tasting of almost 300 unblended Pinots, it appears that this single grape is the source of remarkable diversity.

The tasting was part of *db's* Global Masters series, begun last year with Chardonnay, and continuing this year with Pinot Noir, and, as Wine Society buyer Sebastian Payne MW – a judge and chair in both competitions – remarked after the latter tasting, “With Chardonnay, there were very few disappointments, but so many of the wines tasted the same; with Pinot though, the wines were much more varied.”

Payne was just one of eight Masters of Wine (and one Master Sommelier) who were selected to assess the Pinot Noirs, which were served blind, but arranged according to price band as well as style, so that wines were tasted in the fairest possible order: low-priced to high, unoaked to oaked, light-bodied to full.

This format saw the highly experienced tasters focus purely on the quality of the Pinots without any sense of where they were from, with as many as 16 countries featured in the line-up.

Of course, without prior knowledge of the source, the assessment of quality centred on style. Here, thankfully, there seemed to be consensus among the judges. At the cheaper end of the spectrum, it was felt that low-levels of residual sugar were acceptable – though not desirable – while the tasters also agreed that below £10, Pinot Noir is best without oak influence.

At higher prices, the tasters were looking for an open, pretty nose; an attractive, smooth texture, and enough freshness to ensure the drinker wanted more. Whatever the price though, the wine had to be recognisably Pinot – and although that meant the wine could exhibit flavours from red to black fruits, it needed to be combined with a relatively light body for a black grape, the aforementioned smooth texture and a refreshing finish.

### About the competition

In a crowded wine competition arena, The Drinks Business Global Pinot Noir Masters stands out for its assessment of wines purely by grape variety rather than region.

Divided only by price bracket and, for ease of judging, whether the style was oaked or unoaked, the blind tasting format allowed wines to be assessed without prejudice about their country of origin.

Wines were scored out of 100, with those gaining over 95 points being awarded the top title of Master. Those earning over 90 points were given a Gold, those over 85 points a Silver and those over 80 points a Bronze.

The wines were judged by Masters of Wine and Master Sommeliers on 5 February 2014 at The Modern Pantry restaurant in London.

### RIGHT COMBINATION

Without knowledge of abvs, the tasters had to rely on any impression of excessive alcohol, usually a warming to hot finish. In search of natural balance, judges still scored moderately high alcohol wines generously, as long as the perception of alcohol complemented the fruit concentration. Similarly, when it came to the influence of oak, wines which did well had a good balance between barrel-sourced flavours and tannins and the weight of fruit. Where the oak dominated, medals were not awarded. Also, the level of fruit ripeness was a point of some discussion. The tasters rewarded those wines with bright flavours, particularly lively red fruit, and not examples with a stewed, sometimes raisined character. While the latter style can produce a sweet sensation, it also caused premature colour

# pinot noir masters



Anne McHale MW

and perfume loss, and a flat, short finish.

Of course, attempting to achieve optimum ripeness for Pinot requires not just cooler viticultural climes, but also well-judged harvest times. And as for achieving Pinot's signature smooth texture, that requires not just the right site and careful vineyard management, but also cellar practices that are gentle. Heavy-handed maceration techniques can easily give harsh tannin and a drying sensation, although this was rarely seen in the competition entries.

**Attempting to achieve optimum ripeness for Pinot requires not just cooler viticultural climes, but also well-judged harvest times**

## Results: sparkling Pinot

Company	Product Name	Medal	Vintage	Country
<b>Sparkling under £10</b>				
Cà del Gè	Oltrepo Pavese Pinot Nero Metodo Classico Cà del Gè DOCG	Bronze	2007	Italy
<b>Sparkling £10-20</b>				
Champagne Moutard	Brut Grande Cuvée NV	Silver	NV	France
Champagne de Barfontarc	Champagne de Barfontarc Blanc de Noirs NV	Silver	NV	France
Distell	JC Le Roux	Silver	2009	South Africa
Freixenet	Elyssia Pinot Noir NV	Bronze	NV	Spain
Giorgi	Giorgi 1870 Gran Cuvée Storica O.P. DOC NV	Bronze	NV	Italy
Distell	JC Le Roux	Bronze	2009	South Africa
Monsupello Eredi di Boatti Carlo	Pinot Nero Brut Rosé VSQ NV	Bronze	NV	Italy
<b>Sparkling £20-30</b>				
Champagne Gremillet	Blanc de Noirs NV	Silver	NV	France
Champagne Larnaudie Hirault	Blanc de Noirs NV	Silver	NV	France
Champagne Moutard	Rose Dame Nesle NV	Bronze	NV	France
<b>Sparkling £30+</b>				
Champagne Soutiran	Cuvée Perle Noire Grand Cru NV	Gold	NV	France
Champagne Drappier	Carte d'Or	Silver	1995	France
Champagne Chassenay d'Arce	Confidences Brut NV	Bronze	NV	France
Champagne Moutard	Vieille Vigne Richardot NV	Bronze	NV	France

## Results: unoaked Pinot

Company	Product Name	Medal	Vintage	Country
<b>Unoaked under £10</b>				
Boutinot	Les Volets Pinot Noir	Silver	2012	France
William Cole Vineyards	Viña el Rosal Pinot Noir Signature Morrison	Silver	2012	Chile
Halewood Romania	La Umbra	Silver	2012	Romania
Viña San Pedro Tarapaca	Gato Negro	Bronze	2013	Chile
Boutinot	Sierra Grande Pinot Noir,	Bronze	2012	Chile
La Compagnie des Vins d'Autrefois	Pinot Noir d'Autrefois, Alfio Moriconi Selection	Bronze	2012	France
Distell	Two Oceans	Bronze	2012	South Africa
Halewood Romania	Waitrose Pinot Noir Romania	Bronze	2012	Romania
Casa Girelli	Canaletto Autentico Italiano	Bronze	2011	Italy
Mezzacorona	Feudo Arancio Stemmari	Bronze	2011	Italy
<b>Unoaked £10-20</b>				
Castello di Luzzano	Umoro Nero Pinot Nero Dell'OP	Bronze	2012	Italy
Domaine Paul Blanck Juris Winery	Paul Blanck	Bronze	2012	France
	Pinot Noir Selection	Bronze	2011	Austria
<b>Unoaked £20-30</b>				
Schug Carneros Estate Winery	Schug Sonoma Coast	Silver	2012	United States

## Results: oaked Pinot

Company	Product Name	Medal	Vintage	Country
<b>Oaked under £10</b>				
Viña Maycas del Limari	Sumaq Pinot Noir Reserva	Gold	2013	Chile
Viña San Pedro Tarapaca	Castillo de Molina 2012	Silver	2012	Chile
Undurraga	Aliwen	Silver	2012	Chile
Carolina Wine Brands	Cefiro Pinot Noir 2012	Silver	2012	Chile
Undurraga	Sibaris	Silver	2011	Chile
Les Domaines Paul Mas	Domaine de Martinolles	Bronze	2012	France
Viña San Pedro Tarapaca	Leyda Reserva	Bronze	2012	Chile
Brotherhood Winery	Brotherhood New York Premium Selection	Bronze	2012	United States
Les Domaines Paul Mas	Domaine Astruc	Bronze	2012	France
Viña Casa Silva	Doña Dominga Reserva	Bronze	2013	Chile
Francois Labet	Le Pinot Noir Corsica	Bronze	2012	France
Les Domaines Paul Mas	Paul Mas Estate	Bronze	2012	France
<b>Oaked £10-20</b>				
Hope Family Wines	Liberty School Pinot Noir	Gold	2012	United States
Marisco Vineyards	The Ned Pinot Noir	Silver	2012	New Zealand
Viña Tabali	Tabali Reserva Especial	Silver	2012	Chile
Creation Wines	Creation 2	Silver	2012	South Africa
Viña Tabali	Tabali Talinay	Silver	2012	Chile
Creation Wines	Creation Reserve	Silver	2012	South Africa
Bodega Luigi Bosca,	Luigi Bosca Grand Pinot Noir	Silver	2012	Argentina
Familia Arizu	La Consulta			
De Bortoli Wines	Yarra Valley Estate Pinot Noir	Silver	2011	Australia
Marisco Vineyards	The King's Wrath	Silver	2011	New Zealand
Australian Vintage	Nepenthe Winemaker Select	Silver	2011	Australia
Jackson Estate	Gum Emperor	Silver	2010	New Zealand
Wente Vineyards	Reliz Creek	Silver	2010	United States
Lawson's Dry Hills	Dry Hills Reserve	Silver	2012	New Zealand
Iona Estate	Mr P	Silver	2013	South Africa
New Zealand Vineyard Estates	Waipara Hills Central Otago	Silver	2012	New Zealand
Delta Wine Company	Delta Pinot Noir	Silver	2012	New Zealand
Viña Casa Silva	Casa Silva Cool Coast	Silver	2012	Chile
Jackson Estate	Vintage Widow	Silver	2011	New Zealand
Viñedos Emiliana	Signos De Origen	Bronze	2012	Chile
E&J Gallo Winery	Bridlewood Monterey County	Bronze	2012	United States
Elk Cove Vineyards	Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley	Bronze	2012	United States
Single Vineyard Sellers	Holm Oak	Bronze	2012	Australia
Pernod Ricard	Jacob's Creek Reserve, Adelaide Hills	Bronze	2012	Australia
E&J Gallo Winery	Edna Valley Central Coast	Bronze	2012	United States
Elephant Hill Estate & Winery	Elephant Hill Pinot Noir	Bronze	2011	New Zealand
Viña Valdivieso	Valdivieso Single Vineyard, Leyda	Bronze	2011	Chile
Marugg	Fläscher Pinot Noir Barrique	Bronze	2011	Switzerland
Abalone Wines	Eerste Hoop Pinot Noir	Bronze	2011	South Africa
Viña Valdivieso	Single Vineyard, Cauquenes	Bronze	2010	Chile
San Michele ai Pianoni	Pynos Pinot Nero, Oltrepò Pavese DOC Riserva	Bronze	2006	Italy
Sumaridge Estate Wines	Sumaridge Estate Pinot Noir	Bronze	2011	South Africa
Marisco Vineyards	Marisco Vineyards Pinot Noir	Bronze	2011	New Zealand
Gusbourne Estate	Gusbourne Estate Pinot Noir	Bronze	2011	UK
Pernod Ricard	Brancott Estate Letter Series 'T', Marlborough	Bronze	2011	New Zealand
Fromm Winery	Fromm 'La Strada' Marlborough	Bronze	2010	New Zealand
New Zealand Vineyard Estates	Mud House, Central Otago	Bronze	2012	New Zealand
Bodega Familia Schroeder	Alto Limay Select	Bronze	2013	Argentina
Babich Wines	Babich Winemakers' Reserve	Bronze	2012	New Zealand
Viña Luis Felipe Edwards	LFE Marea	Bronze	2012	Chile
Alto de Casablanca	Ritual	Bronze	2012	Chile

## Panel chair comment



### RICHARD BAMPFIELD MW

With Pinot Noir I'm looking for perfume, freshness, delicacy, texture and harmony... and I'm also looking for that sweet attack at front of palate which you get with good Pinot.

It can finish dry and mouth-watering, but the attack at the front must have more sweetness than other grapes. It is one of things that makes Pinot very attractive.

Oak is really important, and part of the charm of most top Pinots is the use and quality of oak. But I think it is a question of balance. In Burgundy most of the top wines I can think of are definitely aged at least in part in new oak. The light use of oak helps give Burgundy a structure Pinot doesn't have on its own... but it has got to be delicate and sensitive to the vintage.

## SENSE OF STYLE

In essence, according to Payne, "Pinot has to smell wonderful and have a fantastic texture, and to achieve a silver medal or above the wine has to have a long length." Such is the difficulty in achieving this combination that the Pinot Noir Masters saw far fewer top medals awarded compared to its competition forerunner, the Chardonnay Masters. But when the Pinots were good, they were really good – making them an immense pleasure to taste.

So what did the results reveal? While there's a risk of drawing generalisations from such a snapshot in the great world of Pinot plantings, there were certain patterns worth highlighting. Of the 16 countries that featured in the competition, it was New Zealand which took home the highest proportion of medals, gaining 25



Alex Hunt MW

medals from 27 wines entered. As Payne commented after the results were revealed, "For me, Pinot Noir is all about bouquet and texture, and New Zealand has delivered bouquet."

However, it was the US that got the best results, home to the sole Master, the competition's highest accolade, which was awarded to the Schug Winery's Carneros Pinot Noir from the cooler 2011 vintage in California. The US also

**It was pleasing to witness some of Australia's new Pinot Noirs performing well, with the country's Tapanappa, Eileen Hardy and Tolpuddle Pinots all gaining silvers**

dominated the golds, gaining six of the 11 awarded in total, with both Oregon and California achieving impressive scores.

In total, North America gained 27 medals from 32 wines submitted to the competition, confirming California's ability to produce Pinots of generosity and poise, and Oregon's position as one of the world's most highly rated places for this pernickety grape, after Burgundy.

Nevertheless, it was Chile that got the

## Results: oaked & unoaked Pinot

### £10-£20 (continued)

Company	Product Name	Medal	Vintage	Country
Viña Ventisquero	Grey	Bronze	2012	Chile
Bodega Familia Schroeder	Alpataco	Bronze	2013	Argentina
Viña San Pedro Tarapaca	Leyda Single Vineyard Las Brisas	Bronze	2012	Chile
Byron Vineyards	Byron Santa Barbara	Bronze	2012	United States
Spierhead Winery	Gentleman Farmer Vineyard	Bronze	2012	Canada
Boutinot	Moko Black, Marlborough	Bronze	2012	New Zealand
Quintay	Q Grand Reserve	Bronze	2012	Chile
Cline Cellars	Jacuzzi	Bronze	2011	United States
Australian Vintage	Nepenthe Good Doctor	Bronze	2012	Australia
Vina Valdivieso	Winemaker Reserva, Aconcagua	Bronze	2012	Chile
Australian Vintage	Nepenthe Altitude	Bronze	2012	Australia
Kingsland Wines & Spirits	Bioletti's Block	Bronze	2012	United States
Undurraga	T.H. Pinot Noir	Bronze	2011	Chile
Weingut Losen-Bockstanz	Wittlicher Bottchen Auslese	Bronze	2011	Germany
Viña Luis Felipe Edwards	LFE Mareá	Bronze	2011	Chile

### Oaked £20-30

Schug Carneros Estate Winery	Schug Carneros Reserve Pinot Noir	Master	2011	United States
Stoller Family Estate	Bomb Oregon	Gold	2010	United States
Bomb Wines	Mud House Estate, Claim 431, Central Otago	Gold	2010	United States
New Zealand Vineyard Estates	Kendall Jackson, Vintner's Reserve 'Holly'	Silver	2012	New Zealand
Jackson Family Wines	Pinot Noir Breitensteil	Silver	2011	Austria
Matahiwi Estate Winery	Iona Pinot Noir	Silver	2012	South Africa
Juris Winery	Rockburn Pinot Noir, Central Otago	Silver	2011	New Zealand
Iona Estate	Reimer Vineyard	Silver	2011	Canada
Rockburn Wines	Two Degrees	Silver	2010	New Zealand
Meyer Family Vineyards	Noir, Pinot Nero dell' Oltrepò Pavese DOC	Silver	2008	Italy
St Aubyn Leschallas Wines	Kloster Eberbach 'Crescentia' Höllenberg Spätburgunder Dry Spätlese	Silver	2011	Germany
Azienda Agricola Tenuta Mazzolino	Te Muna Road Vineyard	Silver	2011	New Zealand
Mazzolino	Pinot Noir Haide	Silver	2011	Austria
Kloster Eberbach	Meyer Family Vineyards McLean Creek Vineyard	Silver	2011	Canada
Craggy Range Vineyards	The Delta Wine Company Delta Hatters Hill Pinot Noir	Silver	2010	New Zealand
Juris Winery	Schlossgut Ebringen Pinot Noir 'S'	Silver	2010	Germany
Meyer Family Vineyards	Louis Jadot Beaune 1er Cru	Bronze	2010	France
The Delta Wine Company	Surveyor Thomson Wines Surveyor Thomson Pinot Noir	Bronze	2010	New Zealand
Schlossgut Ebringen	Fromm Winery Fromm Brancott Valley	Bronze	2009	New Zealand
Louis Jadot	Viña Maycas del Limari Reserva Especial Pinot Noir	Bronze	2012	Chile
Surveyor Thomson Wines	Kellerei Cantina Terlan Cantina Terlan Riserva, Montigl,	Bronze	2011	Italy
Fromm Winery	Torres Mas Borràs	Bronze	2011	Spain
Viña Maycas del Limari	Colombo Cascina Apertura Piedmont DOC	Bronze	2011	Italy
Kellerei Cantina Terlan	Pastori Winery Pinot Nero			
Torres	Jackson Family Wines La Crema, Sonoma Coast	Bronze	2012	United States
Colombo Cascina	Matetic Vineyards EQ Pinot Noir	Bronze	2012	Chile
Pastori Winery	Jamieson Ranch Vineyards Reata Three County	Bronze	2012	United States
Jackson Family Wines	Cantina Conte Vistarino Pernice Pinot Nero, IGT	Bronze	2010	Italy
Matetic Vineyards	Pinot Nero Provincia di Pavia			
Jamieson Ranch Vineyards	Juris Winery Pinot Noir Unger	Bronze	2009	Austria
Cantina Conte Vistarino	Juris Winery Pinot Noir Hochreit	Bronze	2009	Austria
	Borgo Isolabella Bricco Del Falco	Bronze	2009	Italy
	Monferrato Rosso DOC			
	Juris Winery Pinot Noir Reserve	Bronze	2009	Austria
	Frecciarossa Giorgio Otero Pinot Nero	Bronze	2008	Italy
	Bouchard Finlayson Galpin Peak	Bronze	2011	South Africa



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# pinot noir masters



Mark Savage MW

most accolades overall, achieving 28 medals, which were split between 2 golds, 8 silvers and 18 bronzes. This was from 44 entries however, meaning that Chile was also responsible for a large number of wines which didn't achieve good scores from the judges.

## ADDED VALUE

Notably, it was Chile that dominated the medals in the sub £10 price bracket, confirming its reputation as a source of extremely price-competitive Pinot. "Chile still delivers the best value juicy fruit style cheaper Pinots, though Eastern Europe still shows promise," commented Payne after the results were revealed. And if there was a "weak link" in the tasting according to Richard Bampfield MW, that was South Africa. The country in fact achieved 11 medals from 17 entries, but Bampfield said that he felt the wines "failed to impress" with a "slight flatness to the Pinots".

## FRENCH SPARKLE

But what about France? This country's tally of top medals suffered perhaps from

## Results: oaked Pinot

Company	Product Name	Medal	Vintage	Country
<b>Oaked £20-30 (continued)</b>				
Surveyor Thomson Wines	Surveyor Thomson Pinot Noir	Bronze	2011	New Zealand
Marchesi Antinori	Pinot Nero della Sala	Bronze	2011	Italy
Moehr-Niggli Weine	Pilgrim	Bronze	2011	Switzerland
Kellerei Cantina Terlan	Cantina Andriano, Anrar Riserva	Bronze	2010	Italy
Azienda Agricola Antonio Dellabianca	Pinot Nero	Bronze	2010	Italy
<b>Oaked £30+</b>				
Circe Wines	Circe, Hillcrest Road	Gold	2012	Australia
Rodney Strong Vineyards	Jane's Vineyard Pinot Noir	Gold	2011	United States
Del Dotto Vineyards	Cinghiale Vineyard Pinot Noir	Gold	2011	United States
	Sonoma Coast, Fort Ross-Seaview			
Craggy Range Vineyards	'Aroha', Te Muna Road Vineyard	Gold	2011	New Zealand
Jackson Family Wines	Wild Ridge Pinot Noir	Gold	2011	United States
Viña Cono Sur	Ocio	Gold	2010	Chile
Tapanappa Wines	Foggy Hill Vineyard	Silver	2012	Australia
Rodney Strong Vineyards	Russian River Valley Estate	Silver	2012	United States
King Ridge Vineyard	Castello di Amorossa	Silver	2012	United States
	King Ridge Vineyard			
Tolpuddle Vineyard	Tolpuddle Vineyard Pinot Noir	Silver	2012	Australia
Weingut Mario J. Burkhart	Rarus Noir Blauer Spätburgunder	Silver	2011	Germany
Domaine Berthelemot	Pommard 'Noizons'	Silver	2010	France
Bomb Wines	Carden Pinot Noir	Silver	2010	United States
Weingut Thörle	Hölle Spätburgunder	Silver	2011	Germany
Le Clos Jordanne	Le Grand Clos	Silver	2011	Canada
Moorilla	Moorilla Muse	Silver	2011	Australia
Sonnet Wine Cellars	Sonnet Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia	Silver	2010	United States
	Highlands Tondre's Grapefield			
Bergström Wines	Bergström Vineyard, Dundee Hills	Silver	2011	United States
Jamieson Ranch Vineyards	Reata Pinot Noir	Silver	2011	United States
Accolade Wines	Eileen Hardy	Silver	2010	Australia
Paringa Estate	Paringa Estate Pinot Noir	Silver	2010	Australia
Tarras Vineyards	The Canyon	Silver	2009	New Zealand
Boutinot	Onannon Gippsland	Bronze	2011	Australia
Viña Apaltagua	Apaltagua Coleccion	Bronze	2012	Chile
Vallet Frères	Gevrey Chambertin 1er Cru, Clos St Jacques	Bronze	2007	France
Harley Wines	Dalla Cia	Bronze	2011	South Africa
Domaine de la Côte	Bloom's Field	Bronze	2011	United States
By Farr	Sangreal	Bronze	2010	Australia
Weingut Markus Molitor	Brauneberger Klostersgarten	Bronze	2009	Germany
Bomb Wines	Bomb Oregon Pinot Noir	Bronze	2009	United States

## Pinot Noir is all about bouquet and texture, and New Zealand has delivered bouquet

the few entries at the expensive end, while the lower end of the price spectrum performed only moderately well. "We occasionally find good Bourgogne rouge, but it's still a rarity," commented Payne, alluding to his general experience of buying French Pinot. Nevertheless, the country collected seven silvers; a number boosted by France's strong performance in the sparkling category, above all with Champagne blanc de noirs. Payne



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# pinot noir masters

## Q&A: Adolfo Hurtado, chief winemaker, Cono Sur

### What factors in your view make a Pinot Noir great?

Pinot Noir is an extremely delicate grape that you have to master in order to properly express its fruit, freshness, acidity and gracefulness. A good Pinot is a delicate wine with fresh, juicy flavours, smooth tannins, good acidity and great expression.

### Which regions of the world have the potential to produce high quality Pinot Noir?

The ideal winemaking regions for Pinot are those in which there is a combination of red, mineral soils and a cold, dry climate. Burgundy, of course, is the best example, but areas such as Casablanca, San Antonio and Bío Bío have the potential to become major representatives of the variety due to these characteristics.

### How has your own approach to getting the best from Pinot changed over the years?

Since we began working with Martin Prieur on our Ocio Pinot Noir project, our vinification style has changed tremendously. In the past, we treated Pinot in the same way as Cabernet Sauvignon, Carmenere and Syrah.

With time, we learnt that extraction and concentration weren't the way to go about making a good Pinot Noir, so turned our focus to balance, freshness, smooth tannins, acidity and minerality as the key is elegance. Managing yields, harvest dates, carbonic maceration, the amount of extraction and barrel usage have all been factors we've considered in order to produce the most complex and elegant Pinots possible.

### What sort of evolution in the style and popularity of Pinot Noir are you currently seeing in Chile?

Chile is one of the most traditional wine consuming countries, as the majority of consumers continue to primarily drink red wine, 70% of which is Cabernet Sauvignon. This shows that the Chilean consumer has always been a lover of concentrated wines with firm tannins, which is why at the beginning, Pinot Noir wasn't so common here. However, we are now seeing a group of people that are really starting to appreciate the variety's concept of finesse and gracefulness.

### What is it about Pinot Noir that means it has such global appeal?

There has been a global consumer trend towards approachable wines that offer instant pleasure. The wines leading today's consumption trends have a lower alcohol content, less extraction and concentration, softer tannins and are simply fresher. Pinot Noir fits this description perfectly.

### Is there a winemaker or wine whose expression of Pinot Noir inspires you?

Cono Sur's current Pinot style is largely due to us having worked with Martin Prieur from Domaine Jacques Prieur in Meursault for the last 14 years. His wines, philosophy and the way he works inspires and motivates us.



## Panel chair comment



### MARK SAVAGE MW

I think that marginal ripening is the key to success for all varieties but especially for pernicky Pinot where the window of optimum maturity is so short. Freshness is always essential and so stewed fruit is to be avoided at all costs both in the vineyard with picking too late and then in the vinification when over extraction is the danger. As with great tennis players the greatest are always those who make everything look easy eg Federer (rather than Nadal).

Effortless, almost weightless energy is more exciting and refreshing than something that was a struggle. So natural balance is the key.

Correct if you have to but always remember that the greatest results will come from fruit that needed neither chaptalisation nor acidification.

Acidity is much more important for the structure than tannin. Colour is almost irrelevant so do not be prejudiced by light colours. Think of what Mugnier does with his Musigny.

I look for perfume and purity and precision. I hate jammy fruit and over-concentration, which is the enemy of finesse. The target is delicacy rather than power, hence the vital importance of natural acidity. Bright cherry fruit is more appealing in a young Pinot than stewed prunes.

I want to see a kind of nervous energy, almost edgy, never clumsy, heavy-footed, but always racy.

pointed out: "Pinot Noir sparkling wines are serious... quite different from blanc de blancs with a special redcurrant aroma that adds freshness and excitement when done well."

Finally, it was pleasing to witness some of Australia's new Pinot Noirs performing well, with the country's Tapanappa, Eileen Hardy and Tolpuddle Pinots all gaining silvers.

Interestingly, despite the high number of

entries and range of styles, the judges agreed that the tasting had not been too fatiguing. As Bampfield summed up, "I love tasting Pinot Noir, and I thought the wines were delightful. Good Pinot has a briskness that means it's not tiring to taste." With Cabernet Sauvignon the next focus of *db's* Global Masters tasting series, one doubts the judges will be feeling the same way after a day assessing wines made with this thick-skinned grape. *db*

**The wines were  
delightful.  
Good Pinot has a  
briskness that means  
it's not tiring  
to taste**

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# pinot noir masters



## Panel chair comment



### SEBASTIAN PAYNE MW

For me Pinot is all about bouquet and texture. New Zealand has delivered bouquet. Their vineyards, originally planted with the Swiss clone best suited to sparkling wine production, have been replanted with classy scented clones and the results are increasingly excellent, though Otago can be soupy in the years when it can harvest despite the elements.

Chile still delivers the best value fruit and juicy style cheaper Pinots, though Eastern Europe shows promise.

Texture is the crunch with pricier wines, length of flavour and complexity – a hard combination to find. Pinot Noir sparkling wines are serious I think and deserve a mention. They are quite different from blanc de blancs with a special redcurrant aroma that adds freshness an excitement when done well.

## Q&A: Marcelo Papa, winemaker, Maycas de Limarí

### What factors in your view make a Pinot Noir great?

The terroir. Pinot Noir is a very delicate grape that needs optimum conditions to show all its potential. These can be very elegant wines, with complex and delicate flavours, great structure and extraordinary freshness.

### Which regions of the world have the potential to produce high quality Pinot Noir?

Obviously Burgundy is the first place to go and has great conditions, but Limarí also has a lot to show. Characterised by red clay soils overlaying a chalky base, it has a cool, semi-arid climate with a coastal influence that allows the vines to benefit from the morning fog. These cloudy mornings and the calcareous soil provide the wines with a fresh and delicate character.

### How has your own approach to getting the best from Pinot Noir changed over the years?

When you start drinking wine you look for more structure and more intense aromas and flavours, but after years go by you prefer the Burgundy or Piemonte style that provides delicate and fresh wine. This attributes allows enjoying much more the bottle and not get tired after a glass. For me this idea is represented in a good way with the concept “less is more”. Limarí Valley gives me those results.

### What sort of evolution in the style and popularity of Pinot Noir are you currently seeing in Chile?

In Chile, Pinot Noir started in cool areas but with a lot of sun and luminosity like Casablanca and Leyda. In my opinion nowadays Limarí and the south of the wine region are the new areas. You can find less voluptuous style and more

freshness and elegance.

### What is it about Pinot Noir that means it has such global appeal?

Pinot Noir is an everyday wine, you don't get tired of this variety. Its fresh, delicate and elegant. We need consumers that appreciate and understand this wines.

### Is there a winemaker or wine whose expression of Pinot Noir inspires you?

I can't talk about winemakers because I think that for varieties like Chardonnay and Pinot Noir we have to respect the origin, the soil and the climate more than “the elaboration”. Burgundy is one of those places that I get inspired by, but is not the only one. Limarí has this special magic that captivates me and allows for great Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.



## The judges



Left to right: Patrick Schmitt, Hugo Rose MW, Sebastian Payne MW (chair), Linda Jotham MW, Richard Bampfield MW (chair), Mark Savage MW (chair), Anne McHale MW, Neil Sommerfelt MW, Rupert Millar, Alex Hunt MW, Robin Langton, Gearoid Devaney MS

## Q&A: Mike Cox, winemaker, Schug Winery

### What factors in your view make a Pinot Noir great?

For me, Pinot Noir is first and foremost about elegance and mouthfeel. It is very much a textural wine: supple on entry, rich throughout with a long silky finish, all hung on a solid framework of acidity to carry it. From there we can talk about the nuances of the wine as it ages, but it all starts out with the mouthfeel.

### Which regions of the world have the potential to produce high quality Pinot Noir?

Any region where the growing seasons might be long enough for the flavours to fully develop without an oppressive amount of alcohol. In addition to the obvious Burgundy, I have experienced great wines from Germany (primarily the Rheingau), Austria (Neusiedlersee), New Zealand, Oregon, and right here in Carneros.

### How has your own approach to getting the best from Pinot Noir changed over the years?

One of the great things about working with Walter (Schug) is that his vision really has not changed. We don't have to chase styles as they continuously evolve. We make wines that Walter likes to drink. My approach though has matured and I am more willing to hold back and wait for things to develop rather than be too fiddly up front. Not that I am afraid to correct, it's just that I'm a little more patient and tend to shoot for more of a middle ground.

### What sort of evolution in the style and popularity of Pinot Noir are you currently seeing in California?

The pendulum is swinging back from a heavy-handed approach to one in which subtlety and grace are appreciated. If people are looking for big Napa Cabs or a big Dry Creek Zin, they are sticking to

that rather than trying to force those riper styles.

### What is it about Pinot Noir that means it has such global appeal?

Its subtlety; its ever-changing nature. Pinot Noir will never bore you, but it will also soar higher than any other wine.

### Is there a winemaker or wine whose expression of Pinot Noir inspires you?

Bob Sessions for decades, and now Michael McNeill at Hanzell have made wines that are the gold standard for Sonoma Pinot Noir. Scott Rich, formerly of Carneros Creek Etude and now of his own Talisman brand. For Burgundy, my hero is François Millet of Domaine Comte Georges de Vogüé: the absolute master of Pinot Noir.

