

## **2025 2-Pack #4: Pinot Noir: California vs Orgeon!**

**\$59 for the Pair** (*regularly \$45 & \$37 respectively*)

I scream, you scream, we all scream for... Pinot Noir! We love it from France, and we love it from New Zealand... but let's talk about how it grows in the USA. In the last few decades, California's Russian River Valley and Oregon's Willamette Valley have established themselves as prime, albeit disparate, terroirs where this most prized and fickle of grapes can flourish.

Located in the geographical heart of California's Sonoma Coast appellation, and the dead center of Sonoma County, the Russian River Valley initially came to prominence as a growing region for Pinot Noir in the 1960s and 70s. The Russian River itself runs through the northwest corner of the AVA and sends fog from west to east in the afternoon during the growing season. To the south, the Petaluma Gap works much the same way: an east-west valley runs between the coastal ranges and funnels cool air inland from the Pacific Ocean. Thanks to these two topographical features, fog tends to roll in from the west in the late afternoon and hang around overnight until the late morning sun burns it off. The resulting climate – cool, but not cold, with plenty of warm sunlight hours through the middle of the day – is ideal for Pinot Noir to achieve ripeness and still retain acidity and complexity.

The Yamhill-Carlton AVA is located within Oregon's Willamette Valley. Surrounding the towns of Yamhill and Carlton, west southwest of Portland, the AVA is located just north of the Van Duzer Gap, which functions the same way as the Petaluma Gap, funneling cool maritime air east from the Pacific Ocean over the vineyards. The coastal range itself, to the west of Yamhill-Carlton, along with Chehalem Mountain to the North and the Dundee Hills to the east, protect the region from rain, which is a real threat to tenderhearted Pinot Noir's ability to ripen.



### **Metzker Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2018** (*\$45 regularly*)

Metzker Family Estates is a young project in California, producing varietally correct regional wines from some of California's most prestigious areas. In 2018, a cooler spring led to a long flowering period for the vines and a consistent and near-perfect fruit set. Temperatures that summer were moderate, with fewer heat spikes than in recent years, resulting in a fresher fruit profile in the finished wine. After a mid-late September harvest, the fruit was 100% destemmed and fermented in tank, then aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 30% of which were new. The wine shows perfectly ripe red fruits – fresh cherries and raspberries – with bright acidity and subtle tannins.

### **Suzor "The Tower" Pinot Noir Yamhill-Carlton** (*\$37 regularly*)

Another small, young, family winery, Suzor is a husband-wife partnership working with fruit from a handful of selected sites in the Willamette Valley. Their "The Tower" Pinot Noir is produced from fruit from three vineyards, a blend which is customized each year according to microclimate variances in order to showcase the best of the region. The 2022 was aged 12 months in French oak barrels, 15% of which were new. The wine shows some darker berry fruit – blackberries and black cherries – complemented by earthy hints of black tea. All these delicious aromatics are framed by silky tannins and fresh acidity for a beautiful expression of Oregon Pinot Noir.