

LEARN A BIT MORE ABOUT

PINOT NOIR



Ah – Pinot Noir. The teasing, tantalising grape which can break your heart with its caprices and whims. People who love Pinot, really love Pinot and it's just as well because otherwise, they'd never put up with the trials and tribulations of growing it, let alone trying to make it into great wine. But when it works, when it all comes together, when there is a perfect alliance of the planets and stars – then that is when you see what all the fuss is about and understand why Pinot Noir winemakers will never give up on their dreams of perfection.

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

Pinot Noir is cool – very literally. Growing it in hotter, inland areas can be problematic as it is easy to lose the very delicate aromatic flavours if it gets too ripe, too quickly. Best sites are near the coast – the Hemel en Aarde Valley has long been celebrated for its Pinots and now hopes are high for even cooler areas down South towards the very tip of Africa at Cape Agulhas. There, the cold sea breezes and stormy winds make life tough for the vines, ensuring that what comes from them is only the very finest of grapes, fit for this regal wine.

WHAT DOES IT TASTE LIKE?

Pinot Noirs tend to be quite low in colour – when young they are a pale ruby and quickly turn to pale garnet with only a very little bit of ageing. This leads people to think that the wines might be quite dilute or simple in flavour and nothing could be further from the truth. A good Pinot bursts with loads of red berried fruit – think strawberries, raspberries, cranberries and cherries – with a little earthy, wet forest floor on the side. As it ages, this earthy element increases, becoming gamey and savoury with perhaps a hint of spice and tar.



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WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW?

Pinot Noir is the great black grape of Burgundy, making some of the most expensive red wines in the world. The Burgundians are fanatical about 'terroir' – that magical combination of soil, climate, aspect, grape variety and climate – and plenty of the best wines come from one single vineyard which is shared amongst several (sometimes many) different growers. It also likes to mutate at the drop of a hat, resulting in other grapes such as Pinot Gris (aka Pinot Grigio) and Pinot Blanc although research now has definitively un-linked it from the Champagne grape, Meunier. Previously known as Pinot Meunier, science has now proved that they are, in fact, completely different grapes.

'WHAT SHOULD WE EAT WITH IT?

Although packed with flavour, Pinot Noir is a little lighter on tannins than most other black grapes which makes it a great wine for serving with fishy things – tuna in particular tends to go really well as does swordfish. Duck and lamb are also traditional partners and, although using a Burgundy for cooking can be expensive, this is the best grape to go for if you're making a classic Boeuf Bourguignon.

