

Pinot Noir Wine



By H.L. Barat FitzWalter Reynolds

A Brief History

Pinot Noir is one of the oldest vine grape varieties known and was named by the noble Pinot family after the pinecone shape of the grape bunches. Pinot's been cultivated in Burgundy since the 1st century AD. One legend has it arriving in Burgundy via the Aedui from their invasions of Lombardy and Italy. Another legend has it arriving via the Romans while other tales refer to the Romans finding Pinot already established in the region. With the Barbarian invaders driving the Romans from the region, the Catholic church inadvertently became custodian of the fine Pinots. The monks used Pinot Noir in their sacraments and hence gained approval for the wine. They improved the varietal through careful vineyard practices and by the 6th century, most of Burgundy was divided into church owned vineyards. The first documented mention of Pinot Noir in Burgundy doesn't occur till 1345. French monks brought the grape to the Rheingau region where it's been cultivated since 1470. Church owned vineyards were seized and distributed to families in Burgundy during the French revolution around 1789 resulting in an independently owned and run vineyard model that still survives today.

Pliny the Elder (23-79 A.D.) indicated that a Pinot precursor was being grown by the Allobroger tribe when the Romans invaded Burgundy two millennia ago.

Phillip the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, noted the small, tightly-packed grape bunches resembled a pine cone. Hence, in 1375 he named it Pineau, and forbid the growing of its rival, the Gamay, which he condemned as a "very bad and disloyal plant."

Vinting Technique

The Juice

This wine was produced by fermenting the juice of the Pinot Noir grape. As there are no vineyards growing Pinot grapes in my area (at least, none that I am aware of), a high-grade Pinot wine concentrate was purchased from a California winery. The juice was re hydrated with filtered, clarified water to its original strength.

Fermentation

A yeast used in France in the production on red wines was used for the fermentation (Lavlin 71B-1122). The wine was fermented for two weeks, then rack (or drained) into a new, clean fermenter leaving the yeast sediment behind. This is done as the wine will pick up a noticeable and somewhat unpleasant yeasty flavor if left on the dead yeast sediment for too long.

Bottling

Once fermentation was complete the wine was then allowed to clarify naturally by letting it sit for several weeks. The wine was then bottled.

Bibliography

Pliny the Elder. *Natural History*, 10 vols. London: Harvard University Press, 1992.
Latin text with English translation.

Oxford English Dictionary