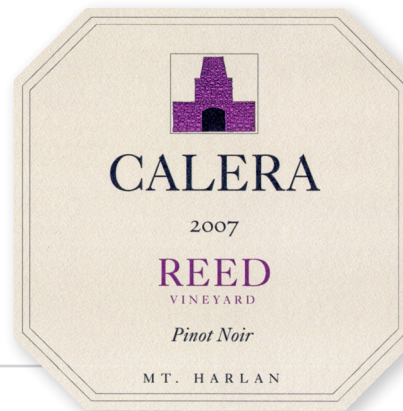
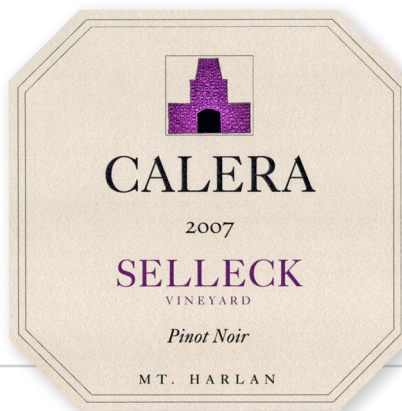


# Ranked 1 & 2 Out of 835 Pinot Noirs!



YEAR'S BEST PINOT NOIR

## YEAR'S BEST PINOT NOIR

Our blind panels tasted **835** new-release North American pinot noirs over the past 12 months. Our critics rated **119** as exceptional (90+) and **63** as Best Buys. **Joshua Greene** reviews California wines and **Patrick J. Comiskey** reviews New York and Oregon wines. Find a complete list of wines tasted and all reviews at [wineandspiritsmagazine.com](http://wineandspiritsmagazine.com).

# 96

CALIFORNIA

**96 | Calera** \$75  
**2007 Mt. Harlan Selleck Vineyard Pinot Noir** In 1975, Josh Jensen planted the Selleck Vineyard on Mt. Harlan, a rocky, south-to southwest-facing slope where he found more limestone in the soil than in his other vineyard sites. The exposition lends this wine more concentration than Reed (recommended below), shown in the depth of color, darker fruit tone and grip of the mineral-inflected tannins. Transparent and vinous rather than directly fruity, this hints at woodland cherries and *fraises des bois*. There's a purity and honesty to the flavors that are rare in the New World and increasingly difficult to find in the Old. Both the Selleck and Reed '07s are magnificent California wines, suited to long aging. (411 cases) *Calera Wine Company, Hollister, CA*

rose adds to the fragrance of the fruit and to the essence of the wine overall. The flavors clear, lively and delicious, particularly salad of duck confit. (W&S, 6/10; 510 cases) *Keller Estate, Petaluma, CA*

**Baxter** \$45  
**Anderson Valley Run Dog Vineyard Pinot Noir** Rose and spice scents brighten the wine's delicate forest berry flavors. It's natural and finely ripe, a point at which the fruit has freshness, structure and grip power. This is classic Anderson Valley Pinot, from an acre of Pommard clone on an east-facing hillside. A delicious companion to roast duck. (W&S, 12/10; 75 cases) *Baxter Winery, Elk, CA*

**Bjornstad** \$40  
**Sonoma Coast Hellenthal Vineyard Pinot Noir (Best Buy)** Gard Hellenthal originally planted his vineyard near Fort Ross in the early 1980s. Greg Bjornstad convinced him when he planted an additional five acres in 2000. Later, Bjornstad launched his own label in 2005, focused on far-pinot noir, including Hellenthal's new vineyard, where the coastal winds seem to blow any weight off the bright red and sour cherry flavors of this wine: They're transparent and ethereal. A resinous character grounds the tannins and a floral flavor lasts. Serve this with grilled steak and roasted hedgehog mushrooms. (W&S, 6/10; 152 cases) *Bjornstad Cellars, Rosa, CA*

Maria bench. The mix of clonal selections yields layers of meaty flavor, the tannin complex and dynamic, the ripe cherry fruit intermingling with the structure and lending transparency to the finish. There's a gloss to the flavors, a graceful finesse that belies the wine's power. The structure is substantial enough to match *rogons de veau* with mushrooms. (165 cases) *Cambria Winery & Vineyard, Santa Maria, CA*



**93 | Drew** \$40  
**2009 Anderson Valley Fog-Eater Pinot Noir (Best Buy)** Jason Drew blended this '09 from Balo and Monument Tree, two vineyards near Philo. The fruit provides cool, direct flavors as well as veils of complexity, like the coastal fog referenced in the name. This is a fresh, fragrant pinot from the Deep End of the Anderson Valley, an elegant wine with the feel of quilted silk. The finish grows with earthiness and tickles with high-toned scents of rose. Decant it for roast duck. (370 cases) *Drew Family Cellars, Elk, CA*

# 95

**95 | Calera** \$50  
**2007 Mt. Harlan Reed Vineyard Pinot Noir** Pinot noir vines like limestone and they've found it on Mt. Harlan, the site of a 19th century limestone quarry. The vines at Reed, a 4.4-acre vineyard planted in 1975, grow on a north- to northeast-facing hillside and are among the last to ripen at Calera. That soil and exposition create a wine of delicate power, its complex aroma touching on fennel seed, tarragon and wild raspberries. The fresh herbal character smells like the hillsides of Mt. Harlan, while the tannic structure is marked by the limestone soils. A trumpet blare of terroir, this is an awesome wine. (190 cases) *Calera Wine Company, Hollister, CA*



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**93 | Hanzell** \$95  
**2007 Sonoma Valley Pinot Noir** Savory woodland mushroom scents lend a sense of mystery to this wine, its flavors ranging from meat to minerals. There's nothing directly fruity about it. Dark in tone but not dense,

# Wine & Spirits

APRIL 2011



## GEEK CHIC

This issue's tastings are focused on sommelier wines—that is, the wines sommeliers often tell us they are drinking, or wish more of their guests would be drinking. That means high-acid, mineral-laden wines, like the rieslings, grüner veltliners and blafränkisch coming out of Austria (p. 105); old-vine Muscadet, crisp Sancerre, Vouvray and pineau d'aunis from the Loire (p. 102); German riesling (p. 124) and, of course, white Burgundy (don't miss Domaine Leflaive's 2008 Chevalier-Montrachet, p. 121).

More and more, it also means Beaujolais, particularly Morgon, and for good reason: See Chris Hallowell's article on page 48 for the back story and page 123 for recommendations. It also means fine Tuscan reds like the sculpted, elegant Scario from Le Macchiole in Bolgheri or the classic Chiantis from Castell'in Villa and Verrazzano (p. 109). And it ought to include Portuguese whites, if the stellar examples on p. 127 are any indication.

Pinot noir may be the most important tool in a sommelier's cellar, however, the wine that can bridge steak and fish as well as the taste preferences of men and women. Pore through the tastings starting on page 90, and you'll be well prepared to mine any list for its best bottles—the ones sommeliers hope you'll notice and enjoy.

As always, these picks come from our blind tastings, with panelists who represent some of the industry's best talent. In New York, Chris Baggetta of *Eleven Madison Park*, Levi Dalton of *Alto* and Hristo Zisovski of *Ai Fiori* were just a few of the tasters who joined us; our San Francisco panels included sommeliers Bruno Baglin of *First Crush*, Ian Becker of *Absinthe Brasserie & Bar* and Arlequin Wine Merchant, Gianpaolo Paterlini of *Acquerello* and John Vuong of *Ame*.

You'll find a detailed description of our tasting process on page 119. For notes on all recommended wines and listings of all the wines tasted for this issue, go to [wineandspiritsmagazine.com](http://wineandspiritsmagazine.com).

### Year's Best

90	Pinot Noir (US)	tasted: 835 top wines: 119 best buys: 63
102	Loire	tasted: 107 top wines: 34 best buys: 8
105	Austria	tasted: 229 top wines: 40 best buys: 27
109	Tuscan Reds	tasted: 256 top wines: 38 best buys: 18
113	Portuguese Reds	tasted: 157 top wines: 25 best buys: 9

### New Releases

116	American	tasted: 260 top wines: 28 best buys: 17
120	Imported	tasted: 345 top wines: 89 best buys: 34
	Total	tasted: 2,189 top wines: 373 best buys: 176