

FOOD & WINE

ITALIAN SPRING

THE
SPRING
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ISSUE

LUSCIOUS PASTAS, VIBRANT WINES, AND
FRESH MENUS TO CELEBRATE THE SEASON

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WITH SPECK,
PEAS, AND
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THE 2019 WINE GUIDE

WHAT TO PAIR,
POUR, AND DRINK NOW

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PINOTS FROM POINTS UNKNOWN

Pinot Noir's high-maintenance personality ("I can't grow here because it's too cold; I can't grow here because it's too hot; I certainly can't grow there—it's clearly far too wet") means that only a few wine regions produce great examples. And yet, as demand grows and grows, new Pinot sources do appear, whether due to bursts of new winemaking talent or vineyards planted by visionary risk-takers.

California's Sta. Rita Hills

West of Santa Barbara, cool winds off the Pacific help create some of California's best Pinots. As winemaker Chad Melville says, "Pinot here has a kind of blue fruit, blueberry note. Whenever I smell that character it's like, 'Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Sta. Rita Hills!'" Try his **2015 Melville Sta. Rita Hills Estate Pinot Noir** (\$36) to see what he means. Others to look for include the peppery **2015 Brewer-Clifton Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$40), the violet-scented **2015 Alma Rosa Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** (\$45) from Richard Sanford (who in 1971 planted the first Pinot vines in the area), and the complex, subtly minty **2016 Chanin Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot Noir** (\$60) with layers of dark berry fruit lifted by anise notes.

Germany's Baden

Here's a surprise: Germany is the third-largest producer of Pinot Noir in the world (or Spätburgunder, as it's known there), after France and the U.S. The Baden region (sandwiched between the Black Forest and the Rhine) and the Ahr region are the sources of its greatest wines, which combine Burgundian elegance with more ripeness than one might suspect. Check out the bright **2016 Shelter Lovely Lilly Pinot Noir** (\$19), named after the former cellar dog of owners Hans-Bert Espe and Silke Wolf. The **2016 Franz Keller Schwarzer Adler Pinot Noir** (\$42) offers brilliant wild-strawberry fruit, or look for the elegantly fragrant **2015 Meyer-Näkel Spätburgunder** (\$35).

Chile's Coastal Edge

Chile made its wine-name on Bordeaux varieties: structured Cabernets and Carmenères, crisp Sauvignon Blancs. But the cool coastal edges of this 2,700-mile-long country are prime spots for Pinot Noir production, particularly valleys like San Antonio, Limarí, Casablanca, Leyda, and Itata. For a super value, the cherry-inflected **2018 TerraPura Pinot Noir** (\$13) from the southern Itata Valley is hard to beat. Or try the red-fruited **2017 Kingston Family Vineyards Tobiano Pinot Noir** (\$26), from a family that's been farming in the Casablanca Valley since the early 1900s. And the **2015 De Martino Legado Pinot Noir** (\$20), from the Limarí Valley, is distinctively silky with lots of peppery notes.



Blind Tasting for the Rest of Us

Getting some friends together, putting a few wines in bags, and trying to suss out what they are can be a great theme for a party. The **WineGame** app (winegame.com), from chef José Andrés and his ThinkFoodGroup cofounder Rob Wilder, takes blind tasting out of the hands of obsessive sommeliers and turns it into a multiple-choice game that even neophytes can have fun with. Get some pals, scan your wines with your phone, create an avatar, taste, and start guessing. The app tells you when you're right (or wrong) and, crucially, gives people multiple chances to get things right. Worst-case scenario: You guess wrong, and still get to hang out and drink a bunch of great wine with your friends.



Wine Gets the Hollywood Treatment

Recent months have been particularly fertile for wine-related movies. The third installment of Jason Wise's sommelier-centric documentary series, **Somm 3**, restages the Judgment of Paris tasting of 1976, only using Pinot Noir this time. The Republic of Georgia and its 8,000 years of winemaking history are the focus of both the in-depth **Our Blood Is Wine** and former sommelier and founder of *Whetstone* magazine Stephen Satterfield's more personal **Wild Grapes** (whetstonemedia.co). And for a fascinating paean to some of Burgundy's top winemakers, rent Oregon-based importer Scott Wright's **Three Days of Glory**. Find all except *Wild Grapes* on Amazon or iTunes.