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60 Pinot Noirs from
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FOOD & ART

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Noir's Ark

While Pinot Noir finds its finest expression in its ancestral home of Burgundy, the grape is capable of producing quality wines of great elegance and finesse in many winegrowing regions outside of France

TEXT BY KENNY LEONG PHOTOGRAPHY BY LIONEL LAI

PINOT NOIR IS A LITTLE LIKE A FINICKY TODDLER – extremely unpredictable and difficult to manage. Among its black grape peers, Pinot is notoriously temperamental, yielding easily to varying climatic conditions – it chooses its environs carefully, only showing its best in a place that is neither too warm nor too cool.

But that's not to say Pinot isn't adaptable – it is, and when nurtured well, it is perfectly capable of capturing the characteristics of the terroir and the intentions of the winemaker. Pinot appreciates a gentle hand in the cellar, and benefits greatly from minimal interference. The resulting wine is one that boasts of remarkable textural appeal, brimming with complex fruit qualities framed by soft, velvety tannins and structure.

Burgundy, the motherland of the grape, is still home to the finest Pinot Noir wines. And the best parcels, the grand cru vineyards, are where the grape reaches its apogee. But Pinot is also a relatively good traveller. Elsewhere outside of France, in areas such as California, it has gained more than significant traction and success. Nearer to home, Pinot has made itself a new home in New Zealand, in particular Central Otago, where some of the finest (and most value for money) New World Pinots are made.

Even in Australia – a country often noted for producing

big, bold assertive reds from Shiraz – it is interesting to see that Pinot is garnering greater attention. Just a few months ago, James Halliday announced Bass Phillip Reserve Pinot Noir 2010 as his wine of the year.

For renowned Adelaide Hills producer Shaw & Smith – one of Australia's leading wine producers owned and run by Martin Shaw and Michael Hill-Smith MW – a Pinot project proves too tempting to pass up. The duo recently started Tolpuddle Wines (named for the Tolpuddle Martyrs) in Tasmania, with full confidence in the region's capability in producing Chardonnay and Pinot Noir of great character and intensity.

Austria is also getting in on the act. Three years ago, I attended a tasting where Austrian Pinots were tasted among the world's finest Pinot selections. Of the top 10 wines alone, six were from Austria – a clear sign, we may deduce, that Austrian winemakers are pretty serious about putting out Pinots that stand up to the world's finest. (The news was later picked up by Jancis Robinson, and you can read her coverage of the tasting at her website <http://www.jancisrobinson.com/articles/a20100816.html>.)

There are indeed many selections on the market, and it's not hard to find Pinots that offer great value for quality. Here's a good place to start.



ABOUT THE VENUE
Named for the proprietors’ favourite Parisian neighbourhood, O Batignolles is a chic wine bar and bistro focusing on wines sourced directly from independent wineries across France. Boutique wineries take the limelight here, as owners Antoine Rouland and Marie-Charlotte Ley have an extraordinary passion for understated wines of great personality and quality. They bring to Singapore extraordinary wines that have never been seen on the local market. 2 Gemmill Lane. Tel: 6438 3913

FRANCE

DOMAINE DES PERDRIX NUITS SAINT GEORGES 2008

The Straits Wine Company \$115 ★★★★★
 The wine shows some ageing with an orange tint. The nose has medium intensity and aromas, with a touch of leather. Firm nice structure, hint of acidity; it develops nicely in the glass.

LES CALLIERS JEAN D'ALLIBERT LE GRAND PINOT NOIR 2008

Red & White International \$32 ★★
 Nice complex nose with cherry flavours. Rich fruit with a touch of oak, which can be slightly overpowering.

ANTONIN RODET CHATEAU DE RULLY PREMIER CRU MOLESME 2008

Top Wines \$85 ★★
 On the nose there is a lot of tertiary aromas. Definitely a mature wine, reaching or having reached its peak. Drink now.

BALLOT-MILLOT & FILS VOLNAY TAILLEPIEDS 2008

Richfield \$105 ★★★★★
 A lot of ripe fruit, spice, and some clove. A lively and light wine, perfect to drink now.

LOUIS JADOT COTE DE BEAUNE VILLAGE 2009

Culina \$53.50 ★★★★★
 Fresh and aromatic with lots of floral aromas and fruit. The palate is rounded and fruity, finishing with medium length. Very enjoyable wine.

HENRI GOUGES NUITS ST GEORGES CLOS DES PORRETS ST GEORGES 2010

Wein & Vin \$125 ★★★★★
 Aromas of nuts roasting on the fire. Rich, intense and ripe fruit palate. Nice structure; firm and persistent.

FOLLIN ARBELET ALOXE CORTON LES VERCOTS 1ER CRU 2010

Caveau Wines \$101.65 ★★★★★
 Soft ripe fruits with finesse and elegance on the palate, with good length on the finish. It develops nicely in the glass.