

FOOD & WINE

The 30 Pinot Noirs to Drink If You Want to Be a Real Expert

From Burgundy and California to Oregon, Italy, Australia, and Germany, these are the bottles that will turn you from a fan into a pro.

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Ask the world's top sommeliers, or the wealthiest collectors of wine why they are fanatical about Pinot Noir, and you'll get essentially the same response: It's a grape that produces the greatest wines in the world.

The sacred home of Pinot Noir is France's Burgundy region. Some of the most expensive red Burgundy wines in the world begin here as tiny, delicate clusters of precious berries dangling from rows of pristine, manicured vines. As Jancis Robinson MW, says, it is a grape "capable of producing divinely scented, gorgeously fruity expressions of place."

To give you an idea of its potential, a current-release of one of the most sought-after wines in the world—a rare *Grand Cru* Red Burgundy from the Côte de Nuits, produced by Aubert de Villaine at Domaine de la Romanée-Conti (DRC)—retails in the U.S. for around \$15,000-\$20,000 or more *per bottle*.

But don't worry, you don't have to buy a bottle of DRC to become an expert in Pinot Noir. What you need to do is understand the grape, and taste the classics.

First, know that it's a finicky variety. While grapes like the widely popular Cabernet Sauvignon can grow almost anywhere that is warm or hot, Pinot Noir demands a cool-climate. Planted all over the world, the best Pinots are produced from vines planted in limestone-rich (calcareous) clay soils, which tend to drain easily, meaning vines have to struggle to burrow deep for water and nutrients, essentially concentrating flavors in the grapes. Most winemakers say that all they have to do is usher it from vine to bottle, and not mess anything up. If they succeed, the result can be a stunning light-to-medium bodied red—elegant,

powerful, or finesse-driven, that will taste great young, and will develop gorgeous complexities over a decade or more in bottle.

Next, gather these 30 Pinots and drink them, while pondering their place of origin and the story behind each bottle. Good Pinot isn't typically cheap, so you've got to be willing to pony up a little more to become an expert, but it's worth it. Oh, and, if you've got any DRC you're looking to share, DM me on Twitter. Thanks in advance.

2. 2016 Jean-Claude Boisset Bourgogne Pinot Noir Les Ursulines Burgundy, France (\$19)



The only under-\$20 wine on this list, but it drinks like one double the price. Dark and earthy, with mouthwatering black cherry and toasty oak, this hails from the Boisset family's ancient vines in the Cote de Nuits. Many of you will be familiar with Jean-Claude's son, Jean-Charles Boisset for his flashy, unabashedly hedonistic persona and his array of wines under the Boisset Collection, Raymond Vineyards, and Buena Vista in Sonoma. Jean-Claude started out as a *négociant* in Nuits-St.-Georges. *Decanter* defines a negociant as some who: "will buy either grapes (and vinify them) or must (and ferment it) or finished wines (and age them in their cellars)."