

# pinotnoir

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## where it's from

Look for...

- Burgundy, France
- New Zealand
- Walker Bay, South Africa
- Chile
- Oregon/California, USA

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'Pinot noir is one of the oldest grapes around and it's possibly related to the earliest wild vines cultivated by man,' says Bibendum's Gareth Groves. 'There's evidence of it being grown in Burgundy as early as the 4th Century, and it's still the home of the grape, but today it gets planted all over the world: California, Oregon, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa all make really good examples.'

And like many grape varieties, Pinot noir is rather particular about just where it gets set down, preferring cooler climes to heady heat. So no tropical sunshine, thanks. 'Pinot noir has been exported out to all but the hottest wine growing regions,' adds Heritage wine expert, Toby Young, 'because whilst it is one of the most difficult grapes to grow (at least partly because of the grape's thin skin), it has the potential to produce some of the finest red wines, complete with unparalleled complexity, elegance and finesse.'

## what it tastes like

Look for...

- Sweet red berries
- Fresh, fruity aromas
- Cherries and plums
- Violets
- Mushroom, 'farmyard' flavours

Some of the juiciest, richest and most flavoursome wines have the mighty Pinot noir grape to thank. But a whole host of decidedly average wines have also hit bars and shelves as less scrupulous producers jump on the popularity of the grape to produce knock down versions. But if you get a good one, it'll knock your pants off. Seriously, just read below.

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'And they tend to produce wines that are known at their best for elegance and almost sensual mouth feel,' continues Toby Young. 'Flavours can include cherries, red fruits, currants, sometimes with hints of sweetness and violets. Sometimes they can be savoury, with 'farmyard', gamey notes, but generally the wine is lighter than say a Cabernet sauvignon, with more emphasis on gentle tannins, a silky mouth feel and sometimes acidity.'

Climate and terroir also play a big part with Pinot noir's taste. 'Pinot Noir flavours are reminiscent of sweet red berries, plums, cherries and at times notable earthy flavours, depending on the growing conditions,' says Bruno Colomer Martí, Head Winemaker at Codorniu.

And given their prima donna nature, it's only fitting that,

aside from champagne, the grape prefers to remain as a varietal wine, so without the addition of any other grapes. 'It can be quite a light red wine with red berry fruit flavours such as strawberry and raspberry, but with age it gets a bit wild and funky, developing earthy, mushroomy, farmyard flavours that taste a lot better than they sound!' says Gareth, of Bibendum Wines.

Indeed, once it gets tucked away for a few years, Pinot noir enters a new realm. 'As the wine ages the flavours become more 'adult,' says Tom Forrest. 'The fresh fruits decline and are replaced by more savoury vegetal, meaty notes and even something 'farmyardy' and gamey.' Yep, that's farmyard. Twice.

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Look for...

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- Russian River Valley, California
- Martinborough, New Zealand
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'The best Pinot noirs I have drunk have been from Burgundy but there are lots of poor quality, expensive wines made there too,' says Gareth Groves. 'For value for money, I'd look to New Zealand or California.'

Toby Young agrees. 'Without doubt, the best Pinot noir comes from Burgundy, in part due to the perfect 'terroir,' but also due to French wine makers' skill and experience in coaxing out the best from this often fickle grape. The best results are arguably some of the best wines in the world.'

But there is also much to be gained from exploring different origins says Toby, and Bruno Colomer Marti agrees.

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So let's head to the Southern Hemisphere. 'I've recently tasted some cracking Pinot Noir wines from Central Otago in New Zealand,' says Tom Forrest, 'and I've found some really nice examples from Chile in the cool area of the Bio Bio Valley. But if I was forced to say where the best Pinot noir wines come from I would have to say Burgundy, and of course Champagne.'

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- Lightly grilled steaks (with older wines)
- Chicken with tarragon (with younger wines)
- Beef bourguignon (with younger wines)
- Tuna steaks (with younger wines)

More a question of what not to eat with Pinot noir, given that this is one of the friendliest food wines out there. From smoked salmon to red meats, a decent Pinot noir provides fine accompaniment to even the toughest of your stomach destined dishes.

'Despite the general rule red wine does not always have to be paired with red meat and white wine with fish or white meat,' says Pernod Ricard's Adrian Atkinson. 'A delicate Pinot noir is perfect with turkey, ham or tuna.'

'If you're dining out and your friends order pork, lamb, smoked salmon or filet of beef, it's a pretty safe bet to order Pinot noir,' adds Bruno Colomer Marti. 'It's light-bodied enough to accommodate fish and also pairs well with lean meats. It can even accompany red meats, as long as the meat's sauce is not too powerful or assertive.'

But while versatility is at the heart of Pinot noir's appeal, many find it best when combined with strong, powerful, game and red meat flavours.

'Lighter styles can be great with fish if people don't want to drink white wine but the best combination is the holy trinity of game, wild mushrooms and bacon,' says Bibendum's Gareth Groves. 'Try a roasted partridge wrapped in posh streaky with some chanterelles. Heaven with a glass of decent Pinot!'

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'Some of the very light and fruity wines of Alsace can even be drunk on their own, slightly chilled,' adds Toby Young, proving this wine really deserves a couple of options on wine menus. ►



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- *Tom Forrest - Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Burgundy or Wooing Tree, New Zealand*
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Look for...

- Burgundy, France
- New Zealand
- Walker Bay, South Africa
- Chile
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Most experts agree that the best of these wines come from Burgundy in France, where the grape originates, but Oregon and California in the States and New Zealand's Martinborough regions are considered good spots to set down roots too. And many experimental producers are now beginning to have success in other parts of the world.

'Pinot noir is one of the oldest grapes around and it's possibly related to the earliest wild vines cultivated by man,' says Bibendum's Gareth Groves. 'There's evidence of it being grown in Burgundy as early as the 4th Century, and it's still the home of the grape, but today it gets planted all over the world: California, Oregon, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa all make really good examples.'

And like many grape varieties, Pinot noir is rather particular about just where it gets set down, preferring cooler climes to heady heat. So no tropical sunshine, thanks. 'Pinot noir has been exported out to all but the hottest wine growing regions,' adds Heritage wine expert, Toby Young, 'because whilst it is one of the most difficult grapes to grow (at least partly because of the grape's thin skin), it has the potential to produce some of the finest red wines, complete with unparalleled complexity, elegance and finesse.'

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Look for...

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- Fresh, fruity aromas
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Some of the juiciest, richest and most flavoursome wines have the mighty Pinot noir grape to thank. But a whole host of decidedly average wines have also hit bars and shelves as less scrupulous producers jump on the popularity of the grape to produce knock down versions. But if you get a good one, it'll knock your pants off. Seriously, just read below.

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'And they tend to produce wines that are known at their best for elegance and almost sensual mouth feel,' continues Toby Young. 'Flavours can include cherries, red fruits, currants, sometimes with hints of sweetness and violets. Sometimes they can be savoury, with 'farmyard', gamey notes, but generally the wine is lighter than say a Cabernet sauvignon, with more emphasis on gentle tannins, a silky mouth feel and sometimes acidity.'

Climate and terroir also play a big part with Pinot noir's taste. 'Pinot Noir flavours are reminiscent of sweet red berries, plums, cherries and at times notable earthy flavours, depending on the growing conditions,' says Bruno Colomer Martí, Head Winemaker at Codorniu.

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Indeed, once it gets tucked away for a few years, Pinot noir enters a new realm. 'As the wine ages the flavours become more 'adult,' says Tom Forrest. 'The fresh fruits decline and are replaced by more savoury vegetal, meaty notes and even something 'farmyardy' and gamey.' Yep, that's farmyard. Twice.

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Toby Young agrees. 'Without doubt, the best Pinot noir comes from Burgundy, in part due to the perfect 'terroir,' but also due to French wine makers' skill and experience in coaxing out the best from this often fickle grape. The best results are arguably some of the best wines in the world.'

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'Part of the fun of Pinot noir is exploring the different flavour characteristics that come from the winemaking and viticulture of different regions. If you're starting out, try something from the Old World for a classic Pinot noir taste and then go on to explore Pinot noir wines from other regions and the New World.'

So let's head to the Southern Hemisphere. 'I've recently tasted some cracking Pinot Noir wines from Central Otago in New Zealand,' says Tom Forrest, 'and I've found some really nice examples from Chile in the cool area of the Bio Bio Valley. But if I was forced to say where the best Pinot noir wines come from I would have to say Burgundy, and of course Champagne.'

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Look for...

- Game, wild mushrooms and bacon (with older wines)
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- Chicken with tarragon (with younger wines)
- Beef bourguignon (with younger wines)
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More a question of what not to eat with Pinot noir, given that this is one of the friendliest food wines out there. From smoked salmon to red meats, a decent Pinot noir provides fine accompaniment to even the toughest of your stomach destined dishes.

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