

wine

morningtonpinot

Photography Jennifer Soo



**2007 Moorooduc Estate
McIntyre Vineyard,
\$35.99**

Fermenting with wild yeasts is just one of the Burgundian tricks used to make this superb, complex pinot. Wild raspberry and ripe strawberry aromas interplay with hints of Moroccan spices and autumnal undergrowth.



**2006 Eldridge Estate
Pinot Noir, \$48 (cellar
door)**

David Lloyd is nicknamed "Lord Eldridge" and indeed this is a noble wine with a purple hue and an elegant nose of raspberries, red currants and violets. The palate is restrained, with sweet fruit, bright acidity and mild tannins.



**2007 Stonier Reserve
Pinot Noir, \$54.99**

The Stonier wines have entered a new age with the Reserve label in top form. Made from the oldest vines, the '07 is bright, intense and focused with high-toned, juicy fruit – ripe cherries, wild strawberries and fresh raspberries with a dash of exotic spice.



**2007 Yabby Lake Red
Claw Pinot Noir, \$30.99**

Robert Kirby, of Village Roadshow fame, is behind Yabby Lake. His "entry level" pinot is tight and bright with aromatics of red currant and raspberry and a hint of cedarwood. Red fruits abound with a hint of spicy oak and a gentle squeeze of dusky tannins.



**2007 Port Phillip Estate
Pinot Noir, \$38.99**

A spectacular vineyard that produces spectacular wines. The '07 was an excellent vintage; the grapes picked at full maturity with rich, ripe fruit flavours – dark plums and black cherries overlaid with spicy oak. A dense, lush and plush pinot.

Passionate Victorian winemakers have mastered the famously tricky pinot grape, writes Peter Bourne.

Growers, makers and consumers all love pinot noir and it's considered the Holy Grail of grape varieties. Up front are red currants, ripe cherries and wild strawberries and the background is even more exciting – the earthiness of mushrooms and truffles, the fresh smell of a forest floor in autumn, the faded glory of falling rose petals.

But pinot noir can be capricious in the vineyard, cantankerous in the winery and elusive in the bottle and, as a result, good pinot is always in short supply, even at astronomical prices. Indeed, drinking pinot noir takes real commitment, both financially and emotionally.

The most sought-after pinot in the world is Domaine de la Romanée Conti, a wine from Vosne-Romanée, a village in the heart of pinot country – Burgundy in France. The top wine, La Romanée, from the less-than-stellar 2004 vintage, sells for \$5000 a bottle – and old and rare bottles sell for much more. You don't have to spend Domaine de la Romanée Conti prices but even everyday pinot sells for not much less than \$20 – twice the price of an acceptable cabernet or shiraz. Top-class examples quickly run to \$50, with the best easily topping \$100.

In Australia, a pioneering group on the Mornington Peninsula are passionate about their pinots. They include Nat and Rosalie White of Main Ridge Estate, who planted their vineyard in 1975. There are also ambassadors, such as former publisher Brian Stonier, who founded Stonier winery a few years after the Whites and helped bring the fledgling pinots of the Mornington to a wider audience. Although Stonier is now part of the giant Japanese beer giant Kirin, Brian remains an enthusiastic envoy for the brand, pinot noir and the Mornington Peninsula. The Stonier winery hosts an annual International Pinot Noir Celebration, pitting its Reserve Pinot Noir against the best from the region, Australia and the world.

Another great Peninsula pinot comes from Hurley Vineyards, owned by Victorian Supreme Court judge Kevin Bell and his partner, Tricia Byrnes, a family law specialist. Their 2006 Hurley Vineyard Harcourt Pinot Noir (\$50 cellar door) is a supreme example of the warm (hence generously flavoured) 2006 vintage. Meanwhile, former schoolteacher Lindsay McCall makes a bold, spicy style of pinot at his Paringa Estate. His three tiers of pinots – the Reserve, the Estate and the entry level PE – have won countless medals and trophies.

David Lloyd is another ex-schoolie and the driving force behind the Mornington Peninsula International Pinot Noir Celebration. David appears a loud, bombastic character but underneath he's a deeply committed, soft-hearted man and his elegant 2006 Eldridge Estate Pinot Noir is among the region's more subtle and stylish pinots.

One of the region's best views belongs to Morning Sun, whose vineyards are planted on Main Creek Road. They run along a ridge that helps to protect the vines from the harsh afternoon sun to the west – a handy aspect in years such as 2009, with its run of sweltering days that shrivelled any bunches exposed to the sun. Mario Toniolo planted the vineyard 12 years ago, at a spritely 70 years of age. As Toniolo and the vineyard approached maturity, he appointed young-gun winemaker Owen Goodwin and his 2007 pinot is fine and ethereal – the very characters that makes pinot noir so elusive.