Los Olivos wineries best bets for pinot noir and creativity include Coghlan Vineyards, Longoria Cellars, Dragonette Cellars, and Tessa Marie Wines. Los Olivos is a charming little town consisting of nothing but wine tasting rooms, gift shops, and small restaurants. It’s dedicated to you – the wine tourist. Because of our focus on pinot noir we were quite selective in which tasting rooms we visited. If you are looking for Los Olivos wineries best bets for whites you have more choices to discover. Los Olivos lies about an hour east of Santa Barbara along highway 154 and only a few miles from U.S. 101.

View [Los Olivos Wine Tasting](#) in a larger map

Coghlan Winery Tasting Room and Jewelery Shop
At Coghlan, be sure to admire the jewelry. It happens that Coghlan was one of the wines at the Pinot Summit 2012 in San Francisco. When we asked the Coghlans which business subsidized the other, they replied it was about even. They have three pinot noirs whose labels reflect their semi-precious gems business: Diopside (2009, Santa Rita Hills, $40), Sapphire (2009, La Encantada Vineyards, $47), and the 2010 Fluorite (clone 115, Santa Rita Hills, $37). Each of the three is unique and displays the variety of flavor and aroma traits characteristic of the pinot noir grape.
Longoria lists seven pinots on their website. We tasted two in Los Olivos and were quite impressed. Prices tend to be in the $50 range, a little out of our range, but fairly priced.

Dragonette Cellars is a true family operation, owned and operated by the three Dragonette brothers, their wives, and a brother-in-law who was in the tasting room when we were there. Their treatment of pinot noir grapes from the justifiably famous Fiddlestix vineyard is about as good as it gets. We were especially impressed by the 2008 MJM, a Rhône-style blend of syrahs from several vineyards. According to our notes, the MJM was nearly sold out and only available to club members. But the tasting room guy made a phone call and got permission to sell us a bottle. We drank it with great pleasure in late March.
Dragonette Cellars tasting room - a Rhone, GSM focus

Tessa Marie Wines is a must-visit. We’ll answer your two obvious questions first. Yes, there is a Tessa Marie. Her picture is below. She’s Fess Parker’s granddaughter and comes by her winemaking skills genetically. (If you’ve never tried any Fess Parker Wines, you should.) The second question is the location of the tasting room. Do not believe Google maps. Our map above is the correct location.

Tessa Marie Cellars - focus on Italian varieties of grapes, especially whites

Now about Tessa Marie’s wines. No pinot noir here – Tessa
Marie prefers Italian varietals. Her first love is sangiovese. We tried her 2009 vermentino which (not surprisingly) has a faint vermouth finish. You’ve never heard of the vermentino grape? Neither had we. She also makes a sparkling vermentino that is, to put it mildly, interesting.

Los Olivos is worth a full day if you have the time. We spent a half-day there and really felt like we had just scratched the surface.

---

**Pinot Summit 2012 Tasting — Winning Wineries**

We want to compliment Vance Sharp, winemaker, for his Pinot Summit 2012 “best in show:” Sharp Cellars 2009 Keenan’s Cove pinot noir. Both of us wine fans rated his wine No. 1 in our blind tasting. Granted we only rated 21 of the 42 wines. But we tasted his wine again in the evening at the grand tasting. If anything, it was better then. With only 75 cases produced of this $48 pinot noir, get it now.

*Our Favorite Wineries at Pinot Summit 2012: Sharp Cellars, Coughlan, RN Estate, Bonneau, T.R. Elliot, Morris Ranch*

**Best In Show Pinot Summit 2012 — Sharp Cellars**

“Sharp Cellars 2009 Keenan’s Cove Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, $48.00. 75 cases produced.
Female reviewers: Spunky raspberry and strawberry jam, dried cherry, and forest floor notes on the nose with rhubarb and spice back notes. The wine is just as lively in the mouth with strawberry, rhubarb, licorice, and black currant. A touch of black pepper and crumb cake notes kick in mid-palate. Clean and balanced. A terrific food pairing wine. 92 points.

Male reviewers: A classic Sonoma Coast nose showing forest floor, raspberries and vanilla. The palate is silky smooth displaying raspberry, fig and gingerbread notes. Great mouth feel. Wonderful finish with light spice. 91 points.”

Now for the really good news. Affairs of the Vine has posted the tasting notes and point ratings for all 460 pinots that were entered in the competition. Download and save this incredibly valuable resource. And here are the tasting notes about just the winning wineries from the official results web site.

**Blind Tasting Results – Pinot Noir**

On to the blind tasting results. We’ll focus on just the pinot noir, ignoring the sparkling wine and “best bang for the buck” rankings. There were two groups of judges, each divided into male and female sections: professional judges and us amateurs (whom Affairs of the Vine is kind enough to call Wine Lovers).

[doptg id="7"]

**PROFESSIONAL JUDGES RESULTS**

_The Pros picked: Alysian, Gloria Ferrer, Barbed Oak, RN Estate, Davis Family_
Female Blind Tasters Winning Wineries Pinot Summit 2012

1. **Gloria Ferrer 2008 Pinot Noir**, Carneros, $22.00, 14433 cases produced, (95 points)
   Sweet and pretty raspberry jam, milk chocolate, herbs, and cherry aromas please the nose. Elegant and pure with layers of cranberry, red cherry, anise, and a touch of cola. Very racy raspberry, milk chocolate and malt on the finish. A perfect food pairing wine!

2. **RN ESTATE 2009 Kruse Vineyard Pinot Noir**, Paso Robles, $48.00, 125 cases produced (94 points)
   Bright garnet color in the glass. Violets, roses, and dark cherry aromas that open to cherry cola with a hint of oak peeking through. Complex and lovely ripe fruit on the palate. Good tannins and acidity. A real crowd pleaser.

3. **Barbed Oak Vineyard 2009 ZARA’S BLOCK Barbed Oak Vineyard Pinot Noir**, Bennett Valley, $29.00. 246 cases produced (93 points)
   The color is like a dark and clear like a midnight sky. The nose is fruity displaying dried cherry that replicates on the palate. Intense flavors. Great aging potential.

Male Blind Tasters Winning Wineries Pinot Summit 2012

1. **Alysian 2008 Allen-Rochioli Blocks Rochioli Vineyard Pinot Noir**, Russian River Valley, $65.00, 159 cases produced (95 points)
   Boysenberry, rhubarb pie, rose petals, vanilla, cherries, strawberries, cola, and white pepper… a very complex nose. Raspberry, cinnamon, cedar, smoky strawberry compote…and that just begins to define the palate. Excellent mouth feel. Long, long finish. Would love to pair this with a myriad of foods. Incredible aging potential. This is a baby just starting to
show it’s stuff.

2. **Barbed Oak Vineyard 2009 Zara’s Block Pinot Noir**, Bennett Valley, $29.00, 246 cases produced (94 points)
Lots of fruit, cola, and dark berry aromas. Toasty notes accent the beautiful cherry core. The finish is long...“This 2009 Odyssey takes you for a long ride.” Big jammy fruit that never seems to end. “This is what New World Pinot should be.”

3. **Davis Family Vineyards 2009 Soul Patch Pinot Noir** (It’s not clear to us whether this link is to the correct wine.), Russian River, $42.00, 525 cases produced (94 points)

**WINE LOVERS RESULTS (Amateurs)**

The Crowd picked: Sharp Cellars, Barbed Oak, Dunstan, Stephen’s, Grey Stack, Coughlan

**Female Blind Tasters Winning Wineries Pinot Summit 2012**

1. **Sharp Cellars 2009 Keenan’s Cove** Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast
2. **Dunstan Wines** 2009 Estate *Durrell Vineyard* Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast
3. **Grey Stack Cellars** 2009 *The Fisherman Four Brothers* Pinot Noir, Bennett Valley

**Male Blind Tasters Winning Wineries Pinot**
Summit 2012

1. **Barbed Oak Vineyard 2009 Zara’s Block Pinot Noir**, Bennett Valley
2. **Stephen’s Cellar & Vineyard** 2008 Estate Pinot Noir, York Mountain
3. **Coghlan Vineyards** 2009 Pinot Noir, Santa Rita Hills

**Our Grand Tasting Favorites**

As mentioned earlier, our favorite was the Sharp Cellars 2009 Keenan’s Cove. Our notes simply say, “Amazing.” Second was a tie between **Coghlan Vineyards** and **RN Estate Vineyards**. Coghlan is in Los Olivos. We tasted their wine during our southern California trip in February. They were pouring three pinots: 2009 Dioxide, 2009 Sapphire, and 2010 Fluorite. All three were terrific. RN Estate handles grapes from the Fiddlestix vineyard as well as anyone we’ve run across. Both the 2009 and 2010 vintages are excellent. Others we liked include **Bonneau Wines** 2009 Sangiacomo with pronounced black cherry elements, **T.R. Elliott’s** 2009 Three Plumes (Russian River Valley), and **Morris Ranch Winery’s** 2009 Middle Block vineyard (clone 115). Be warned: Morris Ranch’s website contains little more than basic contact information.

   **Our Favorite Wineries at Pinot Summit 2012:** Sharp Cellars, Coughlan, RN Estate, Bonneau, T.R. Elliot, Morris Ranch

All in all, a terrific event. We plan to do our best to return in 2013 for the Eleventh Pinot Summit. Thanks to Barbara Drady (@wineevangelist) for organizing this event in such a spectacular fashion.
Pinot Summit 2012 – Blind Tasting Fun & Games

Pinot Summit 2012 was a top notch pinot noir event featuring a fun game for tasters – namely, blind tasting. It attracted boutique wineries, many of them new to us. The tenth annual Pinot Summit was held at the San Francisco Hilton, Financial District, on February 25.

Prospective attendees could either buy an all-day ticket (afternoon and evening) or a ticket just for the evening. The afternoon session included 3 items: the blind tasting, a choice of several breakout seminars, and a sparkling wine tasting at happy hour. The evening session was a grand tasting, followed by the announcement of the winners from the blind tasting. The grand tasting included a mix of some of wines that had been in the afternoon blind session but also many wines and wineries not in the blind tasting. We chose to attend everything. Our overall review: very good event, lots of fun, some education, and best of all...many interesting wineries that were new to us. We’ll definitely plan attend the eleventh Summit in 2013.

The scene at the blind tasting Pinot Noir
The Blind Tasting

There were 42 wines entered in the blind tasting. The organizers realized it would be overwhelming and not at all valid to try to discriminate among so many. So they split the line-up in two. Registrants were given an admission that directed them to one group of 21 or the other.

Once you submitted your tasting ratings by voting for 1 to 5 of your favorites, you were free to browse the other blind 21 wines on the other side of the roped room. Each bottle was wrapped in aluminum foil with a color code for organization. At the end of the evening tasting, the event organizers distributed info sheets showing which winery went with which color.

We were not as impressed with most of the 21 wines we tasted as we had hoped. We fear that many of the wines may have been mishandled. Perhaps some bottles got too warm, were “upset” in transit, were open too long, etc. When you taste at a winery, the winery hospitality staff will retaste an open bottle to see if it still showing its best character—the flavor and aroma profile as the winemaker intended it. At the blind tasting, to keep the voting “clean,” the pouring hospitality folks were event/hotel staff.
21 bottles in each section for blind tasting at Pinot Noir Summit 2012

After some discussion and revisiting half a dozen of the wines, we settled on our favorites. Tony chose Dark Green and Yellow. Later we discovered those were **Sharp Cellars** 2009 Keenan’s Cove, Sonoma Coast ($48) and **Tondre Wines** 2009 Tondre Grapefield, Santa Lucia Highlands ($55).

Norma also liked the Sharp Cellars entry, followed by the **Erath** 2009 Prince Hill, Dundee Hills ($45). Her third choice was the **Davis Family Vineyards** 2009 Starr Ridge, Russian River ($42), followed by the **Kenneth Volk** 2009 Garey Ranch Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley ($48).

The good news is the presence of a professional sommelier on each side of the rope. Ours was Olin Harris, captain at The Restaurant at Meadowood (Napa, three Michelin stars). Olin was patient and informative, a real help to us rookies.

The blind tasting was lots of fun, but the organization could have been better. For example, when we submitted our ballots we were told to take five chips and use them to vote. You could distribute the chips any way you wanted, up to and including voting all five chips for one wine. There was no control over the number of chips people were taking. We could have grabbed 10, or gone back 2 to 3 times. Worse, there were
blue and red chips in separate bowls with no indication that the blue chips were supposed to be for males and the red were supposed to be for females. We fear that the vote results by gender may not be valid.

**Seminars**

We chose “What Makes a Great Vintage?” moderated by Sid Sall, a pinot noir fan and a volunteer for Affairs of the Vine.org (great job, Sid!). The panelists were:

- Lino Bozzano ([Laetitia Vineyard & Winery](https://laetitiavineyard.com), Central Coast according to the program, actually the north end of the Santa Maria Valley),
- Ken Foster ([Mahoney Vineyards](https://mahoneywine.com), Carneros),
- Tim Borges ([Portalupi Wine](https://portalupiwine.com), Paso Robles),
- Dan Sullivan ([Rosehall Run Vineyards](https://rosehallrun.com), Prince Edward Island, Ontario), and
- Greg Freeman ([Hahn Family Wines](https://hahnfamilywines.com), Santa Lucia Highlands).

Yes, you read that correctly. A winery producing pinot noir in Ontario. Being on Prince Edward Island helps because the water in the Gulf of St. Lawrence combined with the natural
protection of the Nova Scotia harbor keeps temperatures somewhat under control.

In case you don’t already believe winemakers are nuts, Dan revealed that Rosehall Run winery buries their vines during the winter. The **Heart and Hands Winery** in the Finger Lakes region of New York does the same thing. We have tasted Heart and Hands pinot noir and were quite favorably impressed. Clearly vine burying is not an impediment to quality.

Naturally, each of the seminar panelists had brought samples of one of their wines for tasting. Tony liked the Hahn entry best, while Norma preferred the Rosehall Run wine. The presentations were excellent with lots of audience participation, questions and comments. Sid Sall did a terrific job as moderator.

**Sparkling Wine Happy Hour**

After the seminar, there was a tasting of sparkling wine with hors doeuvres including fresh oysters. We made a beeline for the Laetitia table where Lino Bozzano was pouring their Brut de Noirs. While we still prefer their Brut Coquard, the Brut de Noirs was pretty terrific. The hors doeuvres were, however, skimpy. Given a tasting of many wines, we went out to dinner, returning about 7:30 for the grand tasting. More on that, as well as the lists of winners of the blind tasting...
competition, in part II of this review.