

# The End of Bad Pinots? Garagiste Visits Solvang Overview

[Garagiste Southern Exposure, Solvang, February, 2016](#) from [Norma Schroder](#) on [Vimeo](#).

On February 11 we headed south. Our objective was the [Southern Exposure edition of the California Garagistes](#) on February 13 and 14 in Solvang. We spent two nights at the [Seacrest Oceanfront Hotel in Pismo Beach](#) before heading to our destination in Santa Barbara. More on that in part 3. This is the overview, part 1. Parts 2 and 3 will go into detail about the wineries listed here. We wanted to get something up while our memories are still working.

## The End of Bad Pinots?

Our conclusion: this may be the end of bad pinots. When the Garagistes visit Solvang, we did not taste any bad wines. As far as we can remember, this is the first time we've had that experience at any major tasting event.



Ryan Cochrane wines (click for larger image)

We tasted about ten wineries that were new to us and pouring pinot noirs. **Special thanks to Rhythm Wines** for bringing along

a bottle just for us. The good news is that we did not taste a single bad wine. These folks have figured out the fussy, temperamental pinot noir grape. Which is, of course, great news for everyone.



Mark and Wendy  
Horvath

Our two personal favorites were [Crawford Family Wines](#) and [Ryan Cochrane Wines](#). **Mark Crawford Horvath** and his wife **Wendy** are the driving forces behind Crawford Family.

**Ryan Cochrane** started out by doing an [internship with Roger Nicolas \(RN Estate\)](#) then got promoted to assistant winemaker. Through that connection and exceptional winemaking skills he acquired some Solomon Hills pinot noir fruit.

**But you won't go wrong with any of the others. In alphabetical order:**

- [Clos des Amis](#)
- [Kessler-Haak](#)
- [Mollie Wines](#)
- [Rhythm Wines](#)
- [Seagrape Wine Company](#)
- [Weatherborne Wine Corp.](#)
- [West of Temperance](#), easily the winner for most unique name.

We also revisited **Scott Pagter** whom we met at the Paso

Garagiste last November. He's still making wine for the [Pagter Brothers Winery](#). And it's still pretty darn good.



Ryan Cochrane

Several of these folks have a distinct focus on pinot noir. **Kudos to Weatherborne for producing only pinot noir. Ryan Cochrane and Seagrape** produce both chardonnay and pinot noir. **Crawford Family** makes it into this group with chardonnay, pinot noir, and syrah. We'll forgive them for including a second red grape as long as they keep on making great pinot! **Mollie** gets included here, with a cabernet sauvignon as their other red.

Stay tuned for the detailed results, including some surprising non-pinot noirs.