



Sokol  
Blosser

Oregon Family Winery Since 1971

# Evolution

## Wine Spectator

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WINE  
VALUE  
of the YEAR

PLUS: Vintage Port  
Best of the Rhône  
NY Wine Experience Highlights

## Wine Spectator

Feb 2023 featuring

2020 Evolution Oregon Pinot Noir



King Estate

### OREGON PINOT NOIR

THESE ELEGANT AND  
DYNAMIC REDS ARE THE  
DARK HORSE OF VALUE

“Value” and “Pinot Noir” are not often found in the same sentence. That’s because Pinot is the fussy child of red wines, persnickety in the vineyard and in the cellar, making average price points for the wines relatively high. Many of the top California Pinots sell for upward of \$100, and the price of red Burgundy is off the charts. While the cost of Oregon Pinot is creeping up, many best buys remain if you know what to look for.

First, it’s good to be aware that Oregon Pinot Noir, particularly from Willamette Valley, generally fits in between Old World Burgundy and New World California versions. Rarely overripe, the wines have bright acidity, tension and savory qualities that create an appealing dynamic.

If you’re looking for value, Pinots with a simple “Oregon” designation on their label are a good place to start. Willamette

Valley is the heart of the state’s wine industry, but a lot of good Pinot Noir is grown outside the valley in AVAs such as Rogue, Umpqua and Applegate valleys in the southern part of the state.

Newer labels including A to Z Wineworks, Dough and Acrobat are dependable Oregon bottlings to look for, while even long-established labels such as Erath produce Oregon Pinots that sell for \$20 or less. (A to Z and Erath are both owned by Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, a company that knows something about a good buy.)

Willamette Valley blends are another reliable source for value. While many of the leading producers focus on vineyard-designated Pinots, most also bottle a Willamette blend from the juice that doesn’t quite fit into their other programs.

These versions are typically produced in larger quantities, which makes them easier to find in the market, but they also carry lower price tags than the rest of the portfolio. Willamette Valley bottlings from Résonance, Argyle and Sokol Blosser are prime examples, and in a classic vintage such as 2019, those blends can rival the winery’s higher-end offerings.

Another step up are bottlings designated under one of the valley’s subappellations,

such as Dundee Hills, Chehalem Mountains, Yamhill-Carlton or Eola-Amity Hills. These wines show more specific personalities—sleek and elegant in the case of Dundee Hills, for example, or darker and earthier for Chehalem Mountains.

#### TIM FISH'S SMART BUYS IN OREGON PINOT NOIR

95	\$35	Drouhin Oregon Roserock Pinot Noir Eola-Amity Hills 2019
94	\$35	Résonance Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2019
91	\$30	Argyle Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2019
90	\$25	Roco Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Gravel Road NV
89	\$30	Chehalem Pinot Noir Chehalem Mountains 2020
88	\$17	Rainstorm Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2019
88	\$20	A to Z Wineworks Pinot Noir Oregon 2018
88	\$20	Firesteed Pinot Noir Willamette Valley 2019
88	\$20	King Estate Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Inscription 2020
88	\$28	Sokol Blosser Pinot Noir Willamette Valley Evolution 2020

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**HOT TIP**  
Oregon has been enjoying a string of strong harvests, with classic vintages in 2016 and '18, both rating 97 points. Truly excellent years like these, where high quality is pervasive, are prime opportunities for value hunters because the abundance of riches will trickle down to larger-production and lower-priced wines.



88 pts

*"Up-front and uncomplicated, with modest cherry and spice flavors. Drink now."*

Tim Fish, Senior Editor