Pinot Noir

5 Things You Need To Know

1. Basics:

Pinot Noir is a red wine made from grapes of the same name. Imported French Pinot Noir is typically referred to as red Burgundy, reflecting the well known region from the which the grape hails . The name is derived from the French words for "pine" and "black" alluding to the varietal's tightly clustered dark purple clusters of fruit.

Pinot Noir grapes are grown around the world, mostly in the cooler regions, but the grape is chiefly associated with the Burgundy region of France,

where some of the most highly sought after Pinot Noirs are produced from well known area sites (or communes) such as La Tache and Gevery – Chambertin. Washington's neighbor to the south, Oregon, is widely considered to produce some of the finest domestic Pinots (including wines from Domaine Drouhin, Erath and Firesteed), rivaling some French counterparts.

Pinot Noir is also used in the production of Champagne (typically along with Chardonnay) and is planted in most of the world's wine growing regions for use in both still and sparkling wines.

2. What's it taste like?

The tremendously broad range of bouquets, flavors, textures and impressions that Pinot Noir can produce sometimes confuses tasters. In the broadest terms, the wine tends to be of light to medium body with an aroma reminiscent of black cherry, raspberry or currant. Traditional red Burgundy is famous for its fleshy, "farmyard" aromas, but changing fashions and new easier-to-grow clones have favored a lighter, fruitier style. The grape's color when young, often compared to that of garnet, is often much lighter than that of other red wines. However, an emerging style from California and New Zealand highlights a more powerful, fruit forward and darker wine that can approach Syrah in depth.

Washington State Pinot Noirs are few and far between due to climate and growing conditions not being optimal. There are some plantings in the Puget Sound area, as well as various locations in the Columbia Valley and near the Oregon border as an offshoot of the Willamette Valley.

3. ***What's it go with?***

Versatility! That is the beauty of Pinot Noir and there are lots of options. You can serve anything from fish to lamb. The key is keeping things simple. Stay away from fruit sauces and let the wine be the fruit on the table. Pinot like this is delicate. To get the most out of the wine think simple and savory with roast beef, roast chicken and especially grilled salmon.

Pinot Noir is typically a lighter red wine and compared to Cabernet or Merlot can be a nice cocktail wine.

- ***As the sales person, recommend three possible choices for your customer. Show them a low priced, a medium priced and one of your more premium offerings. You will often find the customer will buy the top shelf item that you have taken the time to show them.***

4. Pinot Noir in LCB Stores-by the numbers

Washington State stores currently offer 13 Pinot Noirs (4 from Oregon and 9 from California) in the 750 ml and 1.5 liter sizes. They range in price from $5.99- $17.98. There are also 3 imports from Australia and Italy where the variety does very well and can produce outstanding wines.

- ***In state stores, Pinot Noir is typically set on the shelf by region (Oregon or California) then by price R to L descending on the shelf. Imports and larger bottles of which there are few are set by brand.***

5. Category Leaders

In Washington State stores the best sellers in the Pinot Noir category are:

- ***Erath (OR)***
- ***Firesteed (OR)***
- ***BV (CA)***
- ***Robert Mondavi Private Selection (CA)***

There are many other Pinot Noir labels from different parts of the world available in state stores as Wine Specialty or HUB items, and grocery and wine stores. Get to know some of them (especially those from France's Burgundy region), take a look at the labels and do some investigating. The payoff in your ability to better serve your customer will be tremendous.