

# Wine & Spirits

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PYRAMID

RESTAURANT & BAR

SEPIA

*Spago*  
THE LITTLE NELL  
KENSINGTON  
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QUARTERS  
FRANKFORD AVE

BATARD  
CALIFORNIA  
nyc

DELFINA  
NO PA  
Loyal Nine

Le Bernardin

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MOZZA  
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GERONIMO  
AMALI

SUSTAINABLE MEDITERRANEAN

TOP  
50  
WINES

IN AMERICA'S BEST  
RESTAURANTS

28th Annual

Restaurant Poll

HUSK  
PAPPAS BROS.  
Steakhouse

Redbird

RISTORANTE

Barolo  
LENOIR

The Herbfarm

CARNEVOR

The Farrington House

GLASSERIE

Hearth  
BASE VILLAGE

MANRESA

DEL POSTO

TWIST  
BY PIERRE GAGNAIRE

Quince  
Absinthe  
BRASSERIE & BAR

the Walrus  
and the Carpenter  
the Simone  
SEASTAR

Splaggia

RUNNER RESTONE





Team  
Ontario

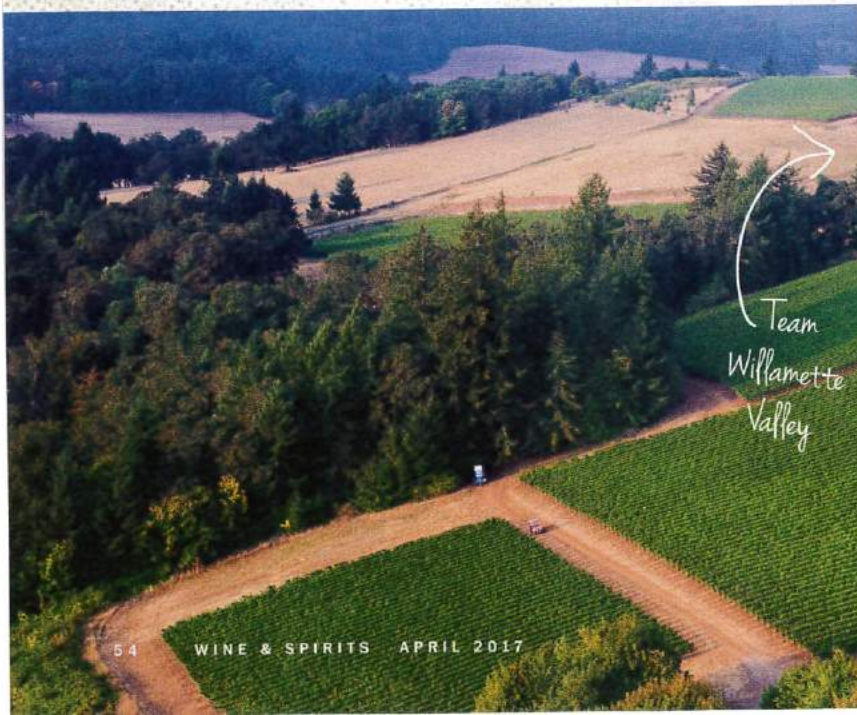
Michael Madrigale, Michelle Bisciegla and Josiah Baldivino first teamed up in 2014. After winning our inaugural Sommelier Scavenger Hunt with their selection of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, they repeated their win the following year with six compelling examples of grenache from McLaren Vale. This year, they took the road less travelled. "We chose the underdog," says Madrigale. "Nobody in the States knows the wines of Ontario, but they deserve the spotlight."

# SommScavenge 3.0

Four teams compete to find  
the most site-expressive North American pinot noir

Pinot noir didn't mean much to American wine drinkers until the early 2000s. Some, perhaps, knew it as the grape responsible for red Burgundy. Others might have been familiar with the pinot noirs from Hanzell, Calera, Au Bon Climat, Eyrie and Williams Selyem—some of the grape's early American standard-bearers. But it wasn't until the past decade that interest in pinot noir really exploded, driving a feverish planting boom. Now, there's a lot being grown on our shores, some of it pretty great.

This year, twelve sommeliers joined in the Sommelier Scavenger Hunt. Each team of three chose a region, visiting fields and cellars to find pinot noirs with unmistakable terroir character.



Team  
Willamette  
Valley

John Szabo, MS, Brad Royale and Véronique Rivest—all Canadians (pictured with SommScavenge Project Manager Kelko Takano)—returned to the competition this year, after their knockout collection of long-lived Hunter Valley semillon nearly came out on top in 2016. Szabo had just finished a book on volcanic wines and was keen to travel to Oregon's Willamette Valley; his team turned its attention to the region's volcanic, sedimentary and wind-blown soils and their influence on the local pinot noir.





David Sawyer, who recently left his post at *Husk* in Charleston, cajoled his former colleague Cappie Peete, and his friend Jack Mason, MS, to head to the hills of the western Sonoma Coast, where pinot noir grows in small, isolated vineyards scattered along the coastal ridges. Their collection of wines captured the imaginations of the forty sommeliers and retailers who gathered at *City Winery* in NYC to taste and vote on the most compelling collection of terroir-expressive wines, and they finally broke the winning streak of Madrigale, Biscieglija and Baldivino.

Team West  
Sonoma Coast



## The Pinot Noir Taste-Off



Josh Wesson of *Suprema Provisions* and Josh Reynolds of *Vinous*, two of the forty judges assembled to vote on the most compelling collection of wines, shared their take on the proceedings.

**Raynolds:** Pinot noir can be a wine that's difficult to read, but it can also be extremely sexy. There are very few varieties that can be both intellectual and pleasurable at the same time, the flexibility of the grape is fascinating.

**Wesson:** It's endlessly interesting. There aren't many grapes that are endlessly interesting.

**Raynolds:** I think sexy sauvignon blanc is a bit of an oxymoron. Sexy cabernet sauvignon, probably the same way.

**Wesson:** Put your pants back on, I say.

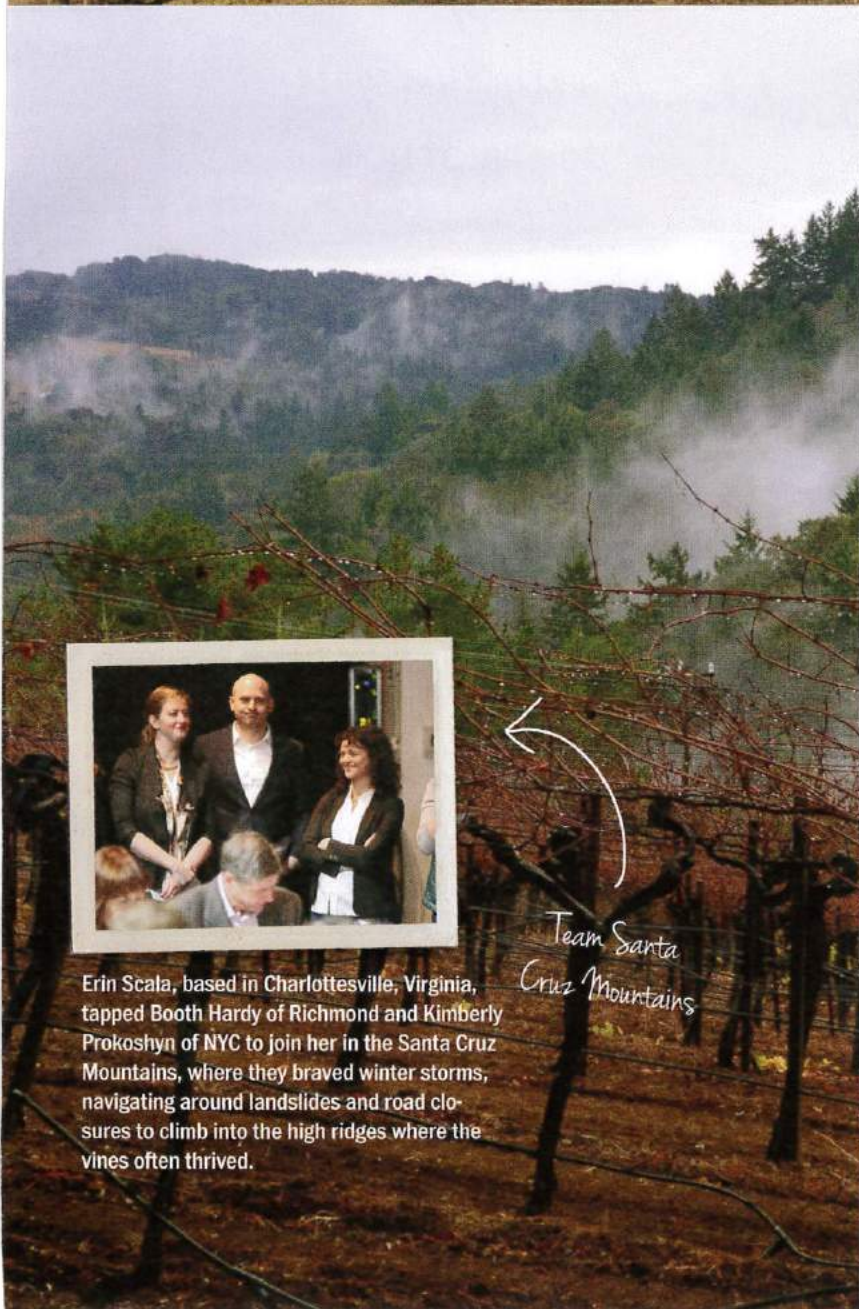
**Raynolds:** We had a chance to see pinots that were very elegant, very graceful, very fine-grained. And also some that were on the richer, more opulent side. Less of those, but that's a function of the fact that the selections were by sommeliers, who, in general, tend toward a more elegant expression of any variety. So we mostly saw fine-grained, delicate, precise pinots, which I adore, and it's a wonderful way to spend a cold winter morning with clean, fresh wines.

**Wesson:** It was a good day for North America.



Erin Scala, based in Charlottesville, Virginia, tapped Booth Hardy of Richmond and Kimberly Prokoshyn of NYC to join her in the Santa Cruz Mountains, where they braved winter storms, navigating around landslides and road closures to climb into the high ridges where the vines often thrived.

Team Santa  
Cruz Mountains





CACHELDER



Niagara

Norman Hardie Lowrey Vineyard

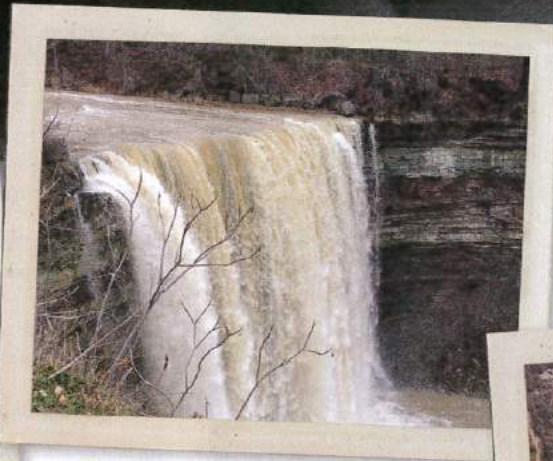
COUNTY PINOT NOIR  
UNFILTERED

VQA Prince Edward County VQA

2013 PINOT NOIR  
VQA ST. DAVID'S BENCH VQA



Prince Edward County



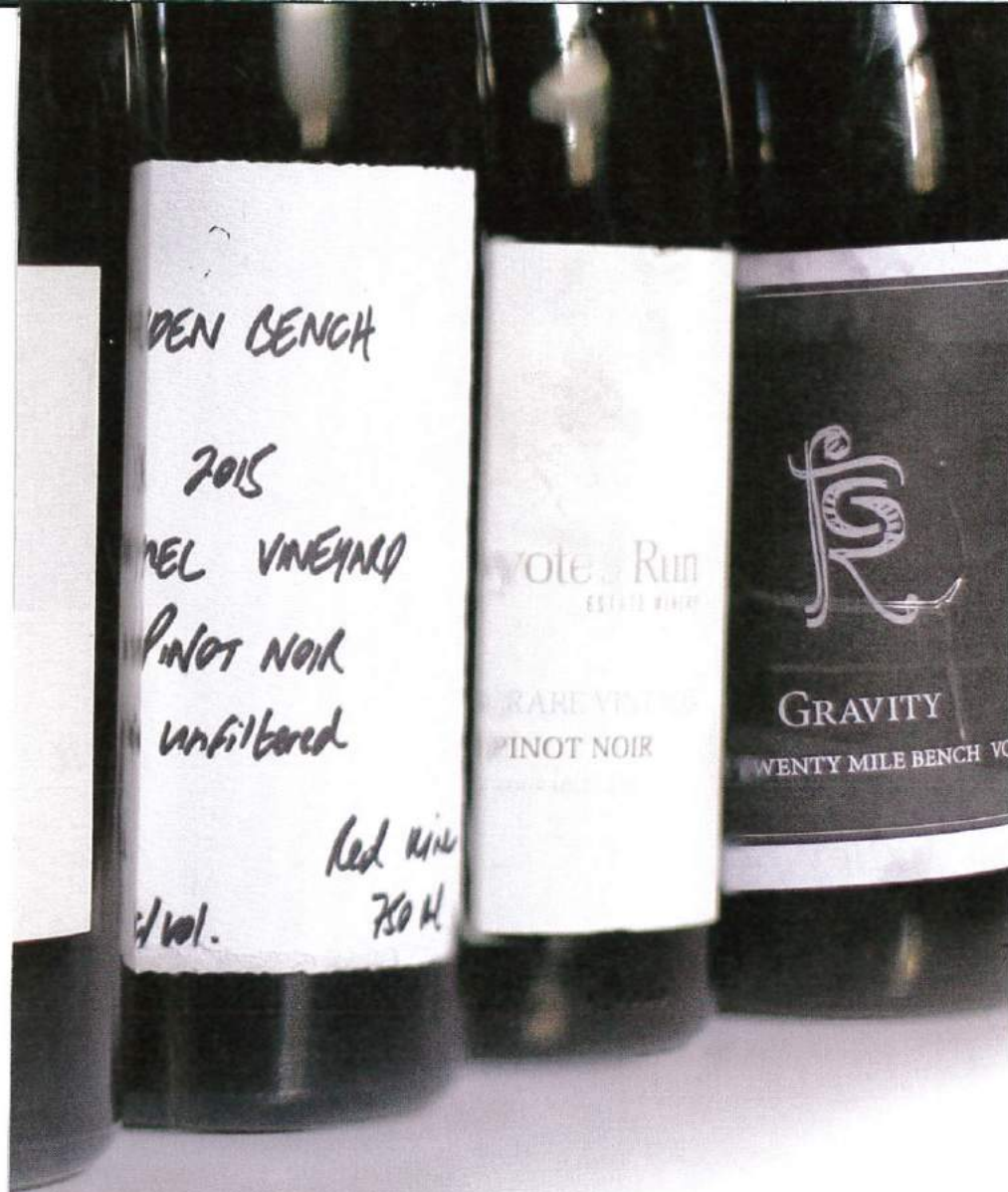
Layers of limestone at Baffs Falls



Niagara Falls  
from the air

Josiah Baldivino, *Bay Grape*, Oakland, CA  
Michelle Bisciegli, *Blue Hill*, NYC  
Michael Madrigale, *Sanroc Consulting*, NYC





## Ontario Pinot Noir

Coming from Oakland and years of drought, Josiah Baldivino couldn't believe the sheer volume of fresh water at Niagara Falls.

After flying over the Falls and the Escarpment in a helicopter, the team landed for a blind tasting of 30 pinot noirs. "Around midnight, a couple of beers in, we jumped in a cab to see the Falls at night," Baldivino says. "They have blue lights on it, and you can see the American side, which is not nearly as cool—the Canadian one is bigger."

But it was the view at Balls Falls, about 20 miles west along the Escarpment, that struck Michelle Bisciegli. "The winemakers continually talked about ancient limestone, newer limestone and clay," she says, "and you could see it in striated layers behind the waterfall. The limestone was tighter on the bottom and looser at the top, with clay between the two."

Ontario is not an easy place to grow grapes. In Prince Edward County, in the northeastern corner of Lake Ontario, Norm Hardie has

to bury his vines in winter to protect them. "It seems crazy when you think about them burying the vines," Baldivino says, "but when you feel how cold it is, you realize they have to do it."

Michael Madrigale considers the region's magic bullet to be Lake Ontario itself, which protects the vineyards from frost in spring and cools them at harvest, delivering full ripeness with brilliant acidity.

"Everyone thinks Canadian wine is ice wine. But there is so much happening there," he says. "Most Ontario producers are not chaptalizing. Most of them are not acidifying. What they are putting into the bottle is natural. It is as real as it gets. Give them another ten years and Ontario's going to be on the level of the great wine regions of the world."

—JOSHUA GREENE

## Six Essential Ontario Pinot Noirs

### Norman Hardie 2013 Prince Edward County Unfiltered County Pinot Noir

"This is the coldest and furthest east area of Ontario," Madrigale says, comparing the Trenton limestone and clay to the composite soil in Burgundy. "It's 10.9 percent alcohol, with lots of saltiness, phenolic ripeness and high acidity." With its mouthwatering precision, this was a favorite for a number of taste-off attendees.

### Pearl Morissette 2015 Twenty Mile Bench Niagara Vineyards Pinot Noir

Heading to the Niagara Escarpment, Madrigale introduces François Morissette as "a Quebecois who comes from working many vintages in Burgundy for Freddy Mugnier and Jean-Marc Roulot. He is a bit of the natural wine flag-waver in Ontario: He adds no sulfur, no additives, and only ambient yeasts go into the fermentation."

### Bachelor 2013 St. David's Bench Lowrey Vineyard Pinot Noir

"Lowrey Vineyard has the oldest plantings of pinot noir in the region," Bisciegli explains, telling how Karl Keiser, the founder of Inniskillin, tried to convince growers to plant pinot noir. "The Lowrey family decided to plant in 1984—just five rows of pinot in clay loam and limestone soil. Thomas Bachelor's wine is from those original five rows."

### Hidden Bench 2015 Rosomel Vineyard Unfiltered Pinot Noir

The team included this as a wine from dolomitic limestone, from the Beamsville Bench on the Niagara Escarpment. "Hidden Bench uses the Rosomel Vineyard for blending for aromatics, for the floral component. This is the first year when they've bottled it separately," Bisciegli says.

### Flat Rock 2015 Twenty Mile Bench Gravity Pinot Noir

"We have these benches, which are basically the slopes that come up from the lake," Baldivino explains. Flat Rock grows on Twenty Mile Bench, where the soil is clay loam till over limestone. That, and the temperature-control system of Lake Ontario, is what this wine is all about, he says.

### Coyote's Run 2014 Four Mile Creek Rare Vintage Pinot Noir

"St. David's Bench is really far from the lake, so here it's a little bit warmer," Baldivino says. "And it's grown on clay soil, which is going to give you that riper, rounder feel." Madrigale considers it the outlier in the flight: "The warmest wine and the one that uses oak as an ingredient."