

GOLD MEDAL  
WINE CLUB'S

# Pinot Noir Press



v04i03



## MAHONEY VINEYARDS

Icons and pioneers for Carneros Pinot Noir, Francis and Kathy Mahoney continue to reinvent themselves and expand the possibilities of the Carneros region with a new artisan label and a lineup of estate-grown, distinctive wines.



Mahoney Vineyards owners Kathy and Francis Mahoney; a peek into the tasting room located at Oxbow Wine Bar in downtown Napa; sampling wine from the barrel to conduct blending trials; a beautiful shot of the Mahoneys' Las Brisas Vineyard in Carneros.

Nearly forty years ago, Francis Mahoney and his wife Kathy set out to realize a dream - to grow Pinot Noir that would stand up to the famed French Burgundies - and to achieve this in Northern California's soil and climate. Francis was captivated with the undiscovered "Los Carneros" region in the southern portion of Napa and Sonoma valleys, and it was here that the Mahoneys broke ground for the first new winery in the region since before Prohibition.

It was 1972, and on a modest budget, Francis and Kathy built a small, functional winery they named Carneros Creek Winery (the Mahoney Vineyards brand wouldn't come into play until 2005). With Kathy in the office managing orders, compliance, staff, and finances, Francis took to the vineyards.

Francis was unique among Pinot Noir pioneers of the 1970s in that he realized, besides climate and soil, clones were an important factor in creating great Pinot Noir as well. He called upon UC Davis professor Curtis Alley, and together formed a team to begin a tedious clonal research project studying various clones of the Pinot Noir grape.

Francis' lifelong love for the red Burgundies, by the way, developed

after leaving the University of San Francisco to travel in Europe, where he spent some time in the French cellars of Burgundy.

"What attracted me to Burgundies was their statement of silkiness," Francis recently recalled. "They were not big or forceful, but totally balanced and elegant."

After returning to California and taking some oenology and viticulture classes at UC Davis, Francis honed his palate working at Connoisseur Wine Imports and Mayacamas Vineyards. He was ready to start pursuing his dream.

Carneros Creek Winery proved to have potential from the get-go, quickly earning critical praise for balanced Pinot Noirs with bright, focused fruit. Francis used the findings from his clonal trials to determine that the best Pinot Noir was not to be found in a single clonal selection, but rather, from a blend of many clones which created a very distinctive style. This study established Francis not only as a Pinot pioneer, but as a resident authority as well.

"We liked different clones like we like different children," Mahoney explained in a recent interview. "They

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Views of Las Brisas Vineyard and the Carneros wine region; owner Francis Mahoney takes a sample of his award-winning Pinot Noir; visitors enjoy tasting Mahoney wines at the popular tasting bar.

## ABOUT THE VINEYARD



The Carneros region was the first wine region in the United States created because of its unique terrior, rather than by state, county, or political boundaries. Influenced by the cooling effect of the Pacific

Ocean and a combination of summer fog, warm days, and a long growing season, Carneros is an independent American Viticultural Area (AVA) that became official in 1983. Its unique climatic characteristics and geographic features put a distinctive stamp on its world-class wine grapes.

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had their own personalities and a little bit of this with a little bit of that makes a more interesting wine.”

Carneros Creek Winery continued to grow and the winery did quite well for some time. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, the winery made changes as California Pinot producers started embracing new oak to make wines that overpowered food. Many of the wines were being made to please the critics rather than defining a style in terms of soil and climate. The trend contradicted Francis’ original vision, and he ultimately left the winery in 1998 to take care of his vineyard holdings and enjoy life.

Francis had planted the Mahoney Ranch Vineyard surrounding his home in northern Carneros, and the Las Brisas Vineyard on Ramal Road (in southern Sonoma-Carneros), and spent the next few years managing and tending his vines.

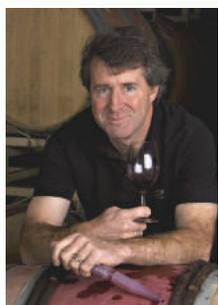
In 2002, Francis was ready for a fresh start and began working with veteran Pinot Noir winemaker Ken Foster to create an artisanal brand of wines named Mahoney Vineyards. These wines would be the “best of the best” from his estate vineyards with a focus on capturing the site and terrior, rather than making wine for the critics. With a minimalist approach to winemaking, Francis and Ken began crafting wines that were bold yet approachable, offering a pure expression of varietal character. It was a return to the elegantly styled wines of the 1970s, and this time they were staying on track.

Mahoney Vineyards released its first wines in 2005 and has since established a strong reputation in the world of California Pinot. Although Pinot Noir continues to be the focus at Mahoney Vineyards, Francis’ pioneering spirit has lead him in new directions as well, as he takes on Italian and Spanish varietals in his newer releases.

Today, Francis Mahoney is still an icon for Carneros Pinot Noir, with a collection of distinctive, small production wines whose varietal charm and Carneros heritage are clearly evidenced with each and every sip. Enjoy!

Mahoney Vineyards sources Pinot Noir fruit from their Estate Las Brisas Vineyard in the Sonoma Carneros region for this month’s featured wine. Aptly named (*Las Brisas* translates to *The Breezes*), this 110-acre vineyard is often shrouded in fog until noon, then receives cooling breezes from the Petaluma coastal gap in the afternoon. Mahoney believes Pinot Noir from this site gives a ripe expression of red cherry fruit and spice with a good underlying structure. Planted at Las Brisas are 15 different clones of Pinot Noir, along with two Italian varietals - Montepulciano and Vermentino - and the Spanish varietal Tempranillo.

# ABOUT THE WINEMAKER



Veteran Pinot Noir winemaker Ken Foster joined Mahoney Vineyards in June of 2002. The former winemaker/production manager at David Bruce Winery in California's Santa Cruz Mountains, Ken had been making wine there for 15 years. During his tenure, he gained experience with Pinot Noir from fifty different vineyards and a dozen appellations, making him a big name in the world of Pinot Noir winemaking.

When Francis Mahoney appointed Ken to oversee production at Mahoney Vineyards, he knew it was a decision that would

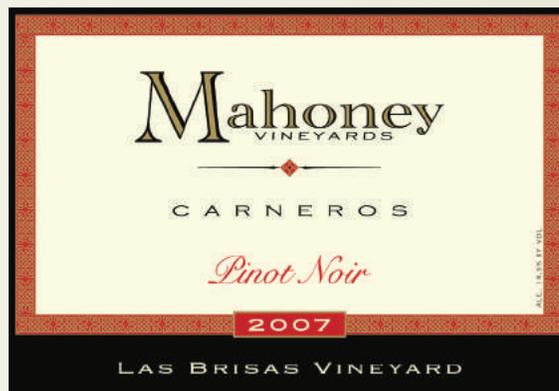
strengthen their program. At Mahoney, Ken instituted the use of small open-top fermentors, inventive oak barrel regimes and small-lot processing that immediately brought Mahoney's wines to the next level.

Ken's intricate knowledge of the technical side of winemaking is perfectly complimented by his superb palate, and an acute sense of how his wines will develop in barrel and bottle. Ken's philosophy is to emphasize the varietal character of the wines, rather than masking them with an over-abundance of oak tannins. Staying true to the appellation and the natural characteristics of the fruit, Ken assists the wines in their development rather than forcing them to bend to his will.

## MAHONEY VINEYARDS 2007 'LAS BRISAS' PINOT NOIR

Touted as one of the top vintages of the decade for California Pinot Noir, the 2007 Las Brisas Vineyard Pinot Noir is concentrated, firm and broad on the palate. This wine exemplifies the purest expression of Carneros-grown Pinot Noir, with ripe red cherry fruit and spicy notes, complimented by a lovely texture and a harmonious sense of integration with oak. A perfect match for entrees of grilled portobello mushrooms, pork, lamb or pasta dishes, and when enjoyed as an apéritif, this wine never fails to impress.

Aging:	15 months	pH:	3.57
Alcohol:	14.5%	Cases Produced:	230
Total Acidity:	0.54 g/mL	Enjoy now until:	2014



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### Portobello Mushroom Pasta

8 ounces portobello mushrooms  
3 cloves garlic  
2-3 thyme sprigs  
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil  
salt and pepper to taste

1/4 cup dried porcini mushrooms (optional)  
3 cups tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped  
1 pound penne (or other cut) pasta  
freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Trim hard parts from mushrooms and discard. Rinse mushrooms quickly to remove grit; cut caps into slices and stems into small chunks. Combine in a medium skillet with 1 clove garlic (crushed and peeled), thyme, olive oil and some salt and pepper. Cook over sufficiently low heat so that mixture bubbles, but mushrooms do not brown. Continue to cook, stirring infrequently, until they are quite shrunken in size and appear firm (30-45 minutes). At this point, you can pause for several hours before resuming cooking. If you are using porcinis, soak them in hot water to cover for a few minutes so that they soften.

Set a large pot of water to boil for pasta and salt it. Mince remaining garlic. Turn heat under oil to medium, and add garlic to the portobellos along with the drained porcinis. Cook, stirring occasionally, until garlic begins to color. Add tomatoes and raise heat to medium-high. Cook, stirring occasionally, until they break up and become saucy (about 15 minutes).

Meanwhile, cook pasta until it is tender, but not mushy. Taste sauce and adjust its seasoning if necessary. When pasta is done, drain it, toss with sauce, top with Parmesan cheese, and serve.



### Pork Chops with Dijon Sauce

1 Tbs. butter  
1 Tbs. olive oil  
4 center-cut rib or loin pork chops, about 1 1/4 inch thick  
salt and fresh ground pepper  
1/4 cup chopped shallots or green onions

1 cup dry white wine  
3/4 cup chicken stock  
3/4 cup heavy cream  
2 Tbs. Dijon mustard  
1 Tbs. chopped parsley (optional)

Pat the pork chops dry with paper towels. Sprinkle with salt and pepper all over them. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Stir in the butter. As soon as the butter has melted, add the pork chops to the pan and sear them (about 2-3 min. on each side). Reduce the heat slightly if the chops brown too quickly.

Remove the pork chops from the pan and pour off most of the fat. Add the green onions or shallots and cook them on med-high heat until softened (about 1 min.). Add 1/2 cup of the wine and bring to a boil, deglazing the pan by scraping the brown bits from the bottom of the pan. Stir in the stock and return chops to the pan. Bring sauce to a simmer, reduce heat, cover and cook until chops are cooked through (145 degree internal temp.), about 10-15 min.

Remove the pork chops to a warm platter; cover with foil to keep warm. Add the remaining 1/2 cup of wine. Increase the heat to high to boil the pan juices. Reduce the juices by half (about 3 min.). Add the heavy cream and boil 3 min. more, until sauce reduces and thickens. Remove from the heat and whisk in the mustard and parsley. Place chops on a bed of sauce and serve.

*Find these recipes and all of your favorites online at [GoldMedalWineClub.com/recipes](http://GoldMedalWineClub.com/recipes). We have a delicious collection of recipes to pair with your favorite Gold Medal wines!*



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