



# TASTE OF WINE

**By Frank Mangio**  
The week of February 13, 2011

## One on One with the Author of Sideways

It was the first time I had seen a major wine festival inside an airport hanger. Leave it to the Pinot Noir wine makers to come up with the Santa Monica Airport to lineup their 100+ “just Pinot” wineries with the winemakers ready to tell the compelling tales about their vintages.

The 2008’s are out in abundance and the noble, finicky grape never tasted better. National sales were up 8.9% in 2010, 2<sup>nd</sup> highest increase.

We’ll get back to the Pinots that pleased and why the ‘08 vintage is drawing so much attention, but really, the one dramatic moment in time that did it for Pinot Noir was the movie Sideways, some 6 years ago. You remember, it was about a frustrated author, Miles, who takes off with his irresponsible but loveable friend Jack and the nutty adventures



they encounter in wine country north of Santa Barbara. Miles drowns his sorrow in a never-ending binge of his favorite wine, Pinot Noir. It caused Pinot and wine tasting rooms to explode in sales, and his hated grape, Merlot, to crash in sales.

Rex Pickett is the master-mind author and screenwriter behind

**Taste of Wine columnist Frank Mangio**

**and author/screenwriter Rex Pickett of the book and movie Sideways talk about his new wine themed book, Vertical.**

Sideways and he was at the event promoting his new book, Vertical, that takes off where, more or less, the last one ended. “It’s some years later, and Miles has written a book that has been made into a movie,” he revealed. “It changed his life and now he is in demand at Pinot

Noir festivals. Crazy Jack is back in his life and his mother is as whacky as ever. They all take off for Oregon's Willamette Valley, home of the best Pinot under the sun, and it kind of takes Sideways into a new and moving direction." I had to pin him down on the Miles character and how he ever wrote about such a quirky personality. "Miles is me," he admitted. "I started going to the wine country above Santa Barbara to lick the wounds of a divorce. I hung out there at the same places as the movie showed, and decided to write about my life, using Miles as the character. I drank a little too much Pinot Noir to get rid of the sting of the rejection letters. And yes, Pinot was and still is my favorite wine."

Rex is working on a sequel movie and hopes to have Paul Giamatti back as Miles. "Sideways did so much for the wine world," he declared. "Now with the economy tanked and some Oregon wine countries so dependent on Pinot Noir, it might take another movie to keep this wine going." For some Taste Of Wine favorites, check out the next part of this column.

## Miles Was Right to Celebrate Pinot Noirs from Oregon

In Sideways author Rex Pickett's new book, Vertical, the hero Miles takes off for Oregon to be in the middle of great Pinot Noirs. The current 2008 release has been called the year for greatness. From Dundee Hills to the Willamette Valley, Pinot Noir lovers find much to cheer about. Intense, brooding, complex flavors are in abundance. The Pinot show in Santa Monica had such star-studded elegance as: Sokol Blosser Dundee Hills \$38; Argyle Extended Tirage Willamette Valley \$60.; Erath Estate \$24. and Willamette Valley Vineyards Reserve \$28.



We don't have to go too far south to keep the great Pinots coming. Sojourn Cellars in Sonoma is getting a solid reputation for big, bountiful Pinots, led by their Sonoma Coast, a blend of some 9 blocks of wines within 3 vineyards. \$39. Testarossa Winery further south near Santa Cruz, partners with growers in the finest appellations in its district in Monterey and the Santa Ynez Valley.

**Megan Ankrum, Southern California rep for Testarossa Vineyards, presenting her wines at the Pinot Days event at the Santa Monica Airport.**

The winery was founded in 1993 by high techies Rob and Diana Jensen who first started with 15 cases in their garage. Today, Testarossa produces 15,000 cases annually and has earned hundreds of 90+ awards for their wines. The 2009 Santa Lucia Highlands Vintage is priced at \$39. Finally, no discussion of Pinot Noir would be complete without mention of Goldeneye from the Anderson Valley of California, one of my Top Ten Tastes from last year and owned by Duckhorn Winery of Napa Valley. Elevation, climate, coastal fog and southwest grape exposure make it a perfect Pinot \$55.



## Wine Bytes

- ❑ Sage Grill in Encinitas is celebrating its 7<sup>th</sup> birthday with \$7. off any wine in stock during the month of February. Sage has a Hill Family Estate wine dinner with 4 wines and a 3 course dinner Mon. Feb. 21 for \$59. pp. RSVP at 760-943-7343.
- ❑ Holiday Wine Cellar in Escondido has a Taste the Northwest event Mon. Feb. 21 starting at 5:30pm. Oregon and Washington are featured for \$5. ea. Call 760-745-1200 for details.
- ❑ Firefly Grill & Wine Bar in Encinitas hosts a Ferrari-Carano Wine Dinner Wed. Feb. 23 at 6:30pm. Some of the great wines of this Sonoma winery will be tasted including one of my Top Ten Tastes for 2010, Tresor premium blend 2007. New Executive Chef for Firefly is now Paul Renaudo, from J-Six in the Gaslamp. \$65. cost. Call 760-635-1066 for your RSVP.
- ❑ Vigilucci's Seafood and Steakhouse in Carlsbad on Coast Highway has a Chateau St. Michelle Wine Tasting Fri. Feb. 25 at 6:30pm. 4 beautiful wines including one of my Top Ten Tastings, the Eroica Riesling 2008 will be served with a special selection of appetizers. RSVP and details at 760-434-2580.
  
- ❑ Dining Out San Diego is celebrating its 7<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a 7 course dinner at Eden in San Diego, paired with 6 expressions of The Macallan, on Sun. Feb. 27 at 6pm. Publisher Josh Kopelman, Chef Scotty Wagner and Ambassador Eden Algie host. \$75. pp. Call 619-269-3336 ext 209 for an RSVP.

**Frank Mangio is a renowned wine connoisseur certified by Wine Spectator. View his columns at [www.tasteofwinetv.com](http://www.tasteofwinetv.com). Reach him at [mangiompc@aol.com](mailto:mangiompc@aol.com).**

**For information on Frank's 3 day Tuscany tour and 10 day Celebrity Mediterranean Cruise October 7 to 20<sup>th</sup>, access [www.vineyardtravel.net](http://www.vineyardtravel.net) or call 800-359-3772.**

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**( Live Well )**

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