

**Esterlina Vineyards****2004 Pinot Noir Reserva
(Cole Ranch)**

Winemaker Craig Sterling outdid himself with this beautiful Pinot made from some carefully grown and well-manicured fruit. It's deep and dark, almost midnight black: one of the most inky Pinots I've ever seen outside of some from the Santa Lucia Highlands. Wait, you say, isn't this Pinot from Mendocino County, and shouldn't it be lighter in color? Well, this wine isn't from the Anderson Valley of Mendocino: it's from the Cole Ranch appellation, which happens to be a tiny little crop circle in the hills between the Anderson Valley to the east and the Ukiah Valley to the west.

The tiniest appellation in America, Cole Ranch produces outstanding Pinot, as well as [Riesling](#), Cab and Merlot. You reach this fantastic little ranch by highway 267, which wends its tortuous way westward from Ukiah over the blonde, oak-studded hills to the charming and bucolic town of Boonville.

The nose is a cedar closet, with intense dark chocolate raspberry aromas: it smells like a Linzer torte out of the oven. Gorgeous and inviting, the aromas really whet your appetite for the first forkful of this one. Rich, lush cherry, raspberry, cocoa, dark chocolate and coffee liqueur flood the palate, followed by a bite of pepper on the finish. This is an excellent, powerful Pinot Noir: no languid shrinking violet here. No, instead, it is a very bold knight, full clad with the mail and armor of extraction, fine oak, piercing acid and shield-strong tannin that can stand up to cellar aging for a decade or more. The texture is as firm and taut as a knight's steed: it ripples with earth, fruit, acidity and texture, making for a memorable ride into battle with any big and bold dish like stuffed lamb leg with mission figs that have been macerated with garlic, star anise, port and shallots, or perhaps even a fine pork chop dusted with chili arbol and grilled to perfection with a spicy cherry-apricot chutney. Then again, a nice duck confit would be sublime...

(Alc: 13.8%, Retail: \$40)

Reviewed May 17, 2007 by [Laura Ness](#).

THE WINE

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Vintage: 2004

Wine: Pinot Noir Reserva

Appellation: [Cole Ranch](#)

Grape: [Pinot Noir](#)

Price: \$40.00

THE REVIEWER**Laura Ness**

A wine writer and wine judge for major publications and competitions around the country, Laura Ness likens wine to the experience of music. She is always looking for that ubiquitous marriage of rhythm, melody, and flawless execution. What is good music? You know it when you get lost in it. What is good wine? It is music in your mouth.