

**Hunter Hill Vineyard & Winery****2004 Pinot Noir, Hellenthal Vineyard
(Sonoma Coast)**

Winemaker Vann Slatter has been making Pinot from the Hellenthal vineyard for a number of years now, and with good, consistent results. It's been a consistent award winner as well.

This is a stout, anything but subtle wine, typical of Pinot Noir from the Sonoma Coast. The blackberry and cassis aromas let you know this is going to be something fairly hefty. There's even a hint of chocolate along with the dark cherries. It's fully ripe fruit without being over the top, and there's a nice amount of acidity to complement the lovely, silky texture. You'd be safe to say this is a beefy Pinot, with even some cigar box and leather notes. This is a Pinot for those who like them big, but with plenty of Pinot character. It is extremely well priced to boot. Nothing wimpy here: it's what you'd expect from a man who enjoys hunting game, and makes wines to go with things like wild boar, duck and the occasional moose. Lacking the latter, you'd want to pair this Pinot with a meaty lamb dish, perhaps even a Mediterranean lamb stew with lots of olives, fennel and star anise. It could also handle a venison filet wrapped in bacon easily, or smoked duck with spicy apricot, ginger and mango chutney.

You might want to seek this wine out. Hunter Hill has grafted over much of their original estate Merlot plantings to Pinot Noir, and will be concentrating on estate Pinot going forward. The last Hunter Hill wine from Hellenthal fruit will most likely be the 2005 vintage. Christine Slatter tells me that the barrels they'd allocated for Hellenthal Pinot for the 2006 harvest ended up filled with a nice, large crop of their own Estate Syrah instead. Plus, the 2006 crop of the Hunter Hill estate Pinot turned out even better than they'd anticipated. Economically speaking, it didn't make sense to pay sky-high Sonoma Coast prices when their estate Pinot fruit was looking so good.

The 2003 version of the Hellenthal Pinot wine won a Silver Medal at the 2005 San Francisco Chronicle competition, and scored 95 Points and a Gold Medal at the California State Fair. The 2004 is poised to reap some nice medals as well.

(Alc: 14%, Price: \$25)

Reviewed November 30, 2006 by [Laura Ness](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Hunter Hill Vineyard & Winery](#)

Vineyard: Hellenthal Vineyard

Vintage: 2004

Wine: Pinot Noir

Appellation: [Sonoma Coast](#)

Grape: [Pinot Noir](#)

Price: \$25.00

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.