



WINERY REVIEW

Rochioli is the Russian River Valley's Pinot Noir pioneer

By Stacy Briscoe | Posted on 11/23/2016



Photo: Max Whittaker Prime / Special to The Chronicle

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The Rochioli have been cultivating grapes in Sonoma's **Russian River Valley** since the 1950s, less than a half-century after the family's arrival in New York from their native Italy. Joe Rochioli Sr. and Jr. tried their hand at the Bordelais varieties, planting Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc. While their Sauvignon Blanc remains in production today (it's one of the oldest SB plantings in the state) Cabernet proved less fruitful.

Instead, Joe Jr. **replanted to Pinot Noir** in 1968, a decision that seems obvious to Russian River Valley wine lovers today, yet at the time was anything but. While California continues to foster a love affair with **Pinot Noir**, propelling the grape to become Sonoma's most planted red, little Pinot Noir was planted at the time. Rochioli, along with peers such as Joseph Swan and the Zellerbach family of Hanzell, began to change that, and the California wine industry will forever remain indebted to their pioneering efforts for what is now one of the Golden State's signature varieties.

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