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I've just returned from Stonier's pinot noir event in Sydney. Open to the public, it's a great way to try a number of high-end pinot noirs from around the globe. The idea was to find consensus on what makes great pinot. Not an easy task. There were plenty of differing opinions on the night, but the quality wines shone through.

In a room full of pinot lovers, you would think the wines from Burgundy, pinot's spiritual home, would win out. And while there were some good Burgundys on offer, with price tags to match, the wines from the New World stood up better than many would have expected.

I had a strong bias towards the French wines, but in a blind tasting, there's only the glass in front of you, and no fancy names or price tags to cloud the picture. So my favourite wines ended up being from the New World.

Top wine honours in my notes were split.

At one end of the spectrum sat the firm, masculine 2007 Holyman pinot from Stony Rise, in Tasmania. At the other, there was the beguiling, generous single-vineyard 2006 Pipeclay Terrace pinot from Mount Difficulty, in Otago.

Both wines are made in tiny quantities in only the best years. It's this sort of attention to detail that pinot needs. So if you are a real pinot nut, start hunting some down. Beware, the Mount Difficulty is about \$100 a bottle and the Holyman is \$50. Certainly not in the quaffing-wine price range, but when it's world-class pinot, you could probably expect to pay even more.

Once again, pinot showed its ability to capture the imaginations of some, while leaving others cold. I guess that's what great wine is all about – we all have our own opinions.

Robert Stein 2009 Riesling

Mudgee, NSW \$25

★★★★ \$\$\$\$

Riesling and Mudgee might not be synonymous, but there's no doubting the quality of the Robert Stein '09 riesling. Clean, crisp and varietal, it impressed the judges at the Winewise Small Vignerons Awards and at the Cowra show, gathering two trophies. Being a small make, it could be tricky to track down, but it's well worth the effort.

