

# Los Angeles Times

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## Pork + Wine Pairing: Black Pig's Heritage Bacon Is Good, But Have You Tried The Pinot?

By Jenn Garbee | October 19, 2011 | Food & Wine



Heritage bacon. Could life get better? It can, particularly if chefs John Stewart and Duskie Estes -- and a really great back story -- are involved. The couple is best known as the chef-proprietors behind Sonoma County's [Zazu Restaurant + Farm](#) (Santa Rosa) and [Bovolo](#) restaurant (Healdsburg). But with their summer [Grand Cochon](#) win (the chef-fueled Olympics of pork, essentially), they're getting as much attention of late for their backyard (literally) side project: Small-batch, hickory-smoked bacon that they sell under the [Black Pig Meat Co.](#) label (a package arrived in our welcome box after we joined the [Butcher's Guild](#)). It's among our favorite bacons at the moment, although it should be noted that we generally have a large number of cured meats on our "like" list at any given time (and

smoky bacon diehards, do read the tasting disclaimer that follows).

But these chefs have a last-minute game changer: Their Black Pig Pinot Noir.

That wine is somewhat circuitously connected to their bacon biz. When the couple found out the Schioppettino grapes growing in their backyard vineyard were diseased, they decided to ditch the prized grapes and raise pigs instead (for commercial production purposes, their pork is now sourced via [Pure Country Pork](#), a Washington farm). Considering the price per ton for grapes (thousands of dollars) versus a package of their bacon (\$13), it's safe to say Stewart and Estes are rather obsessed with cured meat. Estes, incidentally, has a background in butchery (in the restaurant sense of the word), and Stewart, who apprenticed in charcuterie under Mario Batali (yeah, we're jealous, too), makes the charcuterie for the restaurants.

The Pinot? After converting their backyard to a porcine palace, the couple began buying grapes. Thomas George Estates in Healdsburg ([formerly Davis Bynum](#)) now produces their wines, a "Blanc" Pig Sauvignon Blanc (\$25) and that Black Pig Pinot Noir (\$38). That Pinot in particular is a great value for the quality -- although it should be noted that this wasn't blind tasting, but one with several pork interludes. Perhaps all that bacon gave us a biased viewpoint, but regardless, we're still putting that Pinot (with a side of bacon, of course) on our holiday wish list.

*\* Black Pig Meat Bacon Disclaimer: A forewarning to smoke fiends: This is more delicately flavored bacon in terms of applewood smoke dominance. These are subtle-but-meaty slices that, based on girth alone, cause one to pause-and-think before using. In other words, if you are a diehard [Benton's](#) bacon fan (which we also love for those in-your-face hickory smoke moments), Black Pig Meat's bacon is not going to give you that same smoky high. It tastes like exactly what it is: A chef's vision of bacon that should be put to thoughtful menu component use.*

**Black Pig Meat Co:** Locally, [Wilshire Restaurant](#) in Santa Monica uses Black Pig Meat bacon in several dishes. You can purchase both the bacon and wines via the [Black Pig Meat website](#).

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