



WINE JAMES HALLIDAY

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If it isn't broken, don't fix it. Stonier's annual international pinot tasting has followed the same format since it was first held in 2000.

Twelve pinots from around the world are blind-tasted, broken into two flights of six, with a half-time break between the first and second group. A panel of three (this year Jeannie Cho Lee MW from Hong Kong, Jane Faulkner and me) leads the discussion of the wines; all present know the identity of the 12 wines, but not the order in which they are tasted. Table "captains" have the task of gaining a consensus on the preference ranking of the best three wines. Some tables speak about the first flight, others the second. There is an option for Q&A, and a written preference order is collected from each table.

This year's wines came from Australia (4), Burgundy (4) and New Zealand, Oregon, Germany and Chile (1 each), the prices ranging from \$50 to \$650. It shaped up to be the most interesting (and challenging) group of pinots ever presented at the event, and so it proved. The lightest coloured wine was the most highly rated by a large margin and turned out to be the 2012 Stonier Merron's Vineyard (\$55). Jeannie Cho Lee was

particularly enamoured of the wine, but thought (as did I) that it was from Burgundy. The 2012 Freycinet Pinot Noir was my favourite in the first flight, followed by 2012 Ashton Hills Reserve.

Second place went to Germany's 2011 Bernhard Huber Spätburgunder (\$160). I had previously tasted a less expensive Huber pinot noir and was mightily impressed, and I ranked it second in the second flight behind the 2011 Domaine Hudelot-Noellat Romanée St Vivant (\$650).

It takes courage from Stonier to include its wine, the odds against achieving top place stacked against it, dramatically so if you take the cost of the Burgundies (all \$200 and above) into account. Bravery is often its own reward. Full details for all 12 wines appear on winecompanion.com.au

2012 Stonier Merron's Vineyard Mornington Peninsula Pinot Noir

122 dozen bottles made from a tiny crop on the 1.7ha vineyard; open-fermented, 23 days on skins, matured for 8 months in 60% new French oak, 5 months in older oak. Supremely elegant, with a perfumed red fruit bouquet, a long palate making its statement on the finish. 13.5% alc, screwcap

94 points, drink to 2020, \$55

