

## Brooks, Runaway Red Pinot Noir 2009 Oregon

25 Nov 2011 by Jancis Robinson

From \$17.55, £16.50, 2,835 yen

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**3 Dec** Jane Brooks Heuck elucidates:

*The first barrel of this wine fell from the fork lift and rolled into the creek as you saw on the website. Once they dug it out, they put it back in the WillaKenzie Winery. When Jimi came in the next day, someone had put a sign on it that said 'runaway red'. With his passion for Eastern European literature, he immediately thought of Leon Trotsky, the original Runaway Red. In addition to Trotsky's photo, the label shows an ice pick. Trotsky was killed in Mexico with an ice axe. Jimi thought the pick sent a clearer message of the brutal way that he was killed. The label also has the Russian battle cry 'Peace Bread Land' from the 1917 October Revolution. Jimi, of course, added the word 'wine'. Jimi visited Trotsky's grave in Mexico just two months before he passed away.*

*I asked Pascal what he wanted for Christmas and one of the items he listed was 'any books about wine you think I should read'. I bought Jimi the Oxford Companion and now get to do the same for Pascal!*

*We continue to evolve and stay committed to our Riesling program. I was recently asked to join the International Riesling Foundation Board. It is a thrill to be able to work with top riesling producers around the country!*

The more I taste Oregon Pinot Noir, the more impressed I am by the current state of Pinot play in the coolest state in the Pacific Northwest. (See, for example, the comparative tasting described in [German Pinot does itself a favour.](#)) And I have long been a fan of Brooks winery, founded by the charismatic Jimi Brooks, who died far too young.

I was delighted therefore to see that the enterprising, user-friendly UK importer Stone, Vine & Sun is currently offering **Brooks, Runaway Red Pinot Noir 2009 Willamette Valley**, one of far too few Oregon wines to be sold in Europe. Of course the price is higher than it is in the US, but for an American wine, this is a relative bargain.

Like most good Pinot Noirs, it is not particularly dark in colour but is hugely expressive of ripe Pinot Noir fruit, almost explosively expressive, and full of life and freshness. I think it should drink well over the next three or four years. For some reason I don't understand, Leon Trotsky adorns the label. The explanation on the [winery's website](#) is not much help either, though it has a certain charm:

### ***Peace! Bread! Land! Wine!***

*This wine does not represent Trotsky, its name describes the amusing story behind the wine. In the middle of the night during Jimi's first harvest, a single barrel skidded off the rack and rolled out into the darkness. The wine represents this barrel's quick escape as it accelerated down a hill, and with a gigantic heart breaking splash fell into the creek. When it was finally tracked down, the barrel was found completely intact, between the shoulders of the creek; a true Brooks miracle. This wine is about pleasant surprises, deep laughter, and good friends.*

You can read my background to this winery [here](#), and here's what Stone, Vine & Sun have to say about this wine and the winery:

*Brooks winery was founded by Portland-born Jimi Brooks, who trained in Beaujolais before working at Willakenzie and Maysara, whilst founding Brooks in 1998. His sudden death in 2004 might have ended the venture, but so highly regarded was he in the Oregon wine community that family and friends rallied round to keep it going. Since 2006 the wine has been made by tall, pony-tailed Chris Williams, with Jimi's sister Janie running the business as steward for Jimi's son Pascal, now 15. (As Pascal says, 'I love seeing the expression on people's faces when I tell them I own a winery!')*

*Jimi was an early convert to organic cultivation. The estate's own vineyards are all farmed biodynamically, and in addition biodynamically farmed fruit is bought in from Maysara, plus some other grapes. Jimi was also a lover of Riesling, and the two Rieslings, both dry and both of relatively low alcohol, are superb, richly textured and intensely flavoured. [I can attest to this - JR.] An earlier vintage of Ara Riesling has been served at a State Dinner in the White House itself! As for the terrific Pinots, Burgundy lovers should buy these wines and also consider laying them down - top Oregon Pinot ages superbly.*

Because of the lead times of modern newspaper publishing, which seem to get longer as the technology becomes more sophisticated, I am just trying to marshal my red wine choices for my Top 100 Wines, which will be published in the *Financial Times* over the next four Saturdays. It's horrible to have to narrow them down to 25 for reasons of space. I will publish a much longer list here on JancisRobinson.com but note that, as usual, burgundy and other Pinot Noirs feature heavily in my suggestions for what to serve with turkey and the like. This wine would go very nicely with cranberry sauce.

Runaway Red can be ordered directly from the winery's website for \$20 a bottle, from Stone, Vine & Sun in the UK and also in Japan.

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