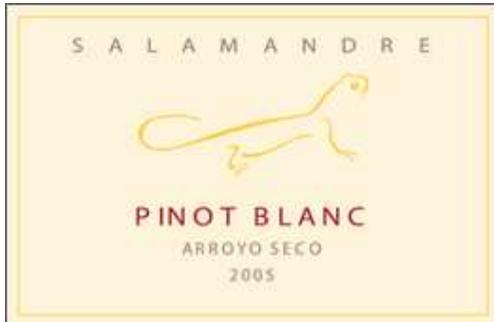


WINE RECOMMENDATION

**Salamandre Wine Cellars****2005 Pinot Blanc
(Arroyo Seco)**

Wells Shoemaker is a Pediatrician by day, and a winemaker during all those other hours: and around harvest, there aren't enough of either. If you could see where he manages the tiny Salamandre operation in the RV-proof hills of Aptos, you'd

send him a shoehorn: it's that tight. In fact, anyone who has been in the typically cavernous palaces of purpose built wineries in Paso and Napa, would freak and run when they saw the tasting room. It's a cozy, elbow-dinging corner of the barrel room where if you turn around, you've gone too far. But still, he loves to experiment with new sources of fruit and new varieties: the more the merrier. He's been at it long enough to know when to take advantage of a varietal he hasn't made yet, especially when it appears to be a good deal. He admits he wishes he had planned to craft this Pinot Blanc into the impressive beauty it is, but frankly, it's the equivalent of having a beautiful daughter by accident: it's part genetics and part luck. He has three of them, so he and wife Sandy appear to be blessed with both. Still, as much as I knew he was over the moon about this Pinot Blanc, I couldn't believe how fantastic it really did turn out.

Yes, it's rich and packs some heat – it was picked at 26 Brix and tops out at 15.5% alcohol – but it is so beautifully balanced you'll fall for it like a tall buxom blonde. The beautiful aromas of ripe peach, citrus and creamy crème brûlée are the teaser to the lush white peach and honey flavors. He fermented half the fruit in stainless and the other half in oak – middle-aged oak, he says – for 4 to 5 months. The soft and lovely flesh gives way to a crisp and pineapply finish, making this wine a total standout. Treat yourself to a really sensational Pinot Blanc at a very fair price: and while you're at it, treat yourself to Coquilles St. Jacques. *C'est magnifique!*

(Alc: 15.6%, Retail: \$20)

Reviewed May 29, 2007 by [Laura Ness](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Salamandre Wine Cellars](#)

Vintage: 2005

Wine: Pinot Blanc

Appellation: [Arroyo Seco](#)

Grape: [Pinot Blanc](#)

Price: \$20.00

THE REVIEWER**Laura Ness**

A wine writer and wine judge for major publications and competitions around the country, Laura Ness likens wine to the experience of music. She is always looking for that ubiquitous marriage of rhythm, melody, and flawless execution. What is good music? You know it when you get lost in it. What is good wine? It is music in your mouth.