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Love pinot noir? Visit Healdsburg, Calif. Some of the best pinot noirs are within a day's drive

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By LINDA MURPHY / Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

HEALDSBURG, Calif. – It takes chilly conditions to produce red-hot pinot noir, and the cool, foggy Russian River Valley in northwest Sonoma County is the place where many of California's most exciting pinots are made.

Russian River Valley Winegrowers Pinot noir vines stretch across MacMurray Ranch, southwest of Healdsburg, Calif. View larger More photos Photo store Americans can't get enough pinot noir, so the best course is to go to the source – with a home base in Healdsburg – to taste and to buy pinots. More than 70 wineries produce the red varietal in the valley, the majority within a 25-minute drive of Healdsburg. In town alone, there are 12 tasting rooms within a three-block radius of downtown, many pouring pinot noir.

Just a mile and a half from Graton is the classy tasting room of **Lynmar Winery**, which pours four current-release wines, including the excellent single-vineyard Quail Hill Pinot Noir and Quail Hill Chardonnay, for a \$10 fee. For \$25 (reservations required), four wines are matched with appetizers. It's enough for a light lunch.

Lynmar Winery, 3909 Frei Road, Sebastopol; lynmarwinery.com