



# PinotFile

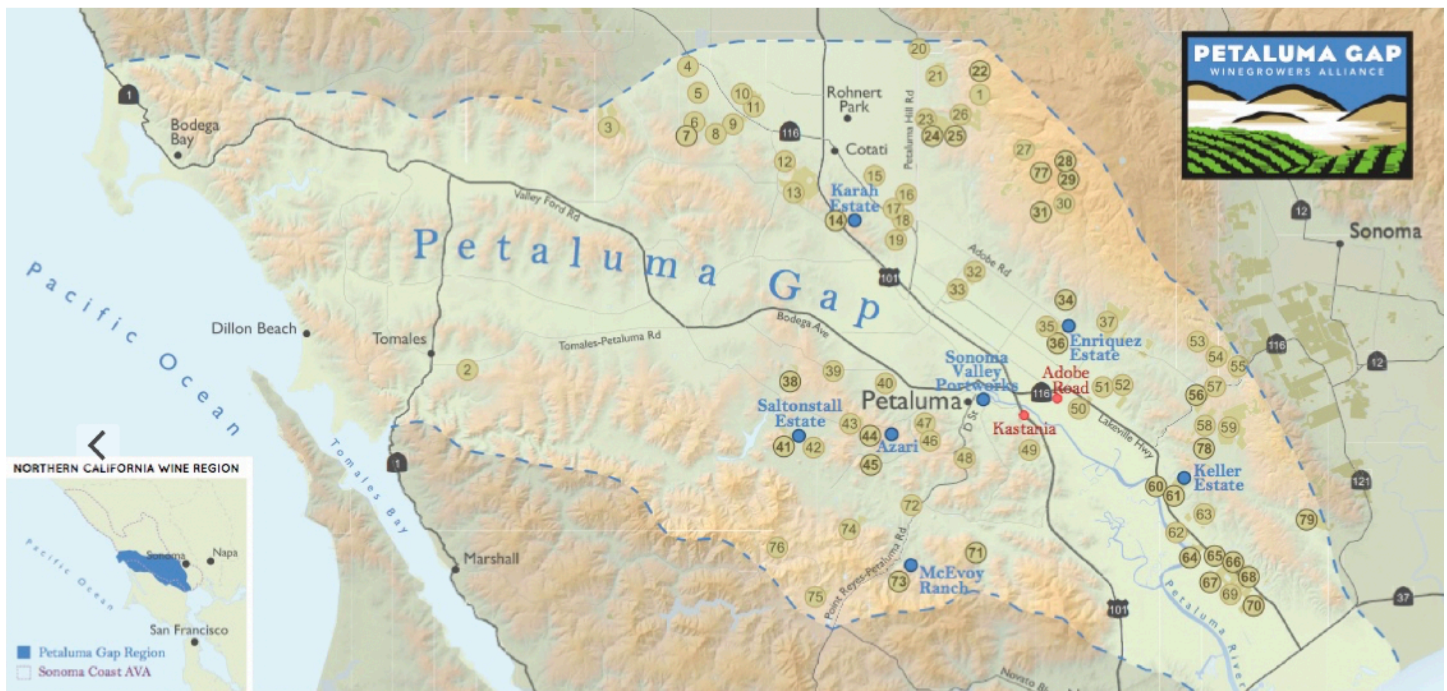
The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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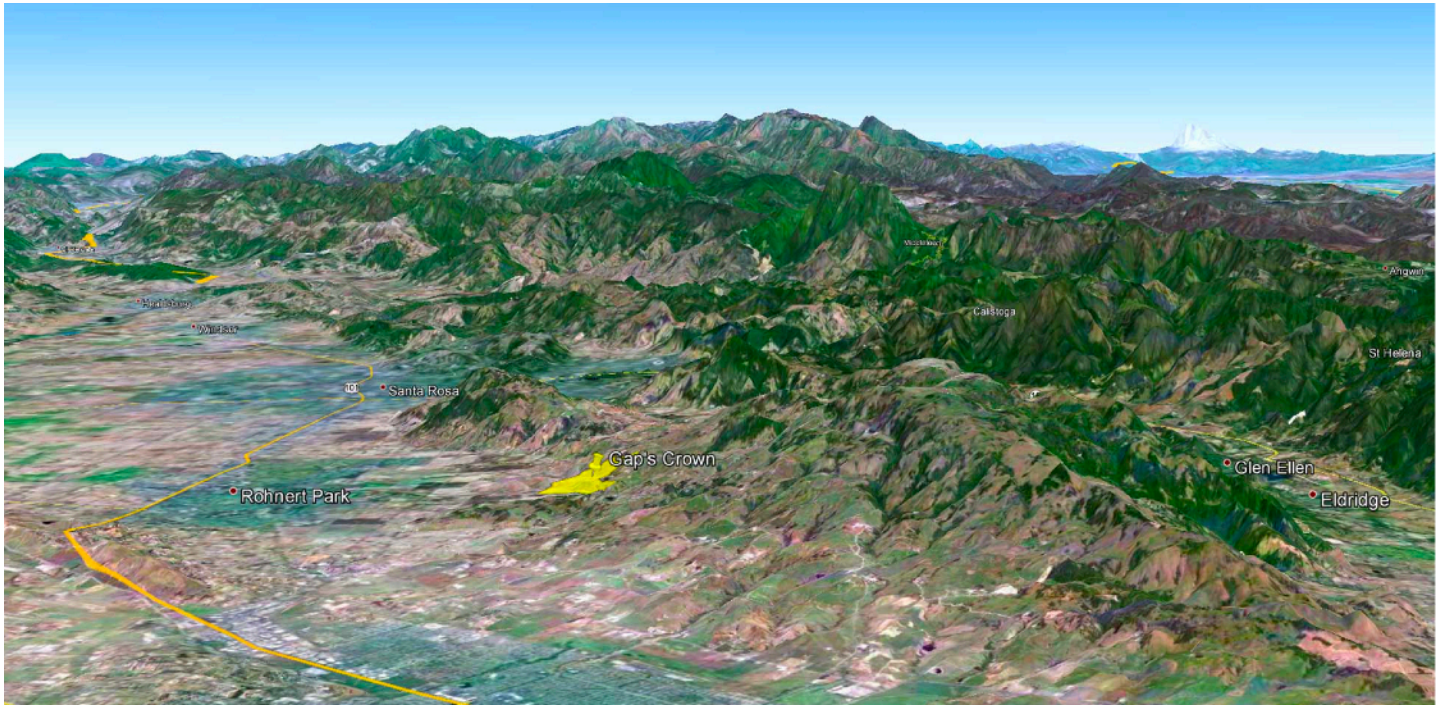
*Pinot Noir has more to say than other wines*

## Gap's Crown: Cool Climate Grape Nirvana

Gap's Crown Vineyard is located on a western hillside of Sonoma Mountain in the town of Penngrove, east of Rohnert Park. Originally positioned in the southern section of the Sonoma Coast AVA, the vineyard is now a part of America's newest AVA, the Petaluma Gap. Afternoon wind and accompanying fog are the defining features of the Petaluma Gap AVA. They enter the Petaluma Gap AVA through a wind gap in the coastal mountain range stretching east from the Pacific Ocean at Bodega Bay through the town of Petaluma and then south to San Pablo Bay. Gap's Crown Vineyard is #26 on the map in the northeast corner of the AVA.

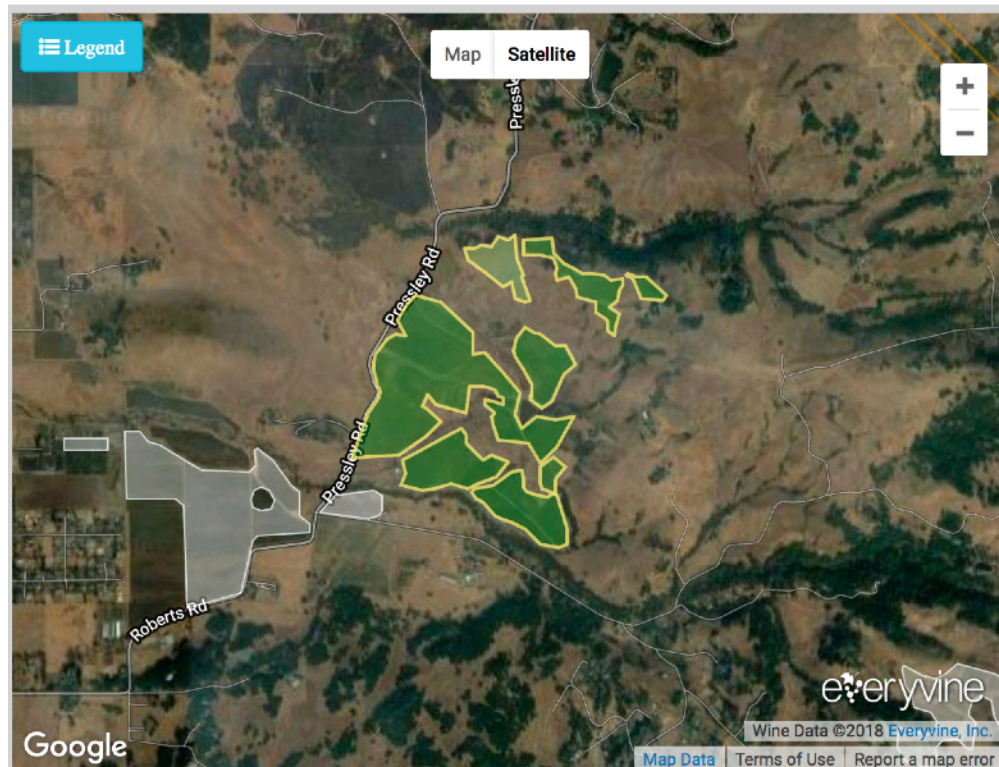


Gap's Crown Vineyard's modest slope and southwest facing vines at 320 to 820 feet elevation expose it to the maritime elements. However, the vineyard was carefully planted with most vines on the hillside above the fog line to encourage even sunlight exposure during the final stages of fruit ripening, while a lingering fog pocket around the vineyard at the end of the growing season allows the grapes to slowly develop sugar and phenolic ripeness in unison. An aerial view of the vineyard's location:



The vineyard was originally owned by Premier Pacific Vineyards in conjunction with CalPERS. Bill Price, the owner of Classic Wines, LLC, that includes Price Family Vineyards (ownership of Durell Vineyard, Gap's Crown Vineyard and other premium vineyard properties in Sonoma County), bought the vineyard in early 2013 for \$13 million. Gap's Crown Vineyard is currently an Estate property of Three Sticks Wines, also owned by Bill Price. A section of about 37 acres is leased long-term to Kosta Browne.

Gap's Crown Vineyard was planted in four phases from 2002 to 2005. The current reported acreage is conflicting, but Jonah Chernoff of Three Sticks Wines told me the vineyard has 106 acres of Pinot Noir and 32 acres of Chardonnay. According to Atlas Vineyard Management, who farm and manage the vineyard, the clonal makeup is as follows: Pinot Noir - Rochioli selection, Swan selection, Dijon 114, 115, 667, 777, and "828," on 110R, 101-14, 3309 and 420A rootstocks; Chardonnay - Dijon 76, 95, 96, 124, and 548 on Riparia Glorie, 16-16, 3309 and 420A rootstocks. All vines are on a VSP trellis.



The vineyard, located adjacent Sangiacomo Roberts Road Vineyard (see Google Map), is composed of multiple blocks (see Google map above), with two-thirds planted at a density of 2,264 vines per acre and one-third planted at a density of 1,361 vines per acre. The predominant soil type is Goulding-Toomes Complex, that is, well-draining, iron-rich, brown clay loam with significant volcanic rock, but there is a variety of soil types. According to Sojourn Cellars' winemaker, Erich Bradley, the rocky soils and resultant excellent drainage are the defining features of the vineyard.

According to the Winkler Index, the Gap's Crown Vineyard is in Region I with 1,900-2,100 growing degree days. The vineyard is located in a cold air pocket and is the last place to get fog in the morning and the last place for fog to lift in the morning. The coolness often leads to Chardonnay begin harvested after the Pinot Noir. Average rainfall is 31.1 inches per year.

Through the years, grapes from Gap's Crown Vineyard have been sold to many wineries: Anaba Wines, Armida, Black Kite Cellars, Blue Farm, Bruliam Wines, Bryter Estates, Expression 38, Fulcrum Wines, Furthermore, Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Guarachi Family Wines, Harrington Wines, Kosta Browne, Landmark Vineyards, LUTUM, MacPahil Wines, Patiné Cellars, Paul Hobbs Winery, Patz & Hall, Ram's Gate Winery, Roger Roessler Wines, Saxon Brown, Sojourn Cellars, Three Sticks Wines, Trombetta Family Wines, Twomey Cellars, WALT Wines, Wind Gap Wines, Wren Hop Vineyards. Most of the grapes have gone into vineyard-designated bottlings. Kosta Browne has the most experience with this vineyard, dating back to 2006.

The excellence of this vineyard, especially as the vines have matured, is indicated by the consistently high quality and scores of the Gaps Crown Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines regardless of the producer. When I surveyed all the Gap's Crown vineyard-designated wines I reviewed in the *PinotFile* from the 2012-2016 vintages, I found 21 Pinot Noir wines scored 90 to 95, except for three wines that scored 89 (2) and 87 (1). I then looked at all the Gap's Crown vineyard-designated Pinot Noir wines reviewed in the *Wine Enthusiast* from the 2012-2016 vintages and found 38 Pinot Noirs rated 90 to 96 and only 3 rated below 90. Regarding Chardonnay, there were 6 Gap's Crown vineyard-designated wines that scored 90 to 95 from the 2012-2016 vintages in the *PinotFile*, and 0 below 90. There were 19 Gap's Crown vineyard-designated Chardonnays reviewed in the *Wine Enthusiast* from the 2012-2016 vintages and all scored 90 to 95, with 0 wines scoring less than 90.

These figures indicate that both Pinot Noir and Chardonnay are consistently excellent from Gap's Crown Vineyard beginning with the 2012 vintage (prior to that vintage grapes were often blended in Sonoma Coast bottlings). The revelation for the consumer is that the name Gap's Crown Vineyard on a bottle of Pinot Noir or Chardonnay is almost a sure thing. There are only a precious few similar vineyards in California that excel in BOTH Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

Here are a few recently reviewed Gap's Crown Vineyard wines (the words, "Petaluma Gap," will start appearing on labels with the 2017 vintage):



**2016 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 224 cases, \$68. Clones "828," and 667. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Intoxicating aromas of dark fruits, spice, violets, char and vanilla. A full-on charge of purple and black fruits attack with a vengeance, envelope the palate, and hang on through an intense, sappy and lengthy finish. About as big as Pinot Noir can be without being jammy. Silken in texture with tame tannins. An ultimate expression of Pinot's exuberance, encouraging contemplation and gloating. Any Miracle Gro in this vineyard? Still extraordinary when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Year in and year out, this is Fulcrum's best wine. 97.*

**2015 LUTUM Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., \$60. This label is a collaboration between winemaker Gavin Chanin and Bill Price. Lutum is Latin for soil or dirt. Grapes picked at 2:00 a.m., harvest Brix 24.0°. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 25% new and bottled unfiltered in March 2017. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, fertile earth, and leafy herbs lead off. Mid weight in style with redeeming flavors of dark red stone and berry fruits with an underlying compliment of toasty oak. Gracious tannins ply the background and the wine finishes with juicy succulence. Noticeably more expressive and cohesive when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 92.*

**2015 LUTUM Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 13.2% alc., \$50. Fruit picked in the early morning at 22.3° Brix, pressed and put into French oak barrels, 25% new. After fermentation and aging for 15 months, the wine was lightly fined and bottled unfiltered in March 2017. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon, pineapple, crème brûlée, buttered toast and vanilla leap from the glass. Enters with rich flavors of lemon, pineapple and pear and finishes with an arrow of bright acidity as a lemon-scented note. Slightly creamy and soothing in texture, with some lingering fruit-scented finish.* **93.**

**2015 Rams Gate Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., pH 3.30, TA 0.58, 333 cases, \$72. A new addition to the Rams Gate portfolio. This vineyard is located in the Petaluma Gap AVA and consists of 138 acres ranging in elevation from 300 to 840 feet above sea level. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Reserved aromas of black cherry, blackberry, plum and old cellar entice. Plump and luxurious, yet suave and caressing in the mouth, with a boat load of dark fruit. The sap is balanced with a backbone of fine-grain tannins and gracious acidity as well as supportive oak. I can't emphasize enough the intensity of fruit flavor and must score the wine high simply on fruit audacity. Like Olympic figure skater Nathan Chen this wine pushes the envelope. **93.**

**2016 Three Sticks Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.65, 315 cases, \$55. Clones 76 and 124. Fermented and aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 26% new. 100% malolactic fermentation. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon, pineapple and pear arrive slowly over time in the glass. Creamy in the mouth, with a gentle soul, offering expressive flavors of lemon-lime, Asian pear, baking spices, caramel and crème brûlée. Nicely composed and easygoing with some finishing persistence.* **92.**

Just this week, I met with Sojourn Cellars winemaker Erich Bradley, and we tasted through the winery's 2016 vintage fall releases. One of the Chardonnays is from Gap's Crown Vineyard and a preliminary review follows.

**2016 Sojourn Cellars Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., pH 3.47, TA 0.63, 300 cases, \$45. Release spring 2018. Clone 95 planted in 2004 and clone 76 also planted in 2004. Clusters are typically small with prominent hen and chick berries. Gently whole-cluster pressed, barrel fermented with native yeast in French oak, 30% new. 75% malolactic fermentation. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Fresh aromas of citrus, pear, and sea breeze. Discrete richness with juicy flavors of lemon-lime and grapefruit. Slightly creamy in the mouth, with a refreshingly upbeat finish.* **93.**

# Recent Sips of California Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

Over the past forty years, the Burgundians have reached out to Oregon and New Zealand Pinot Noir producers, but have largely shunned California Pinot Noir wineries. A wave of Burgundian vintners have flocked to Oregon, offering their expertise as consultants and investing in winery and vineyard ownership. In New Zealand, the Central Otago Burgundy Exchange has proven to be a successful vintner exchange in recent years, and Australia is looking to setting up the same type of program. Bordeaux has been chummy with Napa Valley, and recently auctioned off many large formats to raise money for Napa to assist in that region's recovery efforts from last October's disastrous fires.

Historically, Oregon has had a close relationship with Burgundy, with Oregonians spending considerable time working and studying in Burgundy as far back as the early 1960s beginning with David Lett and Charles Coury. Oregon winemakers have readily embraced the people and culture of Burgundy, while California has been more aloof. In addition, California is known for Cabernet Sauvignon and the Burgundians profess no love for Cabernet Sauvignon or the Bordelaise. Oregon and New Zealand are more Pinot-centric and the lifestyle of these two regions is more akin to Burgundy.

Oregon maintains stricter regulations regarding wine labeling. In California, if a wine label lists a general appellation such as California, at least 75% of the wine must be produced from grapes grown in the place named, and at least 85% if the label lists a specific American AVA such as Anderson Valley. In Oregon, if the label claims "Oregon," an Oregon county, or an Oregon appellation wholly within Oregon, 100% of the grapes must be from Oregon and 95% from that appellation of origin.

Some Burgundy vigneronns have been outspoken critics of California Pinot Noir, discounting the Pinot Noir wines on the basis of their frequent higher alcohols, significant ripeness and extraction, and generous oak bearing. Try putting a California Pinot Noir in a French Burgundy wine tasting, and you will most likely find the wine being snubbed. It's a French thing.

There are a few Frenchmen who have made inroads in California. Aubert de Villaine of Burgundy's Domaine de la Romanée-Conti created a partnership with Larry Hyde of Hyde Vineyards in Carneros, but this venture, called HdV, is centered on Chardonnay and a Merlot-Cabernet blend. Jean-Charles Boisset resides in California and has acquired DeLoach and Buena Vista, both notable producers of Pinot Noir. Claude Koeberle co-founded Soliste, a producer of Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir profiled in the previous issue of the *PinotFile*. There are a few French ex-patriots successfully making Pinot Noir in California, including Luc Morlet (Morlet Family Vineyards and Cabaud Wines) and Nicholas Morlet (Peter Michael), Jerome Chery (Saintsbury and Fog Crest Vineyard), and Arnaud Weyrich (Roederer Estate).

There are numerous California winemakers who have spent time in Burgundy to work and learn, and they embrace Burgundy and its winemaking techniques and tradition more than vice-versa. As a result, the California Pinot Noir renaissance has simply progressed along a different path than Oregon. Perhaps iconic winemaker Burt Williams of Williams Selyem, who never set foot in Burgundy, yet whose wines were highly respected by the Burgundians, set a precedent for California.

All that posturing discussion aside, look to the many top-notch recently released California Pinot Noir wines reviewed in this issue. Not all is joyous in California Pinot land, however, as some Pinot Noir wines are more a beverage than wines driven by a clear vision, seemingly produced to appeal to the mainstream consumer's love of oak, ripe fruit and sweetness. These fruit-driven wines lack distinction, aromatic joy and deliver little nuance.

## Domaine Della Winery, Santa Rosa

David Hejl has been crafting Pinot Noir since 2010. He was the former General Manager and CEO of Kosta Browne Winery. The Domaine Della Winery was co-founded with his sister and brother-in-law and the name, Domaine Della, honors David's mother, Della Winifred Dale. The inaugural releases were from the 2012 vintage. The wines have a resemblance to those from Kosta Browne in style. Visit [www.domainedella.com](http://www.domainedella.com).

**2016 Domaine Della Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 200 cases, \$65. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The source of this wine is instantly identifiable by an array of typical aromas including cherry, wild raspberry, garrigue and earthy flora. The mid weight, dark red cherry, raspberry, cranberry and spice core aims to please. Forward-drinking, with excellent mid palate intensity and an agreeable but not lengthy finish. 90.*

**2016 Domaine Della Terra de Promissio Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 125 cases, \$75. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose speaks more of shrub and forest than black cherry fruit. Polished in the mouth with an imposing wave of black cherry, cola and spice flavors that have a savory character. Good vibrancy and crispness in a fresh and approachable style with an impressively long and generous finish. 92.*

**2016 Domaine Della Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 150 cases, \$65. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Very shy aromas of dark cherry and fertile earth. The mid weight plus fruit flavors of black cherry and black raspberry are underscored with notes of earth and black tea. Silken in texture, with immersed tannins and a modest finish. Satisfactory rather than special. 88.*

**2016 Domaine Della Keefer Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 150 cases, \$75. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Awkward nose, offering scents of dark cherry and mulch with a slight soapy note. A discreetly concentrated core of cherry fruit is framed by silky tannins and noticeable acidity that drives the palate. The wine finishes with a red fruit theme and a wintergreen note. 88.*

**2016 Domaine Della Graham Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 125 cases, \$75. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. A very ripe-fruited wine bordering on roasted character, offering aromas of cherry compote, root beer and cigar. A bold attack of the blackest cherry, cola, black tea, tobacco and dark chocolate flavors great the palate. Silken in mouth feel, with immersed tannins and a modest finish. The wine has Russian River Valley character traits but the super-ripeness detracts. 89.*

**2016 Domaine Della Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 125 cases, \$65. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon, pineapple, pomelo and pastry creme really come at you. Bright flavors of lemon, pineapple, pear and golden apple fare bold and long. Creamy in the mouth, with a good acid underbelly and some lingering fruit and nutty oak at the end. Very Caliesque and hearty. 93.*



**2016 Domaine Della Ritchie Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 125 cases, \$70. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Subtle but enchanting aromas of ripe lemon, honey, melon, sea breeze, graphite and smoke. A sophisticated wine featured refined flavors of citrus and pear fruits but speaking more of "minerality." Focused, with welcome acidic verve, and finishing with lengthy crystalline fruit aromatics. This is one of California's top Chardonnay vineyards and the wine reflects that pedigree. 94.*



## **Dutton-Goldfield, Sebastopol**

Winemaker Dan Goldfield sources from wide-ranging exotic vineyard sites, all with special character. The 2015 vintage wines are concentrated yet lively due to bright acidities. The wines are aged in 50% new French oak giving them a noticeable, but in most cases, compatible influence. The wines from Dutton-Goldfield are

giving them a noticeable, but in most cases, compatible influence. The wines from Dutton-Goldfield are consistently of the highest quality and scores are largely irrelevant. Visit [www.duttongoldfield.com](http://www.duttongoldfield.com).



**2015 Dutton-Goldfield Redwood Ridge Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.65, 292 cases \$62. The 32-acre Putnam Vineyard is situated on a hillside at 1,000 feet elevation near Annapolis and only six miles from the ocean. Low yields and intense berries. Gravely soil and deficit irrigation leads to naturally low-yielding vines, producing thick skinned fruit, small berries and concentrated flavors. Fermented in open-top fermenters. 5-day cold soak, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Gratifying aromas of dark berries, spice and underbrush lead to a discretely concentrated mouthful of black raspberry, blackberry and purple grape flavors. Flat-out delicious, gaining traction over time in the glass. A substantial backbone of fine-grain tannins predict age ability. More composed and harmonious when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **94.**

**2015 Dutton-Goldfield McDougall Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.39, TA 0.71, 140 cases, \$62. Vineyard is located on a high (1,100 feet elevation), south-facing ridge. Planted in 1998, it is owned and farmed by Barbara and her son Rich McDougall. Low yields, thick-skinned berries, and deep color. 100% de-stemmed, 7-day cold soak in open-top fermenters, aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of dark red and purple berries, black cherry and fertile earth. The mid weight plus core of earthy dark fruits have a feral, forestry and umami quality consistent with this vineyard's far western Sonoma terroir. Modest, fine-grained tannins make for good approachability. The intense, extremely long finish exhibits a quenching arrow of acidity.* **93.**

**2015 Dutton-Goldfield Devil's Gulch Vineyard Marin County Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.66, 262 cases, \$72. A steep, terraced (up to 60% grade) vineyard planted to Dijon clones. Small yields (less than 3/4 ton per acre in 2015), tiny berries and wild fruit intensity. Owned and farmed by Mark Pasternak. 100% de-stemmed, put into open-top fermenters, 5-day cold soak, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. This wine is the most sumptuously oaked in the lineup tasted here. The nose offers aromas of black cherry, cardamom spice, char and burnt tobacco. Plenty of black cherry goodness leads the attack in this mid weight styled wine with immersed tannins and uplifting acidity. Silky in the mouth, with expansive fruit flavors accented with oak-driven smoke and caramel. The barrel treatment was less imposing when the wine was tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **91.**

**2015 Dutton-Goldfield Deviate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.68, 406 cases, \$72. A deviation from the winery's emphasis on single-vineyard bottlings. Sourced from Jentoft Vineyard in Green Valley (Calera clone) and Putnam Vineyard near Annapolis on the far Sonoma Coast. 100% de-stemmed, put into open-top fermenters, 5-day cold soak, aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas of ripe strawberry, black cherry and baking spices. Seamless and luxurious in the mouth, with mid weight plus flavors of black cherry, boysenberry, blackberry, cassis and the right touch of toasty oak. The satin tannins, luxurious mouth feel, and a finish that offers great length and cut make for a dreamy drinking experience.* **93.**





**2015 Dutton-Goldfield Rued Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.8% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.74, 649 cases, \$55. Vineyard planted in Green Valley by Warren Dutton in 1969. Chardonnay musqué selection known as the “Rued clone.” Soils are super sandy Goldridge series. Vines are dry farmed. Berries are consistently thick skinned and tiny for Chardonnay. Barrel fermented, full malolactic fermentation. Some barrels fermented with natural yeast and some inoculated with cultured yeast. Aged 15 months with lees stirring in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. A connoisseur’s wine that offers layers of nuance.*

*The nose delivers aromas of grilled pineapple, lemon, spice, white flower blossoms and flint. Sleek, refined and focused on the palate, with a proper mating of lemon, pineapple, apple and toasty brioche flavors with juicy acidity. Admirable harmony, with a steely, citrus inspired finish that begs another sip. 96.*

## Fulcrum/On Point Wines, Sonoma

The 2016 Pinot Noirs are not dainty wines but beautifully crafted in this style, featuring plenty of fruit yet elegant in composure. Each single-vineyard bottling is distinct with only a mild winemaking imprint. The only thing I don’t like about the Fulcrum wines is the labeling. The On Point labels are striking. Fulcrum will be hosting a Celebration of Spring on Saturday, April 21, for email list and club members. A few 2016 wines will be poured. RSVP at [tasting@fulcrumwines.com](mailto:tasting@fulcrumwines.com).



**2016 On Point Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 140 cases, \$38. A blend of grapes from Gap’s Crown and Wildcat Mountain vineyards. Clones 115 and 667. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 18% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Heady aromas of dark strawberry, black raspberry, spiced plum, underbrush, maple and anise. Luscious and imposing on the attack and mid palate, with a mid weight plus charge of boysenberry, blueberry and pomegranate fruit flavors. Some spice and toasty oak is woven through the fruit core. The tannins are balanced and the texture very soft. This is a fruit-driven*

*wine with a good tannic backbone that wants for a little more acid vibe. 89.*



**2016 On Point Christinna’s Cuvée North Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 134 cases, \$38. A blend of grapes from Gap’s Crown, Wildcat Mountain and Donnelly Creek Vineyards. Clones 115, 667, “828,” and Pommard. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels 14% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Lovely marriage of dark berry fruit and oak aromas. More refinement and restraint than the On Point Sonoma Coast bottling, featuring mid weight flavors of black cherry, blackberry and black raspberry. Creamy in the mouth, with modest tannins, integrated oak and a coating finish. While the Sonoma Coast bottling is more thundering, the*

*Christinna’s is more symphonic. 91.*

**2016 Fulcrum Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 153 cases, \$62. Pommard clone from Donnelly Vineyard. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *A very fruit-forward and gregarious wine with aromas and flavors of purple grape, boysenberry, black raspberry and hints of toast and vanilla. Lush and velvety in the mouth with soldiering tannins, adept acidity and a generously fruity finish. This is a wine to enjoy now for its giving nature rather than cellar. 92.*

**2016 Fulcrum Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir** 151 cases, \$62. Clones 667, 777 and Pommard. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels 35% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose offers aromas of purple and black berries, BBQ rub, earth and sandstone. The wine’s flavor profile stands out for its garrigue character that compliments the boysenberry, black raspberry and blackberry fruit flavors. Impeccable balance with a deft oak accent, satiny texture and some closing joy. 93.*



**2016 Fulcrum Brosseau Vineyard Chalone Pinot Noir** 129 Cases, \$62. Clones 113, 114, 115 and Mt Eden. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Dark garnet color in the glass. The rustic aromas of peat and timber combine with demure aromas of black fruits. Mid weight plus blackberry and cassis flavors have a noticeable earthy clay pitch. Velvety in the mouth with toned tannins typical of this vineyard that are supportive rather than foreboding. There is a nimble touch of oak and enough acidity to bless the sappy fruit with juiciness and vibrancy. The finish is very long and succulent. This is a terroir-driven wine that is quite*

*recognizable to me after tasting multiple vintages. Even better when tasted the following day exhibiting more*



recognizable to me after tasting multiple vintages. Even better when tasted the following day exhibiting more mellow tannins. Decant or hold for a year or two in bottle. **94.**

**2016 Fulcrum Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** See page 4. **97.**

**2016 Fulcrum Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., 146 cases, \$49. Dijon 95. Barrel fermented in 32% French oak. Unfined and lightly filtered. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Highly aromatic, featuring scents of lemon oil, apple, creme soda, mixed nuts, toffee and a hint of matchstick. Nicely composed, with rich flavors of lemon, tangerine, pastry creme, and a compliment of oak-driven burnt caramel and vanilla in a friendly style. Texturally plush, with embraceable acidity.* **92.**

## **Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Healdsburg**

Winemaker Theresa Heredia maintains the style of wine featured by Gary Farrell, who founded this winery. Typically, the wines are acid-driven and perhaps even more so in the 2015 vintage. The result is that the wines have an uncommon freshness and vibrancy as well as food affinity. Tasting by appointment in a newly remodeled hospitality center. A standard for Russian River Valley Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Visit the winery's website at [www.garyfarrellwinery.com](http://www.garyfarrellwinery.com).

**2015 Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyards Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.69, 391 cases, \$80. Released February 2018 after one year in bottle. Sourced from the Allen and Rochioli vineyards that are located on opposite sides of Westside Road. Both sites are farmed by the Rochioli family. Primarily Pommard selection from Allen Vineyard (both old vines planted in 1974 and newer vines planted in 1996) with the remainder Pommard from Rochioli Vineyard. Grapes harvested in cool morning hours, 85% destemmed, and fermented in open-top tanks after a 6-day cold soak. 10-15 days of extended maceration followed primary fermentation. The wine was aged in French oak barrels, 40% new, on primary lees for 16 months. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Highly aromatic over time in the glass, with scents of crushed Bing cherry and seasoned oak. Light to mid weight in style, with a vibrant and sustaining cherry core. Elegantly composed, with a sleek and soft mouth feel, a noticeable citric acid underpinning, and a long cherry-imbued finish. This wine is more lean and gentle with less ripened fruit in this vintage.* **92.**

**2015 Gary Farrell Hallberg Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.36, TA 0.69, 1,173 cases, \$55. Released February 2018 and one year in bottle. Vineyard is located in the cool Green Valley. A strong marine influence leads to less severe daily temperature shifts so the vines never shut down completely. The result is grapes with dark color, great structure and darker fruit flavors. Clones 667, 777, "828," Pommard and a suitcase selection. Grapes harvested in early morning, 20% whole cluster, 6-day cold soak. 10-15 days of extended maceration after fermentation. Aged in French oak barrels (light and medium toast), 40% new, on primary lees for 16 months. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of blackest cherry, black raspberry and blueberry-pomegranate. Bright, mid weight flavors of blueberry and boysenberry fruits resembling biting into just-picked-in-the-early-morning grapes. Polished and balanced with a juiciness propelled by vibrant acidity, finishing clean and bright.* **93.**

**2015 Gary Farrell Olivet Lane Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.6% alc., pH 3.12, TA 0.81, 868 cases, \$45. Released February 2018 after eighteen months in bottle. This vineyard was planted in 1975 to a Wente selection on AXR rootstock. It is situated in the Santa Rosa Plain between the warmer Westside Road region and the cooler Green Valley. Warm summer days are moderated by cool breezes and chilly evening temperatures and fog intrusion. The result is wine with higher natural acidity at fairly low sugar levels. Harvest Brix 22°. Whole cluster pressed, inoculated with Montrachet yeast, barrel fermented and aged on the lees for 9 months in French oak barrels, 35% new (barrels and 500-L puncheons). *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of pound cake, grilled lemon, nuts, malted milk and flint. Silky as well as crisp on the palate, with engaging flavors of lemon, pineapple and creme caramel. The wine's noticeable oak-driven character and lemon essence infuses the cleansing finish.* **91.**

**2015 Gary Farrell Rochioli-Allen Vineyards Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.9% alc., pH 3.17, TA 0.73, 421 cases, \$60. Released February 2018 after 18 months in bottle. Sourced from two blocks within the Allen Vineyard, farmed by the Rochioli family. Clones 76 and 15. Harvest Brix 22.5°. Gently whole cluster pressed. 2/3 of the juice was transferred to 35% new French oak barrels (including 500-L puncheons) and 1/3 to a concrete egg-shaped tank, and aged 9 months. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The nose is uplifting, with hi-tone aromas of lemon curd, golden apple, yeast and flint. Bold and rich with ostentatious*

flavors of apple and citrus underlain with a peek of toasty oak. Sleek in the mouth, with the slightest tannins and a mouthwatering, citrus-driven finish. The wine noticeably improves as it warms in the glass. **93**.

## HIBOU, Oakville

After an impressive debut with the 2014 vintage, and a minuscule production from Riddle Vineyard in 2015, the winery is back on track with the two 2016 offerings. The wines are in such limited quantities that they are only sold by allocation to members of the mailing list. Visit [www.hibouwine.com](http://www.hibouwine.com).



**2016 HIBOU Riddle Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 100 cases, \$60. Clones 115 and Pommard. 45% whole cluster (the 115 block was harvested at about 24 Brix and de-stemmed entirely; the Pommard block was harvested at about 25 Brix and fermented using 100% whole cluster). Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 25% new (clone 115 aged in two neutral barrels, Pommard aged in one new and one neutral barrel). Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Alluring aromas of exotic spices, red and purple berries, forest and floral bouquet. Quite long and fulfilling in the mouth with a delicious mid weight core of boysenberry and black raspberry fruits touched by spice. Seductive in mouth feel with silky tannins and an extended finish. Considerably better when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle when the nose sent me reeling. 94.* See page 20 for more on Riddle Vineyard.



**2016 HIBOU Alder Springs Vineyard Mendocino County Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 75 cases, \$45. Vineyard planting began in 1993 by Stu Bewley. 100% whole cluster. Clone 459. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 25% new, and racked just before bottling. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasing aromas of dark cherry, dark red berry, forest floor, underbrush and cola. The mid weight plus essence of well-spiced boysenberry and blackberry fruits is initially framed by imposing tannins. The lustrous texture pleases as does the slightly astringent, yet bountiful finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the tannins showed some amelioration and the fruit was more bounteous. The 100% whole cluster creates the tannic load but this will improve with more time in bottle. 93.*

## Ken Brown Wines, Lompoc

Master winemaker Ken Brown continues to craft magnificent wines that represent the nadir of offerings from the Central Coast. Ultra premium is an appropriate description of the small lot Ken Brown Pinot Noir and Chardonnay wines that I have reviewed through the years. For more information, visit [www.kenbrownwines.com](http://www.kenbrownwines.com).

**2014 Ken Brown Rancho La Viña Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.57, 178 cases, \$55. This vineyard, planted in 2005, is located at the far western edge of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA subjecting it to extreme marine influence. Clone 115. 100% de-stemmed grapes. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 32% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Fruit aromas of cherry and strawberry show up first on the nose, with aromas of BBQ beef and spice arriving over time. Charming on the palate with seamless composure and energy, offering mid weight dark red fruit and baking spice flavors entwined with a*

complimentary oak backbone. The finish has plenty of cherry goodness and a lift of acidity commonly associated with wines from this AVA. **92.**



**2015 Ken Brown Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.59, 154 cases, \$65. Vineyard originally planted in 1971, but newer clones and rootstocks have been added over the years. Clones 943 (planted in 2008) and Wädenswil 2A (planted in 2011). Soils are Botella Series, clay and loam with a high calcareous content that drains well. Grapes de-stemmed, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 38% new. Light egg white fining and bottled unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The wine is a chameleon in the glass, offering every-changing aromas of black cherry, black raspberry, clove, cardamom, and tea leaf aromas, and purple and black fruit flavors nicely touched by spice and toasty oak. The fruit core packs a punch and the sense is lushness and velvet in the mouth, yet the wine is light on its feet. Opulent and huggable. 95.*



## Morgan Wines, Salinas

Dan Morgan knew of the potential of the area long before the Santa Lucia Highlands became an official AVA. By 1996, Dan and Donna Lee purchased and planted a 65-acre property of the newly named Santa Lucia Highlands. It was here that they established the Double L Vineyard (Double Luck, in honor of their twin daughters). Today, the organically certified Double L Vineyard is one of the most famed winegrowing properties in the Santa Lucia Highlands, boasting 20 different clones on 8 different rootstocks.

The spring and summer of 2016 were mild with no extreme heat or cold periods. No rain in the fall resulted in clean fruit harvested in mid September. Read more at [www.morganwinery.com](http://www.morganwinery.com).



**2016 Morgan Twelve Clones Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.61, \$35. Sourced from Double L (29%), Boekenoogen, KW, and Tondré Grapefield vineyards. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Deeply engaging aromas of cherry, potpourri and char. Mid weight flavors of black cherry and boysenberry in a juicy style with good balance and a thread of oak support. An appropriate every day drinker. 89.*

**2016 Morgan Boekenoogen Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.56, TA 0.66, 95 cases, \$64. Clones 115, 113, and Pommard 4. Grapes 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Enchanting aromas of black cherry, baking spices, sandalwood and smoked beef. Mid weight plus flavors of juicy blueberry and boysenberry with subtle oak enhancement. A very giving wine offering considerable pleasure. Nicely composed with modest tannins, a lush mouthfeel that falls short of jammy, and a purple berry finish that really hangs on. 93.*



**2016 Morgan Tondré Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.60, 91 cases, \$64. Vineyard is adjacent Garys' Vineyard. Grapes 100% de-stemmed, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant perfume of blackberry and boysenberry fruits, fertile earth and toast. Amazing attack of purple and black fruits that are expansive in the mouth and progress through an extremely long finish. Rather*

*luxurious, yet uplifting and docile, with lacy tannins and a hint of noble oak. This vineyard is a consistent producer of stellar wines. I have tasted many wines from this vineyard made by different producers through the years and they have always excelled. 94.*



**2016 Morgan Double L Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** Vineyard is located in the northern end of the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA overlooking the Salinas River Valley. Winds moderate the afternoon temperature. First vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands to achieve both organic and sustainable certifications. Composed of certified organic grapes. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Eager to please aromas of cherry, raspberry, dark red rose petal and nutty oak. Sleek and refined on the palate with a mid weight core of purple berry and plum fruit flavors underscored by a smoky note that resembles smoke taint. The tannins are well balanced and there is a pleasing acid underbelly making the wine vibrant and easy to enjoy from the get-go. 91.*

**2016 Morgan Double L Vineyard Clone 115 Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.60, 44 cases, \$64. Grapes de-stemmed, native yeast began whole berry fermentation in open-top tanks. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Very enjoyable aromas of blackberry jam, spice and toast. Plenty of extroverted sap in a mid weight plus style offering blackberry, ollaliberry and black cherry flavors and a tug of oak that blends in over time in the glass. A strong but suave tannic backbone and satin texture add to the enjoyment. A bit more extraction and finishing length than the regular Double L Vineyard bottling. 93.*

## **Pence Vineyards & Winery, Lompoc**

Pence Ranch is evolving with the vineyard moving to 100% organic farming, the hiring of Sashi Moorman as the winemaker, the increasing familiarity with the vineyard by vineyard manager Francisco Ramirez, and a continued investment in winery equipment including large concrete tanks for fermentation. The wines are 100% estate grown from 19 acres of Pinot Noir, 10 acres of Chardonnay, 3 acres of Gamay and 3 acres of Syrah. Vines were first planted in 2005. Soils are rich clay that is different than most Sta. Rita Hills vineyards except those on the hills.

Red wines are fermented in 4-ton concrete fermenters instead of stainless steel tanks commonly used, all wines are native yeast fermented and there are no additions of water, acid or enzymes. Stem inclusion in the red wines is variable and depends on the vintage. French oak barrels are used exclusively for aging with the percentage of new oak dependent on the wine. The Chardonnays are barrel fermented (puncheons) with complete malolactic fermentation, and aging on the lees without stirring.

Owner Blair Pence has established a unique working ranch providing sustenance for all involved in the project. Estate grown consumables are produced to complement the range of wines and reinforce the connection of food and wine. Plan to visit the Pence Vineyards, Winery and Ranch in the eastern Sta. Rita Hills for private tours and tastings by appointment: [www.penceranch.com](http://www.penceranch.com).

**2016 Pence Ranch Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., \$30. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, wood spice, eucalyptus and earthy flora. Straightforward, middleweight flavors of black*

cherry, black raspberry, spice, toast and tobacco. Easygoing, with matched tannins and some finishing fruit goodness. Satisfactory, but lacks charisma. **88.**



**2016 Pence PTG Estate Sta. Rita Hills Gamay Noir** 13.5% alc., 498 cases, \$36. An estate grown Passe-Tout-Grains that is a 50/50 blend of Gamay and Pinot Noir. The estate Gamay vines were established from cuttings from the oldest Gamay vineyard in the US in Oregon. Grapes fermented in concrete tank carbonically and aged in neutral puncheon. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, strawberry and herbs arrive slowly in the glass with swirling. Cherry-driven on the palate with an herbal underpinning. Comfortably textured with silken tannins and a ending note of bright cherry.* **89.**

**2015 Pence Unum Estate Sta Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc. 125 cases, \$60, wax crown. Sourced from the oldest vines in the estate vineyard. Clone 667 planted in 2006. 25% whole cluster fermented, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Very nicely perfumed, offering aromas of cherry, raspberry, spice, and BBQ rub. A friendly wine which is both savory and fruity, offering a mid weight, oak-kissed cherry core dressed in silken tannins. A woody, herbal thread plies the background. The fruit seems a bit under ripe.* **89.**

**2015 Pence Estate Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay** 13.0% alc., 423 cases, \$40. A blend of six clones grown in sedimentary soils. Barrel fermented (25% new oak) and aged on the lees without stirring for 16 months. Full malolactic fermentation. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of toasty oak, flint, smoke and sea shell. Lush and creamy on the palate, with flavors of lemon, pineapple, toasty brioche, crème brûlée and a hint of salinity. The wine finishes on a lemon note with very good length, intensity and cut. A likable wine that delivers plenty of flavor and energy.* **90.**

**2015 Pence Rosa Estate Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., 372 cases, \$50, wax crown. Sourced from a small 2.8-acre block where the soils are a mix of calcareous, diatomaceous and limestone along with the typical heavier clay of the site. Barrel fermented in French 581-gallon oak Foudre for 16 months. Full malolactic fermentation and no lees stirring. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Reserved, but pleasing aromas of lemon creme, spice and warm brioche. Highly refined and polished with bright flavors of lemon wafer grapefruit and green apple. A classy wine with a finish cinched up with hi-strung lemony goodness.* **93.**



## Rhys Vineyards, Los Gatos

2015 was a very low yielding vintage. Because of extremely low yields and dry conditions, the 2015 Rhys Pinot Noirs are very intense and concentrated. The result is that the wines are tight and not forthcoming yet. These three latest releases require decanting if opened now, but should receive further bottle age. Rhys Vineyards wines are sold exclusively through a mailing list at [www.rhysvineyards.com](http://www.rhysvineyards.com).

**2015 Rhys Vineyards Bearwallow Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 13.6% alc., \$59. 23 acres situated at 300 to 600 feet elevation in the “deep end.” 10”-25” of topsoil over fractured shale, quartz and sandstone. Rhys selection massale and heritage clones. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Very shy aromas of*

*black cherry, fertile earth and spice. More lushness, sap and finish than the Porcupine Hill bottling at this stage. Mid weight plus flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, and boysenberry backed by firm tannins that show up on the finish as slight astringency. More appealing when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle when the nose was quite earthy, yet the palate was alive with cherry fruit, with still noticeable tannins on the finish. 93.*

**2015 Rhys Vineyards Porcupine Hill Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 13.6% alc., \$79. 3 acres of selection massale and heritage clones. High density vines planted at Bearwallow Vineyard. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark raspberry, cherry, turned earth, underbrush and spice lead off. More fruity on the palate, featuring mid weight flavors of cherry and raspberry with a bit of earthiness. Firm tannins show up as astringency on the juicy, cherry-driven finish. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the wine was softer in the mouth with delightful cherry fruit and less astringency. 92.*

**2015 Rhys Vineyards Horseshoe Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 12.7% alc. \$79. 17.5 acres planted in 2004 at 1360 to 1610 feet elevation. Top soils of 6"-20" over sedimentary rock and volcanic ash. Rhys selection and two heritage clones. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of oak come to the fore in the form of smoke and burnt tobacco. Mid weight flavors of dark cherry, boysenberry, tobacco and toast framed by gutsy tannins. The fruit shows good intensity but is currently swallowed up by the oak imprint and tannins. About the same when re-tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Unbalanced now, but further bottle aging may help. 89.*

## Satyre Wines, Sebastopol

Satyre ("suh-tir") Wines is the creation of the winemaker (aka the "goat," Ted Weisser) and the sommelier (aka "the girl," Nicole Kosta), in love with their life in West Sonoma County, and inspired by the wines of the world. The Satyr is a mythical woodland creature, half man and half goat, who indulged in the great vices of the world, namely wine, dancing and music. Satyrs were companions to Dionysius, God of Wine. The two wines reviewed here were from the winery's first official vintage. Consulting winemaker is Jeff Restel. Partners in the venture are Blake and Lisa Everett. Visit [www.satyrewines.com](http://www.satyrewines.com).



**2015 Satyre Wines "Aristaeus" Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., 74 cases, \$54. Aristaeus means "the best" and this wine is the producer's favorite red wine expression of the vintage. Sourced from Dutton Ranch-Morelli Lane and Dutton Ranch-Manzana. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, blueberry and a hint of oak arrive slowly in the glass. Sleek in the mouth, with mid weight flavors of black cherry, black raspberry, blueberry and spice framed by lacy tannins and agreeable*

acidity. Considerably more expressive when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **92.**



**2015 Satyre Wines “Seilenos” Dutton Ranch-Mill Station Green Valley of Russian River Valley**

**Chardonnay** 14.3% alc., 40 cases, \$45. Seilenos was the Greek god of winemaking and drunkenness and the father of satyrs. Old vines that struggle in deep sandy soil. Barrel fermented with partial malolactic fermentation and aging for 17 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. This wine was much more appealing when tasted from a previously opened bottle on the following day. Inviting aromas of lemon custard, spiced pear and yellow stone fruits. Richly appointed with robust flavors of Limoncello, grapefruit, pineapple, pear, vanilla and caramel. Slightly creamy in texture, with embedded acidity and a very generous finish that leaves quite an impression.* **93.**

## The Winery, San Francisco

San Francisco’s first fully-functional urban winery. Winemaker Bryan Kane. [www.winery-sf.com](http://www.winery-sf.com).

**2015 The Winery North Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 300 cases, \$29.99. Grapes sourced from Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Lake counties. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Strange nose profile featuring aromas of potpourri, baking spices, clay, greenery, smoke, cigar and toast. Mid weight core of purple fruits have a woody, floral accent. The wine finishes with a sweet and sour tone.* **85.**

**2015 The Winery Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 100 cases, \$40. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of blackberry preserves, nutty and charred oak and vegetation. Mid weight plus array of purple berry fruit flavors framed by integrated tannins and tart acidity. Very similar to the North Coast bottling but with more mid palate presence and finishing length, but with the same sweet and sour ending.* **87.**

## Three Sticks Wines, Sonoma

**2016 Three Sticks Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.47, TA 0.63, 392 cases, \$65. Released February 6, 2018. Sourced from vineyards north of Sebastopol. Open-top bin fermentation, 12% whole cluster, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. Grapes 100% de-stemmed, whole berry fermentation using native and cultured yeast in open-top tanks. Aged for 11+ months in French oak barrels, 38% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Intensive swirling fails to bring out much charm on the nose, revealing only toast, bark, cigar and menthol. The well-ripened black cherry and black raspberry core is accented with notes of cola, dark chocolate and contentious toasty oak. The tannins are quite modest and the fruit-driven finish strives to please, but the oak disguises the Pinot character.* **87.**

**2016 Three Sticks “The James Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.62, 265 cases, \$65. Released February 6, 2018. Sourced from Rita’s Crown, La Rinconada and Sanford & Benedict vineyards located in the southern part of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. Open-top fermentation, 22% whole cluster, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 55% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Demure aromas of black raspberry,*

blackberry and toast. Mid weight plus in style, with a core of blackberry and black currant flavors framed by very fine-grained tannins. Toasty oak plies the background as the fruit reaches for expression. The velvety texture is the best feature of this wine. I would hold off a year or so to promote integration of the oak and elevation of the fruit. **90.**

**2016 Three Sticks PFV Estate Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.51, TA 0.61, 865 cases, \$65. Released February 6, 2018. Sourced from vineyards owned and farmed by Three Sticks owner, Bill Price, and include Gap's Crown Vineyard, Walala Vineyard, Dupont Vineyard and Durell Vineyard. Open-top bin fermentation, 24% whole cluster, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 60% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark strawberry and cherry with an imprint of oak. Mid weight flavors of strawberry, cherry, rhubarb and spice have good lift and freshness. Immersed tannins with a noticeable acidic verve, finishing long with a tart cherry theme.* **92.**



**2016 Three Sticks "Origin" Durell Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.4% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.588, 302 cases, \$50. Released February 6, 2018. Fermented in concrete eggs for 25 days, inhibited malolactic fermentation. Aged 11 months in concrete eggs (54%) and stainless steel (46%). *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of lemon creme pie, white peach, yellow apple, and a hint of straw. Crisp and bright on the palate with vivacious flavors of lemon, grapefruit, white peach and pear. Chardonnay that is completely unplugged with no oak infusion. Cleansing instead of creamy in mouthfeel, with deft integration of acidity, plenty of vim and vigor, and a spirited finish.* **94.**



**2016 Three Sticks "One Sky" Sonoma Mountain Chardonnay** 14.6% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.65, 364 cases, \$50. Released February 6, 2018. Old Wente selection grown at 900 to 1,100 feet elevation. Soil is red iron volcanic and calcareous strata. Barrel fermented, 100% malolactic fermentation, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Soaring aromas of fresh lemon, caramel apple and sea breeze. Highly flavorful and engaging with rich tastes of lemon, pineapple and tropical fruits. Slightly viscous on the palate with only a hint of oak vanillin. Richness and ripeness, yes, but this beauty is balanced and impossible to resist.* **94.**

**2016 Three Sticks Gap's Crown Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** See page 4. **92.**

## Tulocay Wines, Napa

One of the oldest wineries in the Napa Valley, Tulocay Wines was founded in 1974 by Bill Cadman. He has crafted a unique Coombsville (Haynes Vineyard) Pinot Noir since the winery's beginning. Bill has never submitted his wines for review (purchased these two out of curiosity and prices reflect that), but his wines have won many medals in California wine competitions. Since 2017, a considerable portion of winery operations has been assumed by Bill's youngest daughter, Brie. Tasting by appointment. Visit [www.tulocay.com](http://www.tulocay.com).

**2013 Tulocay Coombsville Napa Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., \$29. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The barrel treatment dominates the strawberry and cooked cherry aromas with an overlay of toast and burnt*



tobacco. Light to mid weight in style with juicy flavors of blackberry and black raspberry framed by toasty oak. Vivid acidity brings the fruit to life and there is enviable finishing persistence, but there is a bit too much imposing oak that did not subside even after the bottle was open for several hours. **88.**

**2014 Tulocay Haynes Vineyard Napa Valley Chardonnay** 13.9% alc., \$28. Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Leading off are welcoming aromas of lemon oil, pineapple, marzipan, butterscotch and honey. Richly fruited in a mid weight plus style with a creamy texture and flavors of lemon, pineapple, toffee, and burnt caramel. There is plenty of goodness to wrap your arms around. **92.**

## Waxwing Wine Cellars, Belmont



**2017 Waxwing Delfina's Vineyard Arroyo Seco Pinot Noir Rosé** 12.9% alc., 85 cases, \$25. Released March 2018. Pommard 4 harvested at 21.0-22.0° Brix. Whole cluster pressed and fermented in stainless steel. Aged 3 months in neutral red barrels with occasional lees stirring. Moderately light pinkish orange color in the glass. Very inviting aromas of blood orange, strawberry, rose petal and spice. Bright and bracing, like biting into a cold naval orange. Added flavors of apricot, strawberry and tart cherry. Easy to cozy up to with a sense of orange hanging onto the finish. **91.**



**2016 Waxwing Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 104 cases, \$45. Released March 2018. A blend of grapes from Lester Family Vineyard and Larry's Vineyard. Clones 115 and 667. 25% of fruit foot stomped whole cluster and the rest de-stemmed into small open-top fermenting bins. 5-day cold soak, vigorous punch downs, and aging in once-used French oak barrels for 15 months. Bottled with a light filtration. Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Nice Pinot perfume of strawberry, raspberry, spice and bark. A demure, but flavorful, lighter weighted wine featuring well-spiced red fruits with dollop of oak in the background. Elegantly composed, with gentle tannins, a good cut of acidity and some finishing purpose. **90.**

**2016 Waxwing Lester Family Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 49 cases, \$65. Vineyard planted in 1998 on a sandy loam hillside bordered by redwoods. Nearly dry farmed and sustainably farmed by Prudy Foxx. Clone 115. A two barrel selection of the richest wines from this vineyard. 100% de-stemmed, 5-day cold soak in open-top fermenters, aged 15 months in once-used French oak barrels. Bottled with a light filtration. Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of darker berries, spice and nutty oak open the way to a mid weight plus styled wine featuring tasty flavors of well-ripened black raspberry, blackberry and black currant. Plenty of fruit to satisfy with a healthy tannic backbone, a complimentary oak thread, and a friendly finish. More engaging when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. **92.**

## More Good Wines

Mi Sueño Winery in Napa Valley was founded by Rolando and Lorena Herrera. Beginning in the 1980s, Rolando worked his way up from a harvest laborer to cellar master, and eventually produced wine under his own label in 1997 starting with a Napa Valley Chardonnay. It was the same year that he married Lorena. The winery name was fittingly Spanish for "My Dream." The first vintages sold out quickly and they were living their

dream. In 2003, Rolando founded Herrera Vineyard Management, allowing him to control the farming as well as winemaking

**2015 Mi Sueño Los Carneros Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 430 cases, \$42. Sourced from Tierra Blanca Vineyard in Napa Carneros. Aged 11 months on the lees in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon curd, honey, walnut and toast soar from the glass. Richly fruited and well oaked, with a slightly creamy mouth feel, and flavors of grilled lemon, pineapple, fig, caramelized banana, coconut, and honey. A flamboyant, Caliesque Chardonnay that is well done in this style. 90.*



**2016 Frank Family Carneros Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.59, 5,000 cases, \$38. The foundation for this wine is the Frank Family's Lewis Vineyard located in Napa Carneros near the shores of San Pablo Bay. This 78-acre vineyard has 68 acres planted to Chardonnay and 10 acres planted to Pinot Noir. The wine was aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 33% new, 67% once and twice-filled. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Perfume of black cherry, forest floor, and oak toast and spice. The middleweight, well-ripened flavors of black cherry and blueberry-pomegranate please with good intensity. Sleek in the mouth with engaging balance, a noticeable compliment of oak, and some finishing length. 89.*

**2014 Hunt & Ryde Estate Grown Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., pH 3.48, TA 0.62, 275 cases, \$50. Released spring 2017. Label owned by the Fieri family and wine crafted by Guy Davis. Named for brothers Hunter and Ryder Fieri. Family vineyard is farmed organically. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The delivers aromas of black cherry, cola, mocha, baking spice, bark and BBQ smoke. Lush, velvety and sleek in the mouth with endless waves of sweet black cherry goodness accented with notes of dark chocolate, char and smoke. Perfect for drinking now, with fully integrated tannins and a cherry kiss at the end. 90.*

**2015 Kendall-Jackson Jackson Estate Outland Ridge Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 15.0% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, 445 cases, \$42. Vineyard is located on a high eastern ridge with soils similar to a Goldridge classification. Clone 667, "828," and 115. Aged 13 months in 95% French oak barrels, 45% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose combines oak-driven aromas of cardamom spice and vanilla with aromas of mixed berry fruits. Full-bodied and lush on the palate, exhibiting a charge of sweet purple and black berry fruit flavors that are ripe but not overripe that are underscored with a compliment of oak and agreeable tannins. The higher alcohol adds sweetness and luxuriant body to the wine and is well integrated. A hedonistic, masculine Pinot Noir nicely composed in this style. 90.*

**2015 Ladera Pillow Road Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 860 cases, \$50. Pillow Road Vineyard acquired by Pat and Anne Stotesbery in 2006 and an adjacent parcel planted in 2008 to seven acres of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. It is located in the Sebastopol Hills and vines are planted in Goldridge soil. Clones are Calera, Swan, 777 and Pommard 4. In 2015, the wines from Pillow Road Vineyard were bottled with the Ladera name for the first time. Grapes harvested at night, hand sorted and de-stemmed. 7-day cold soak, gentle maceration, and aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 65% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose offers a combination of Griottines and oak-driven smoke, toast, spice and vanilla aromas. The mid weight flavors of black cherry, blackberry, and cola speak of the Russian River Valley, but there is simply too much oak tattoo revealed in contentious toast and tobacco flavors. That said, there is commendable tannin and acid balance and some finishing length. 88.*

**2015 Occidental Freestone-Occidental Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$65. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Perfume of black cherry, rose petal, toast and aromatic cigar. Opulent core of black cherry and purple grape flavors with modest oak in the background. Remarkable intensity with an explosion of fruit and lasting fireworks. The satin texture and lengthy finish set this wine apart. I would prefer less oak enhancement, but otherwise, this is a delightful wine. 92.*



**2015 Sea Smoke "Ten" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.53, TA 0.62, \$82. Released October 2017. Composed of ten French clones from the organic and biodynamic certified Sea Smoke Estate Vineyard. A selection of the most robust wines of the vintage and as a result, the darkest and richest of the Sea Smoke bottlings. In 2015, reduced yields led to a small crop with unusually high grape concentration. Grapes were 100% de-stemmed followed by a 5-day cold soak in open-top fermenters and then inoculated with cultured yeasts. Total maceration 16 to 28 days. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 60% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. A brooding wine that seems reluctant to engage the drinker upon opening. Rustic*

aromas of clay, earth and dark berry and stone fruits. A voluptuous mouthful of purple and black berry and black plum fruit flavors greet the palate along with firm but not muscled tannins. Harmonious in mouth feel and character with a purple-fruited finish that seems endless. A little more appealing when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle with more aromatic goodness and fruit expression. The wine was just starting to come out of its shell three days later and was very seductive. Challenging to score this wine as it needs a few more years in bottle. Don't even think about drinking it now. **93-95**.



# Riddle Ranch Vineyard: An Historical Pinot-Loving Property

Riddle Vineyard and the older Morelli Lane Vineyard next door are part of the property that Guiseppe “Joe” Morelli, Sr. (photo below) acquired in 1892. Joe was born on the eastern shore of Lake Como in the town of Lierna, Italy. Family legend indicates that he was married several times and had 17 siblings. When he was about 20 years old, he fled to Switzerland to escape military service. He married a Swiss woman and started to raise a family. Seeking a better life for his family, he left for New York in 1874.



Joe moved on to Nevada where he joined his nephew, and they obtained a contract to furnish charcoal to the miners. Then, in 1883, he moved to Healdsburg where he worked various jobs including a lumberjack along the tributaries of the lower Russian River from Guerneville to Duncan’s Mills. He became a United States citizen in Sonoma County on December 21, 1891.

After ten years away from his family back home in Switzerland, Joe sent for his eldest son, Joe Morelli, Jr.. By 1892, the family had saved \$3,100 to buy an 80-acre parcel of land on what is now Morelli Lane. From 1892 to 1900, the farmland was cleared of oak and redwoods and a vineyard was planted. To accommodate an expanding family, two homes, built entirely of redwood, were built on the property. A three-story winery was constructed just north of the main house along with a cow barn. In about 1912, a large wine cellar was added underneath the main house.

In order to plant more vineyard, in 1906 the Morelli’s bought a 43-acre parcel located on Harrison Grade Road, about a mile away from the main ranch right across from what is now Heintz Vineyard. A large house and winery were built on this property in 1908. In January, 1910, the Morelli property was apportioned among three sons by drawing straws. The 43-acre parcel was drawn by Lee Morelli, while Joe Jr. and Tony Morelli each received half of the original 80-acre parcel where Riddle Vineyard and Morelli Lane Vineyard now sit. The Morelli Lane Vineyard, revived by the Duttons in 1995 is now farmed by Dutton Ranch.

Riddle Vineyard is located on Stoetz Lane at the top of the Harrison Grade in Sebastopol, just north of Occidental on the second ridge inland from the Pacific Ocean in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley AVA. Only six miles from the Sonoma Coast, this 17.5-acre vineyard was planted by owner James Riddle in 2008. Clones 115, “828,” Pommard and Mt. Eden are planted at high density (3.5’ x 6’) in well-drained Goldridge and Franciscan shale soils. The special Mt. Eden selection was sourced from a prominent vineyard planted along California’s Central Coast and performs particularly well at this site. Some Chardonnay is planted as well.

Riddle Vineyard sits in a “sweet spot” for Pinot Noir. Nearby are multiple premier vineyards including Chenoweth Ranch, CIRQ’s Treehouse, Aubert’s UV-SL, Fox Den, Square Peg’s SP-SL, Lucky Well, Silver Eagle and Bill Price’s new vineyard at the top of Stoetz Lane. The map below is from DuMol’s website showing location of Dutton Ranch-Morelli Lane Vineyard. Riddle Vineyard is next door.



Mornings in the vineyard tend to be foggy, yet the fog burns off fairly early allowing the vineyard to be drenched in warm sun the rest of the day. James Riddle is a meticulous farmer who has installed a deep irrigation system that effectively waters the root zone, yet preserves precious water that is in short supply at the site.

Although Pinot Noir has been produced from Riddle Vineyard only since 2012, the quality of the wines have been outstanding. Wineries sourcing fruit and releasing vineyard-designated Pinot Noir from Riddle Vineyard include C. Donatiello, HIBOU, Rivers-Marie, Sojourn Cellars, and Young Haden. Wineries have also sourced fruit from this vineyard for Sonoma Coast bottlings including Red Car Wine Co.

I recently met with Sojourn Cellars' winemaker Erich Bradley to sample the winery's 2016 vintage fall releases that included a Riddle Vineyard Pinot Noir. A preliminary review follows. See also the HIBOU Riddle Vineyard Pinot Noir reviewed in this issue.



**2016 Sojourn Cellars Riddle Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.4% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.57, 450 cases, \$59. Release spring 2018. Each of the four clones at the vineyard were picked and vinified separately. The Mt. Eden clone provides the backbone for this blend. Native yeast open-top fermentation and aging in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered in August 2017. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Vivid aromas of dark fruits, spice and savory garrigue. Mid weight flavors of dark red and black fruits with a hint of cola and oak. Beautifully balanced with a spicy, satisfying finish.* **93-94.**

# Pinot Briefs

**Taste!** Taste! is dedicated to everything we love about Sonoma County: good eats, delicious wine and craft beer. The Active 20-30 Club of Sebastopol, that raises money to help underprivileged children of West Sonoma County, host this food and music event. Held at Sova Gardens in Sebastopol, May 12. Tickets are \$40-\$50 at [www.facebook.com/events/272631173233773](http://www.facebook.com/events/272631173233773).

**21st Annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival** This year's event will be held Friday through Sunday, May 18-20. The big news is that the festival has moved to Camp Navarro, with on-site lodging. Forty-five wineries will be pouring at the Grand Tasting on Saturday. A Winemaker Dinner has been added Saturday night at the venue's lodge. Winery open houses will be held on Sunday. All-event pass is \$425, 2-day combo ticket is \$220. Tickets on sale now at [www.avwines.com/pinot-noir-festival](http://www.avwines.com/pinot-noir-festival).



**IPNC Featured Foreign Wineries Announced** Vintners from Austria, France, New Zealand and South Africa will be attending the International Pinot Noir Celebration in McMinnville, Oregon, July 27-29, 2018. Full weekend tickets are \$1,295.00. To view the list of participating foreign wineries or to register, visit [www.ipnc.org](http://www.ipnc.org).

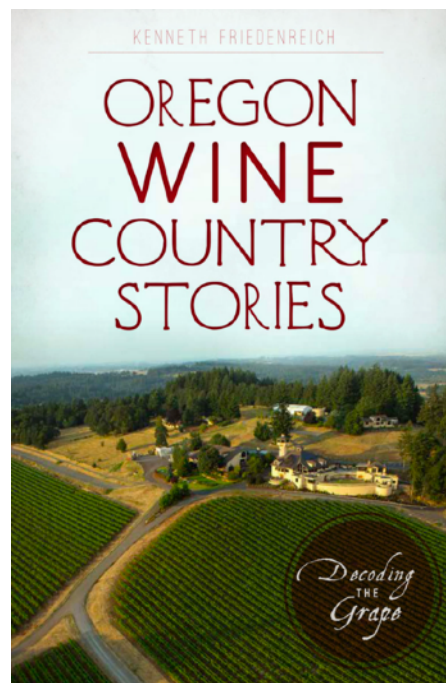
**Third Annual Willamette: The Pinot Noir Auction** The Willamette Valley Wineries Association held this trade event on April 7 at the Allison Inn & Spa in Newberg, Oregon. 78 lots of one-of-a-kind Pinot Noir wines and 3 collaborative lots of Chardonnay were offered from the 2016 vintage. The lots sold for a record setting \$737,000, exceeding the 2017 auction totals by 56%. The sale brought in over \$800,000 including revenue from ticket sales and sponsorship. All money raised funds marketing and educational activities of the Willamette Valley Wineries Association. The top selling Pinot Noir was a five-case lot of Antica Terra "Alder Creek" at \$33,000. Five cases of Zena Crown Vineyard "Barrel and Foot" Pinot Noir brought \$24,000, five cases of Alexana Estate Winery "By a Landslide" Pinot Noir brought \$20,000, and ten cases of Hyland Estates "The Perfect Pair" Pinot Noir brought \$20,000.



**Santa Barbara Vintners Festival** A Grand Tasting of wines from over 100 wineries, superb food from local foragers, farmers and restaurants and live music. The 36th Annual Santa Barbara Vintners Festival will be held Saturday, April 21, at River Park in Lompoc. General Admission is \$70 (\$55 for guests living in Santa Barbara County, \$100 for early entry). Visit [www.sbcountywines.com](http://www.sbcountywines.com) for more information and to purchase tickets. Lompoc has a new hotel, The Hilton Garden Inn, that offers modern amenities and guest rooms, as well as the on-site Valle Eatery & Bar restaurant.



**New Book Release: *Decoding the Grape: Oregon Wine Country Stories*** Author Ken Friedenreich moved to Oregon after a 34-year layover in Southern California. He liked Oregon wine so much, he moved to Oregon to write about it. The book offers a snapshot of the wine business in Oregon, or as Ken says, “A one-stop crash course in working on your taste memory instead of your abs or rock climbing skills.” Nearly 400 wineries were visited and wines sampled for this both erudite and humorous book. The book is available this spring from Arcadia Press and Amazon.



**Two Buck Chuck Launches Organic Pinot Noir** Charles Shaw Winery, commonly known as “Two Buck Chuck,” has created a line of organic wines including a Cabernet Sauvignon, a Pinot Noir and a Rosé. The wines are closed with a twist-off Helix natural cork. The wines will be sold at Trader Joe’s priced at \$3.99.

**Seeking the Holy Grail of Pinot Noir** Six winemakers from Oregon’s Willamette Valley and California’s Sonoma County share their techniques for making premium Pinot Noir in an article published in



*Wines & Vines*. Claire Jarreau of Brooks Wines said, “There can be no hiding mistakes made on the vine or in the cellar; every aspect of the grapes’ transformation into wine is expressed. However, this transparency makes Pinot Noir a great storyteller and highly rewarding for those that enjoy the challenge.”

<https://www.winesandvines.com/features/article/197069/Seeking-Perfection-in-Pinot-Noir>.

**Foley Family Wines Acquires Acrobat Label** Acrobat, King Estate’s value brand, was purchased for an undisclosed sum. Acrobat produces about 156,000 cases annually of Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Rosé of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay and the wines are ubiquitous in the US marketplace. Foley already owns The Four Graces in the Dundee Hills of Oregon.

**Native Yeast Versus Cultured Yeast** An informative online article appeared on the blog, Reverse Wine Snob. Under the blog’s Ask The Expert series, winemaker Erica Stancliff discusses the role of native yeast and cultured yeast in winemaking. Visit <https://www.reversewinesnob.com/native-yeast-versus-cultured-yeast-in-winemaking>.

**International Biodynamic® Wine Conference** Demeter USA hosts the first International Biodynamic® Wine Conference (IBWC) in the US, May 6-7, 2018, at the Golden Gate Club in San Francisco. May 6 is the Biodynamic Producer Day Program, May 7 is the Trade & Media /Day Program and Grand Tasting, and May 7 is also a Party & Consumer Grand Tasting (open to all). More than 40 wineries from three continents will be pouring at the two IBWC Grand Tastings. Many notable Pinot Noir producers will be pouring including Brooks, King Estate, DeLoach Vineyards, Sea Smoke Estate Vineyards, Analemma Wines, Brick House Vineyards, Johan Vineyards, Keeler Estate Vineyard, Radio Coteau, Westwood Estate Winery, Winderlea. No Burgundians are participating. Visit [www.biodynamicwineconference.org](http://www.biodynamicwineconference.org).



**CorkGuru** This is a new restaurant wine list app for the iPhone. It is the first restaurant-focused wine app. Diners are able to review the restaurant’s wine list before going, or peruse it on an iPhone while at the table. Restaurants can upload their inventory to the app so the information is current. Restaurants can also promote certain wines.

**Getting Your Money’s Worth!** I looked at the latest April issues of four major wine publications: *Wine Spectator*, *Wine Enthusiast*, *Wine & Spirits* and the *Oregon Wine Press*. Of course, advertising provides the backbone of profitability for wine magazines, but it was surprising to see how much advertising is in each issue. *Wine Spectator*: 140 pages, 56 full pages of ads (40%) and 17 pages of partial ads. *Wine Enthusiast*: 138 pages, 28 full pages of ads (20%) and 2 pages of partial ads. *Wine & Spirits*: 146 pages, 25 full pages of ads (17%) and 6 pages of partial ads. *Oregon Wine Press*: 59 pages, 19 full pages of ads (32%) and 3 pages of partial ads. Most ads are wine-related except in *Wine Spectator* which also has ads for whiskey, cars and cruise lines among others. *The PinotFile*: 25 pages, 0 ads.

**29th Annual Wine & Spirits Restaurant Poll** Pinot Noir was the most popular wine in US restaurants according to the latest Restaurant Poll. Every January, *Wine & Spirits* polls top restaurants across the US about wine sales to track trends and compile lists of the most popular wines. Pinot Noir accounted for 13.6 percent of the most popular wines, surpassing Cabernet Sauvignon, that was last years top dog. Several sommeliers reported an increased increase in Oregon Pinot Noir. 18 Oregon producers made the list of 30 of the most popular Pinot Noirs. According to Daniel Beedle of Indian Accent Restaurant in NYC, “The New York crowd is over California Pinot Noir. They think it’s really big, extracted Pinot, and this is not a Marcassin crowd. They see Oregon Pinot and think it’s a perfect mix - classic Old World flavor with a little modern body and fruit.” The only thing holding domestic Pinot Noir back is pricing. Willamette Pinot Noir wines averaged \$75 a bottle, while California wines averaged \$84 from the Central Coast and \$94 from the North Coast. The top 10 most popular restaurant Pinot Noirs: Cristom Jefferson Cuvée, Domaine Drouhin Dundee Hills, Belle Pente (Willamette Valley, Belle Pente Vineyard, and Murto Reserve bottlings), Flowers Sonoma Coast, Friedrich Becker Pflaz (Germany), Patricia Green Cellars Willamette Valley Reserve, Failla Sonoma Coast, Adelsheim Vineyard Willamette Valley, Evesham Wood Willamette Valley, and JK Carriere Willamette Valley Provacateur. Other popular Oregon Pinot Noirs were Teutonic Wine co., St. Innocent, Angela, Eyrie Vineyards, Walter Scott, Archery Summit, Soter, Omero Cellars, Elk Cove, Erath, and Penner-Ash. Other popular California Pinot Noirs were Joseph Phelps Freestone, Emeritus, La Crema, Anthill Farms, Belle Glos, Tatomer, Meiomi, Williams Selyem and Littorai.

**Evenstads pledge \$6 Million to Linfield College Wine Program** The founders of Domaine Serene, Grace and Ken Evenstad, pledged the largest gift in Oregon history to allow Linfield College to expand its wine education. program. Linfield College already offers the first interdisciplinary liberal arts bachelor’s degree in wine studies in the US. The generous gift will endow the Grace and Ken Evenstad Center for Wine Education at Linfield, and an endowed faculty position, the Evenstad Chair in Wine Studies.

**Taste Dundee** The Fourth Annual Taste Dundee Celebration will be held Saturday, April 28, 2018, at Dobbles Family Estate in Dundee, Oregon, as part of Oregon Wine Month. 20 Dundee wineries will be pouring along with local eats and live music. Visit the website for information and tickets at [www.tastedundee.com](http://www.tastedundee.com).



**Research from ETS Labs on Smoke Taint** Dr. Eric Hervé of ETS Laboratories has presented his latest work on smoke taint studies that the ETS team has conducted since the California fires of 2008. Research on smoke taint from 2003-2007 revealed that volatile smoke compounds could be absorbed by grapes and leaves and become attached to sugars (“glycosylated”). During fermentation, the compounds are freed from their sugar attachment and cause smoke taint to appear in wine. Labs, such as ETS, developed marker compounds to estimate the risk of wine smoke taint, specifically guaiacol and 4-methylguaiacol. Results from the 2018 vintage showed that the final concentrations of free guaiacol in wines was only on average 1.6 times higher than the concentrations measured in grapes at harvest indicating the risk of smoke taint was lower when fire events happened earlier in the season. Dre. Hervé found that washing the grapes and reducing the maceration time for red wines did not reduce smoke taint. There is no effective treatment of smoke taint in wine at this time, although reducing the amount of leaves that make it through sorting may have limited value. <https://blog-en.fruitionsiences.com/2018/04/10/ets-smoke-taint/>.