



# PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no  
Noir, you Pinot  
Noir*

## Clarice Wine Company: An Innovative Approach to Crafting and Marketing Wine

As a young man, Adam Lee was employed as a wine buyer for Nieman Marcus in Texas when he met his spouse Diana who shared a passion for wine. He originally intended to be a wine writer but was advised to work a harvest and make wine first. The couple moved to the Russian River Valley in 1993 and Adam started a wine publication called *Vintages, Vines and Wines*. That pursuit was short-lived as the winemaking process quickly grabbed his interest. Adam and Diana soon pooled their \$24,000 savings and founded Siduri Wines in 1994.

The first Siduri vintage, in 1994, consisted of 107 cases of Pinot Noir from a small vineyard in the Anderson Valley. On a whim, he left a bottle of his first Pinot Noir with Robert Parker, Jr., who was staying in Napa Valley. Parker would award a high score to the wine and the Lees were in business to stay.

Adam was one of the first young winemakers to strike out on his own to produce Pinot Noir in California. He quickly achieved renown and became a mentor for several other Pinot Noir specialists to follow including Brian Loring (Loring Wine Company) and Andrew Vignello (A.P. Vin). He also became a consultant for a number of Pinot Noir producers including ROAR in the Santa Lucia Highlands.

Adam's ambitious venture led him to produce more distinct Pinot Noir offerings than any other winery in California, made from vineyards stretching from Oregon's Chehalem Mountains in the northern Willamette Valley to the Sta. Rita Hills in California's southern Central Coast. He now has 25 vintages of making Pinot Noir under his belt.

The price of the winery's meteoric success put considerable pressure on the Lees who managed most of the marketing and sales for the winery along with making the wines. With three children, it was challenging to balance work and family. In 2015, Siduri Wines was sold to Jackson Family Wines, freeing the Lees from the business side of the winery but allowing Adam to continue as consulting winemaker. The sale did not dull Adam's inquisitive nature and gave him time to launch several new projects.

The most notable of these new projects is Clarice Wine Company, an innovative idea combining a subscription-based Pinot Noir wine offering with opportunity for the active involvement of the subscriber group in an educational experience. Adam does not particularly like to sell wine but he does enjoy the friendships, camaraderie and sharing of knowledge and experiences that wine engenders. Accordingly, he has created a completely new experience creating an extended wine family at odds with the common mailing list or wine club.

625 consumer subscribers pay \$960 a year (\$160 monthly from March through August) for a future's case of Clarice Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir. In return, beyond the outstanding wine, subscribers receive access to a website where Lee gets to engage his love for wine journalism and pen articles that appeal to wine geeks. Informative articles are also included by others in the wine writing community. The website has a private forum to allow for the exchange of information. Adam hosts a few parties each year where members can meet his growers and taste barrel samples, as well as hosting tastings of wines from other grower friends or from a vineyard or appellation that Adam admires combined with discounted wine pricing for subscribers. All in all, Clarice is an expansion of consumer involvement and education, and a sensible step in that direction.

I first wrote about Clarice Wine company in 2018 here: [www.princeofpinot.com/article/2040/](http://www.princeofpinot.com/article/2040/).

I recently met with Adam to discuss his new venture and taste his three Pinot Noirs from the 2017 and 2018 vintages. He has selected two iconic vineyards for Clarice - Garys' Vineyard and Rosella's Vineyard. This choice stems from his long-time working relationship with growers Gary and Mark Pisoni and Gary Francioni. Adam began purchasing fruit from Garys' Vineyard since the initial vintage in 1999, and Rosella's Vineyard since its initial commercial harvest in 2001.

The Clarice wines represent a completely new approach to Pinot Noir for Adam. Instead of looking at individual blocks and clones of Pinot Noir, he began to look at the vineyard as one complete entity. This made the most sense with vineyards such as Garys' and Rosella's with which he had considerable familiarity and where the vines had matured.

Adam purchases grapes from selected areas of both vineyards by the acre rather than by the ton. This allows him to work with Gary and Mark to determine farming and yield preferences. The two sections of each vineyard are considered one site, and the grapes are picked at one time regardless of ripeness. The two sections of grapes in Garys' and Rosella's vineyards typically ripen a day to 10 days apart, but they are picked at the same time so that some grapes are riper and others are less ripe. The hope is that the resulting wines will be more complex. This approach is similar to what is done for field blends in vineyards. Currently, this is an unusual approach in the Santa Lucia Highlands.

Adam is picking grapes sooner in the growing season for the Clarice wines and the resulting alcohols are about 14% or a little less. The long hang time for vines in the Santa Lucia Highlands and the increasing maturity in the Garys' and Rosella's vineyards allow for phenolic ripeness at lower Brix and the retention of natural acidity. A high percentage of whole clusters (60%-80%) are placed in the bottom of the stainless steel fermenting tanks and the de-stemmed berries added to the top. This whole cluster inclusion ensures a healthy tannic structure that predicts age ability. Indigenous yeast and indigenous malolactic bacteria are used for all of the ferments. The wines are bottled without fining or filtration.

There are a few openings available to join the subscriber list at Clarice Wine Company. To read more details, visit [www.claricewinecompany.com](http://www.claricewinecompany.com).

I mentioned other projects that Adam is involved in as well. Adam has spent time in the Châteauneuf-de-Pape region of France. Here, Grenache is vinified in concrete vats. Adam reasoned the same could be accomplished with Pinot Noir if thicker-skinned clones such as "828", Martini and 23 were used (all similar in skin thickness to Grenache). More tannins could be extracted from the skins to balance the loss of tannins from oak barrels. In addition, a longer maceration is employed. This winemaking process avoids the potential drawbacks of neutral barrels that require frequent cleaning and maintenance. In collaboration with the Jackson Family, Adam has started "Root & Rubble," with an inaugural offering from the 2018 vintage (\$39). Clone "828" from the Barbieri Vineyard in the Russian River Valley was vinified and aged in square concrete vessels. I sampled an as yet unlabeled bottle of the wine. *Dark red color in the glass. Suave in the mouth, featuring red fruits with a touch of spice and rose petal and a savory underpinning. Juicy and easily approachable in a very friendly style. Drink this wine now if you prefer your Pinot Noir al dente.*

Almost all French winemakers have veered to Oregon for various winemaking collaborations. Adam also plans to work with a prominent vigneron from Châteauneuf-de-Pape to produce a California Pinot Noir. Stay tuned.

## 2017 Vintage Wines

The fact that these wines were even better when tasted from bottles that had been opened 4 days prior is a testament to balance, quality and age ability. These were are objectives that Adam met in these wines.



**2017 Clarice Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.44% alc., pH 3.41, TA 0.72. Screw cap. 85.7% Rosella's Vineyard and 14.3% Garys' Vineyard. 57% whole cluster fermented. Aged in French oak barrels, 42.8% new. Combines the structure of Garys' Vineyard with the fruit-forward character of Rosella's Vineyard. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Lovely perfume of cherry, blueberry, rose petal, mushroom and dusty oak. Suave in the mouth with good energy, offering mid weight flavors of black cherry and spice. The explosion of fruit raises the senses. Nicely composed with a memorable finish. Re-tasted 4 days after opening the bottle with similar*

*results and the finish again making an impression. I agree with Adam on this wine in that it is not a lesser appellation wine but rather a different expression of the Santa Lucia Highlands. 94.*



**2017 Clarice Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., pH 3.39, TA 0.72. Screw cap. 58% whole cluster fermented. Aged in French oak barrels, 83.3% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass Deep aromas of red cherry and berry, cola, spice and sweet pipe smoke. A terrific wine with a plethora of dark red and blue fruits and a savory thread in a soft, sleek and satisfying package. The wine has impressive energy, merged tannins and a very lengthy finish. Wonderful now, but will age beautifully. Still grand when tasted 4 days later from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 94.*



**2017 Clarice Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., pH 3.45, TA 0.69. Screw cap. 54% whole cluster fermented. Aged in French oak barrels, 66.6% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Enticing aromas of dark cherry and spice box. A tad richer and more structured than the Rosella's bottling. Exquisitely composed with a wide range of dark fruit flavors and a touch of spice. There is a good acidic vibe and the finish is amazingly long. When tasted from a previously opened bottle after 4 days, the wine was still superb but will be even more rewarding in a few years. 96.*



**2018 Vintage Wines** (tasted from finished wine barrel samples)

These wines were still fresh and delightful when tasted from 375 ml bottles that had been opened 5 days prior. As noted for the 2017 vintage wines, this is a testament to the high quality and age ability of these wines.

2018 was more like the "normal vintages" prior to 2010. In the Santa Lucia Highlands, temperatures never hit 100 degrees and only rarely touched 90 degrees. Instead of leaving a large amount of fruit on the vine and only thinning at veraison as in 2017, Adam had the growers follow their usually thinning process which called for removing fruit in multiple passes. Harvest was two weeks later than in 2017 and yields were notably higher.



**2018 Clarice Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 13.98% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.62,. 62.5% Garys' Vineyard and 37.5% Rosella's Vineyard. 77.9% whole cluster fermented. Aged in French oak barrels, 37.5% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark cherry and berry with exotic spices. A mid weight assortment of dark fruits saturate the mid palate and carry over through a generous finish. A tad more tannin than the 2017 bottling presumably due to the increased whole cluster but when tasted on the fifth day after opening, the tannins had modulated. 94.*



**2018 Clarice Rosella's Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.05% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.64. 80.8% whole cluster fermented. Aged in French oak barrels, 72.7% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The most appealing and seductive aromatic profile among the 2017 and 2018 wines. Whole cluster inspired aromas of dark cherry, burnt tobacco, pine sap and spice. Engaging core of mid weight plus dark red fruits framed by fine-grain tannins. This wine is bursting with fruit goodness, yet there is a compatible contribution of tannins to hold the wine in perfect balance. Absolutely glorious when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle 5 days later. The finish seems to stick like glue to the palate. 97.*



**2018 Clarice Garys' Vineyard Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.08% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.59. 76.2% whole cluster fermented. Aged in French oak barrels, 72.7% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Deep, dark and mysterious aromas of black fruits with an earthy tone. A little more fruit concentration and structure than the Rosella's and not as welcoming at this stage. Still, the flamboyant fruit has charm, the suede tannins add textural seduction and the finish goes on and on and on. Still stellar when tasted from a previously opened and re-corked bottle 5 days after opening. Cellaring will be beneficial, but this will always be the baddest boy in the three wine lineup. 95.*

# Sonoma County Wrap

In the last issue of the *PinotFile*, I related my recent extended trip to Sonoma County. In this follow-up, I will add some additional reviews of Sonoma County wines and provide lodging and restaurant recommendations you can use when you travel there. I am at your beck and call if you need private tasting appointments or assistance in making any winery visit arrangements. June and July are ideal times to visit before harvest.

## Staying in Healdsburg

One of my favorites is the **Duchamp Hotel** located on Foss Street just behind Costeaux Bakery on Healdsburg Ave. Even though it is downtown, it is secluded and quiet with plenty of private parking. Once here, you never have to use your car unless you are going to wineries. Duchamp has six detached, identical, private suites that surround a 50' pool and spa. The hotel is an adult-only experience. A large garden, "The Grove," has multiple fountains and can be used for relaxing, private parties, weddings, bridal showers, and corporate retreats. A \$20 ticket entitles each guest to eat-in or take-out breakfast or lunch at Costeaux Bakery. The helpful staff can schedule complimentary wine tastings. Rates vary with the seasons. Visit [www.duchamphotel.com](http://www.duchamphotel.com).

Duchamp also offers **Downtown Suites ONE**, an urban luxury 1,150 square foot apartment for up to four adults. It was fully remodeled in 2018 and is only steps away from Chalkboard and Willi's Seafood restaurants. A second rental, the **Urban Luxe Loft** is above the Paul Mahder Gallery in downtown. Completed in 2018, it is a one-bedroom, 1,100 square-foot suite with a private street level entrance. It has a kitchen, a wet bar and a dining table for six. A third property, **Downtown Suites TWO** will be available soon. This is a 2-bedroom, 1-bath suite with a full kitchen, that is located on Healdsburg Avenue. All of these lodgings come with full access to the parking, pool and other services at Duchamp. Visit [www.duchamphotel.com](http://www.duchamphotel.com).

**Ru's Outpost** consists of three cottages adjacent the Duchamp. Each is furnished in a washed white theme with one bedroom. Gimlet is the largest and has a full kitchen with a large front porch. Clementine has a kitchenette and a large back patio. Fig is the smallest one bedroom with no kitchen. These cottages have access to the Duchamp facilities and a \$20 credit for breakfast or lunch at the nearby Costeaux Bakery. Visit [www.healdsburgcottages.com](http://www.healdsburgcottages.com).

For those on a more modest budget, I would highly recommend the family-friendly **Hotel Trio Healdsburg** by Marriott located on Dry Creek Road about 1.5 miles from downtown Healdsburg. A shuttle or bicycles are available. Each large room has a full kitchen. Across the street is Big John's Market where you can find the makings for dining in or wine country picnics. Visit [www.hoteltrio.com](http://www.hoteltrio.com).

## Dining in Healdsburg

My favorites include **Willi's Seafood**, **Chalkboard**, **Campo Fina**, **Valette** and **Barn Diva** for wine country cuisine. For upscale Mexican food, go to **El Farolito**, just off the square and get the Molcajete. For breakfast or Sunday brunch go to **Costeaux Bakery** or grab coffee and a donut muffin at **Downtown Creamery** (great ice cream too!). **Jimtown Store** is an essential visit for all visitors to Healdsburg. Located just 15 minutes from downtown on CA-128, this quaint country store and cafe is a Sonoma County landmark dating to 1895. The cafe offers breakfast and lunch with food that honors local farming by using sustainable, ethically raised, non-GMO California ingredients. The best Italian can be found a few miles north of Healdsburg in Geyserville at **Diavola Pizzeria**.

## Staying in Santa Rosa

There are multiple chain hotels by Marriott, Hyatt, Holiday Inn, and Best Western, but I would check out **The Astro Motel**. This lodging was built in 1963 as a motor lodge was completely remodeled in 2017 in a fashionable urban style with 34 rooms. Each room is outfitted with original mid-century modern furnishings and much of it is for sale. Located downtown on Santa Rosa Ave., it is a haven for bike enthusiasts. Visit [www.theastro.com](http://www.theastro.com). The owners also offer the **Spinster Sisters Restaurant** in Santa Rosa, my hands-down favorite place to dine in Santa Rosa. It has been named one of the essential restaurants of Sonoma County and Michelin wrote that the restaurant "reeks of good taste, not only in design but in their delicious range of food."



## Dining in Santa Rosa

My favorites in addition to **Spinsters Sisters** include **Sazón, Willie Bird's, Rosso Pizzeria & Wine Bar, Cascabel** and the venerable **Willie's Wine Bar** which recently re-opened after the original restaurant was destroyed in the 2017 fire.

## Staying in Sebastopol

I often base my stays in the Russian River Valley in Sebastopol at the **Fairfield Inn & Suites**. Other options to consider are the rental houses offered by **Furthermore Winery** that include a vineyard ranch house and a second quaint house in Occidental. If you have a large group, I would recommend **The Lone Palm Wine Country Retreat and Offsite** offered through airbnb. The magnificent property has 5 bedrooms, 3 baths and can sleep up to 16 guests. Located in a secluded, wooded, hillside with all the requisite amenities and only a 10 minute drive to downtown Sebastopol. My oldest son recently hosted 25 people here for a weekend retreat to celebrate his 40th birthday. **Freeman Vineyard & Winery** has a luxurious three bedroom, three bath guest home on the winery's estate, next to Gloria Vineyard. It is available to wine club members and mailing list customers.

## Dining in Sebastopol

My favorites include **Underwood Bar & Bistro, Willow Wood Market Cafe** and **Mexico Lindo**, all in nearby Graton, and **K&L Bistro, Barrio, Fern Bar, and Backyard** (in nearby Forestville).

## Some Bests in Sonoma County

Best ice cream: **Screamin' Mimi's** in Sebastopol and **Downtown Creamery** in Healdsburg.

Best bakery including best bread: **Red Bird Bakery** in Cotati

Best market: **Oliver's** in Cotati and Windsor

Best fish tacos: **Handline** in Sebastopol

Best hamburger: **Underwood Bar & Bistro**

Best coffee: **Acre** in Sebastopol and Santa Rosa

Best Mexican food: **El Molino Central**, Boyes Hot Springs, Sonoma

Best sushi: **Hana** in Rohnert Park

Best cheese: **Cowgirl Creamery**, Pt. Reyes Station

Best crab sandwich: **Spud Point Crab Shack**, Bodega Bay

Best clam chowder: **Tony's Seafood**, Marshall

Best smoked turkey and smoked duck: **WillieBird**, Santa Rosa

## Michelin Guide

California is now home to 90 Michelin-starred restaurants featured in the inaugural Michelin Guide California. Sonoma County restaurants include the following. Three Stars - **SingleThread**, Healdsburg. One Star - **Farmhouse Inn & Restaurant**, Santa Rosa, and **Madrona Manor**, Healdsburg.

Michelin Bib Gourmand California restaurants for 2019 were recently announced. Restaurants are highlighted that offer high-quality meals that include two courses and a glass of wine or dessert for \$40 or less. Sonoma County awardees: **Backyard**, Forestville, **Bravas Bar de Tapas**, Healdsburg, **Chalkboard**, Healdsburg, **Diavola Pizzeria**, Geyserville, **El Molino Central**, Sonoma, **Glen Ellen Star**, Glen Ellen, **Ramen Gaijin**, Sebastopol, **Risibisi**, Petaluma, and **Stockholme**, Petaluma.

## Retail Wine

Wine retailers have largely faded from the winescape as wine buyers purchase wine directly from wineries either through tasting rooms or online. One retailer that has continued to thrive is **Bottle Barn** in Santa Rosa. I always head here when in the Russian River Valley because this no-frills warehouse store offers a huge selection of Sonoma County wines at rock-bottom prices. Unfortunately, Bottle Barn does not have all their wines available online. On my last trip to Sonoma County, I looked for value-priced Pinot Noir wines, particularly those that had won important medals at recent wine competitions. Awards in competitions are often

based on price categories so a \$12.99 wine is not competing with a \$59.99 wine. Here are a few that I tasted. I have included the Bottle Barn price (BB) as well as the producer's SRP.



**2016 Sonnet Tondre's Grapefield Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., \$23.99 (BB), \$33.99 (SRP). This stellar vineyard is sourced by a number of producers. I find this wine is a consistent, excellent, well-priced offering from winemaker Tony Craig. It is hard to find, possibly available from Silver Mountain Vineyards website, but every year the wine shows up at Bottle Barn. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Deep aromas of dark berries, purple grape, spice and a hint of toast. The flavors echo the aromas in a mid weight plus style that is very sleek and comforting on the palate. The fruit is ripe, but not overripe. Complimentary oak chimes in with notes of vanilla, anise and tobacco. The finish is long, fruit-filled and juicy.* **90.**



**2016 CrossBarn (Paul Hobbs) Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$29.99 (BB), \$39.99 (SRP). Gold Medal North Coast Wine Challenge. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Welcoming aromas of red cherry, red cranberry, herbs and dusty path. Delicately composed with a lighter weight core of red cherry fruit. More flavor intensity than one would expect from the elegant style. Very easygoing, with silky tannins, integrated oak, and some length on the finish. This wine exhibits the gossamer side of Pinot Noir and speaks of summer.* **90.**



**2016 Davis Bynum Jane's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.58, 15,741 cases, \$25.99 (BB), \$35 (SRP). Double Gold and Best of Class at the San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. Winemaker Greg Morthole, and consulting winemaker David Ramey. Clones 2A, 23, 113, 114, 115, 667, 777 and Pommard. Harvest Brix 26.4°. 5-day cold soak, native yeast fermentation, aged 12 months in French oak barrels, 87% French and 13% Hungarian, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. On the nose, black cherry shows up over time along with aromas of vanilla and charcoal. Much better on the palate, with a plethora of black cherry, black raspberry and spice flavors in a middleweight style. A friendly wine with integrated tannins. A trace of alcoholic warmth shows up on the finish.* **89.**



**2016 Balletto Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.59, \$19.99 (BB), \$29 (SRP). Double Gold 2019 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition and Gold Medal at the North Coast Wine Competition. Estate grown and bottled. Winegrower John Balletto and winemaker Anthony Beckman. Aged in 100% French oak barrels, 32% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Enticing aromas of Bing cherry and dark rose petal. Dark cherry and berry fruits are featured in a harmonious, accessible, mid weight style with staying power on the finish.* **89.**

**2016 Cinque Insieme Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 220 cases, \$12.99 (BB), SRP N/A. Cellared and bottled by Cinque Insieme (CHEEN-kway) in Santa Rosa and crafted by winemaker Justin Lattanzio. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The very savory nose offers aromas of underbrush, pine cone, mulch and fertile earth. Ripe-fruited in a mid weight style, featuring black fruits, a hint of stem and a thread of piney oak. Sleek in the mouth with some finishing length.* **87.**

**2017 Line 39 California Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$7.99 (BB), \$12.99 (SRP). Vinted and bottled by Line 39 in Parlier, CA. Gold Medal San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, splintered wood and vanilla creme. Light to mid weight in concentration and cherry driven, with underlying notes of oak-driven marzipan and vanilla. A simple, easily quaffable wine.* **86.**

**2016 Laurier Carneros Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., \$11.99 (BB), \$15.99 (SRP). Vinted and bottled by Laurier Vineyards, Sonoma. Bob Stashak is the winemaker. Part of the Bronco Wine Co. portfolio. Double Gold and Best of Class at the 2019 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition. Small amount of Tannat, Malbec and Proprietary red grapes included (5% or less of each). Aged in American oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. The nose is nondescript, even unpleasant, with only a hint of muddled cherry and raisin. Light to mid weight in style, offering flavors of blackest cherry, prune and almonds. A bit awkward in an elegant style with a modest finish. The wine tastes much riper than the ABV would indicate.* **84.**

# Recently Tasted Sonoma County Wines

## Chappellet Vineyard & Sonoma-Loeb, St. Helena

In 2017, after 50 years of focusing on mountain-grown Bordeaux-variety wines from Napa Valley, the Chappellet family made its inaugural vintage of the Chappellet Grower Collection, a collection of small-production wines emphasizing cool-climate Sonoma County Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. Long-time Chappellet winemaker Phillip Corallo-Titus chose to work with the very best growers. Phillip also crafts the Sonoma-Loeb lineup of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wines. Sonoma-Loeb was acquired by Chappellet in 2011, but Phillip has crafted the Sonoma-Loeb wines since its debut 1990 vintage.

The wines are modestly priced considering the high quality. I prefer the Chardonnays, as the Pinot Noirs tend to be very ripe-fruited and somewhat lavishly oaked. Visit [www.chappellet.com](http://www.chappellet.com) and [www.sonoma-loeb.com](http://www.sonoma-loeb.com).

**2017 Chappellet Grower Collection Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.74, TA 0.58, 1,288 cases, \$45. Sourced from some of the most prized sections of Pinot Noir at Dutton Ranch. Clones 115, 667, 777 and Pommard. Harvest Brix 24.8°. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Plenty of oak-driven perfume of dark chocolate, toast and vanilla upon opening, but the oak declines over time and blackberry and black currant aromas come to the front. The luscious core of purple and black fruits is quite satisfying. Silken in texture, with agreeable tannins, sooty oak in the background and a modest finish. 90.*

**2017 Chappellet Grower Collection Bateman Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.57, TA 0.67, 273 cases, \$60. Vineyard was founded by Paul and Lee Fay Bateman. It is located in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Clones 115 and 777 are planted in Goldridge sandy loam on a sloping east-facing hillside that receives abundant morning sunshine but is protected from the afternoon heat. Harvest Brix 24.8°. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Fresh aromas of boysenberry and blackberry with a hint of oak and underbrush. A mid weight plus style offering waves of purple and black berry fruits that are mouth filling but not jammy. The tannins are complimentary, a bit of oak plies the background, and the wine finishes with fruit-laden generosity. A wine for fruit hedonists. 92.*

**2017 Chappellet Grower Collective Sangiacomo Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.68, 1,130 cases, \$45. A cool, windswept vineyard bordering San Pablo Bay where the grapes slowly mature. Roberet Young, Hyde and Caterina clones. Harvest Brix 23.0°. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Leading off are aromas of lemon, pineapple, white peach and seashore. Beautifully composed with excellent harmony, offering fresh flavors of lemon and pear. The wine offers ideal oak integration, bracing acidity, a creamy mouth feel and some finish that displays a stony grip. 93.*

**2017 Chappellet Grower Collective El Novillero Vineyard Carneros Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.69, 675 cases, \$45. Vineyard planted by the Sangiacomo family. Well-drained rock and gravel soils. One block of Robert Young clone Chardonnay planted in 1993. Harvest Brix 24.7°. 100% malolactic fermentation and aged in French oak barrels, 42% new. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Very enticing aromas of lemon oil, apple and creme caramel. Rich and full-flavored on the palate offering expansive flavors of lemon, pineapple and pear. Excellent energy, deft oak accent, and a crunchy, juicy finish. This wine alerts all the senses and brings one's attention to bear. 94.*



**2017 Chappellet Grower Collective Calesa Vineyard Petaluma Gap Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., pH 3.35, TA 0.63, 1,646 cases, \$45. Vineyard is farmed by acclaimed grower Oscar Renteria. Shallow, gravelly loam soils. Sourced from five prized hillside blocks. Clones are ENTAV 548, Robert Young, Dijon 809 and Spring Mountain. Harvest Brix 23.1°. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. A complex nose offers aromas of lemon pith, white flower blossom, paraffin, butter and toast. A beautiful wine that is sleek and vivacious with energy to spare. Flavors of lemon and white stone fruits have good intention. The wine finishes with the slightest bitterness. 92.*





**2017 Sonoma-Loeb Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$36. Grapes sourced from Sangiacomo, Calesa and Dutton Ranch vineyards. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Slightly confected aromas of dark cherry, baking spice, waffle cone, warm almonds and vanilla. Noticeable oak embellishment in this full-bodied style with giving flavors of black cherry fruit framed with notes of dark chocolate and vanilla. Expansive in the mouth, with a generous black cherry infused finish that also displays a slight bit of alcoholic warmth.* **89.**

**2017 Sonoma-Loeb Dutton Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.76, TA 0.65, \$43. Clones 667, 777 and 115. Fermented with yeast strains from Burgundy and Germany. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is heavily oak-inspired with aromas of toast and tobacco accompanying fruit aromas of black cherry. Better on the palate, with noticeable grace, softness and suavity, featuring a mid weight plus essence of black cherry cola flavor with a mantle of oak. The finish is long, generous and spirited but with a slight sense of alcoholic warmth. When tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle, the nose was still oak-driven, but the oak was better integrated on the palate.* **89.**

**2017 Sonoma-Loeb Sonoma County Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.74, \$28. Grapes sourced from Parr Vineyard in Knight's Valley and Sangiacomo Vineyard. Harvest Brix 23.6°. Minimal malolactic fermentation, fermented and aged in neutral French oak barrels for 8 months. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon, spice and wine cave hold up over time in the glass. The flavors of lemon, pear, kiwi, yellow apple and pastry cream are fine, but the wine lacks verve and there is a burnt edge to the flavor profile.* **88.**



**2017 Sonoma-Loeb Private Reserve Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., pH 3.44, TA 0.67, \$33. Sourced from Sangiacomo and Calesa vineyards. The emphasis is on Wente, Robert Young and Caterina clones of Chardonnay. Harvest Brix 23.7°. Partial malolactic fermentation, aged on the lees in French oak barrels, 35% new, for 8 months. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Engaging aromas of lemon, butter and friendly toasty oak. Flavors of lemon, pineapple, yellow peach and apricot keep giving as the wine opens in the glass. A riper-fruited style with judicious oak and some finishing persistence.* **90.**



**2017 Sonoma-Loeb Envoy Carneros Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.60, \$40. Harvest Brix 23.0°-25.0°. Sourced from select blocks of the Sangiacomo Vineyard with which Sonoma-Loeb has been working for almost 30 years. Focus on Hyde Wente and Robert Young selections of Chardonnay. Partial malolactic fermentation, aged in French oak barrels for 8 months on the lees. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Nicely appointed aromas of guava, spiced pear, lemon and crème brûlée. Crisp, bright and fresh, with flavors of lemon-lime, pear and green apple with an underlying botanical thread.* **90.**

## Emeritus Vineyards, Sebastopol

The Emeritus story began with a piece of land named Hallberg Ranch located in the cool Green Valley region of the Russian River Valley. With its Goldridge soil, and a climate shaped by fog and wind off the Pacific, Hallberg Ranch was originally planted to wine grapes. With Prohibition, the Hallberg family had to replant with apples and peaches. In the mid-1990s, vintner Brice Cutrer Jones and his vineyard manager Kirk Lokka became transfixed by the idea of growing Pinot Noir on the 115-acre ranch. Kirk spent three years preparing and planting Hallberg Ranch. Replanting consisted of close spacing with vines trained and pruned according to the Burgundy AOC Guyot model. 11 clones were selected to plant, including two field selections from iconic vineyards in the Côte de Nuits, and a selection from Brice's friend and famed vintner, Aubert de Villaine. In 2007, they made the decision to dry farm Hallberg Ranch allowing for enhanced root structures.

Emeritus's second estate vineyard is Pinot Hill located in the cool Sebastopol Hills region. It is located just eight miles south of the Hallberg Ranch and shares the same Goldridge soil, but it is a totally different vineyard. The vineyard is exposed to fog when it first penetrates inland from the Pacific Ocean and is the last place that the fog burns off in the afternoons. As a result, Pinot Hill is 10 degrees cooler than Hallberg Ranch. Vines are closely spaced, and select Burgundy clones are AOC Guyot Trained and pruned. The vines are dry farmed. The resultant wines tend to be more savory than those from Hallberg Ranch. Beginning with the 2016 vintage,



the father-and-daughter team of Brice and Mari Jones, along with winemaker Dave Lattin, decided to showcase the differences between the two sides of the Pinot Hill Vineyard.

The wines reviewed here were estate grown, produced and bottled. The wines reflect a steady, moderate growing season that was the fourth year of drought. Visit [www.emeritusvineyards.com](http://www.emeritusvineyards.com) for wine availability.

**2016 Emeritus Hallberg Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., \$44. This wine represents the diversity of the Hallberg Ranch. A blend of about 40 individual lots of Hallberg Pinot Noir. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 32% new. Estate grown, produced and bottled. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. A heavy imprint of oak is evident on the nose that offers aromas of toast, savory spices, black cherry and clay. A middleweight plus style with layers of blackberry and black current fruit. Lush in texture with good structure, but there is a stemmy thread in the background and the wine could use more energy.* **89.**

**2016 Emeritus Wesley's Reserve Hallberg Ranch Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.7% alc., 450 cases, \$75. This debut vintage is made exclusively from a selection of the prized center blocks of Hallberg Ranch, an area that yields the vineyard's most robust and dark-fruited wines. Wesley's Reserve is named after Brice's father, William Wesley Jones, a former Air Force Colonel. Aged 14 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry vanilla cola and savory herbs come to the fore. A flood of blackest cherry, blackberry and Hoison flavors are framed by a healthy tannic backbone that keeps the generous fruit in balance. The wine saturates the mid palate and carries over to a boisterous finish of deep purple and black fruited goodness.* **92.**



**2016 Emeritus Pinot Hill East Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.0% alc., 300 cases, \$75. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. Pinot Hill East is a significantly cooler east side of the vineyard. *Pleasing aromas of black cherry, blueberry, savory herbs and balsam. Similar to the Pinot Hill West bottling but more appealing aromatics. Mid weight in style and quite earthy in tone, with an array of black fruits. Sleek in the mouth with modest tannins and a modest finish. Like the Pinot Hill East bottling, this wine also displays a taste of guaiacol. I have found this flavor in certain vineyards such as Hansen and Bucher in the Russian River Valley and not everyone finds it unpleasant.* **90.**

**2016 Emeritus Pinot Hill West Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 13.2% alc., 225 cases, \$75. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 42% new. The west side receives more afternoon sun producing more overt fruit flavors. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of burnt tobacco, rose petal and black cherry. A mid weight style, with oak-infused and ostentatious purple and black fruits. Quite earthy with a noticeable taste of guaiacol. Unchanged when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **89.**

## Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery, Jenner

Fort Ross Vineyard is a relatively isolated site on a mountain with spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean less than one mile away. Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery produces estate-grown Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Pinotage. Owners Lester and Linda Schwartz began preparing their 52-acre vineyard in 1994 and after four years of preparation, they began planting. the vines that range in elevation from 1700 down to 1200 feet above sea level. The first vintage from the Fort Ross Vineyard was 2000.

The winemaker is Jeff Pisoni (Pisoni, Lucia). The Fort Ross Vineyard & Winery Tasting Room is located in Jenner. Visit [www.FortRossVineyard.com](http://www.FortRossVineyard.com).

**2014 Fort Ross FRV Fort Ross Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 715 cases, \$52. Calera, Pommard and Swan clones. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled August 2015 unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Really nice aromas of red cherry, sandalwood and sous-bois. Good drive on the palate, with flavors of cherry and spice. Some tannins and oak show up over time in the glass. Gracious in texture and juicy with some finishing purpose.* **91.**

**2016 Fort Ross The Terraces Fort Ross Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., 142 cases, \$80. 100% Calera selection planted on a terraced block carved out of the rugged hillside that

faces the cool Pacific. With its steep southwestern aspect, this may be one of the most extreme plantings on the Sonoma Coast. 100% de-stemmed, several day cold soak, native fermentation in 5 and 10-ton stainless steel tanks. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Bottled August 2017 unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Deep aromas of cherry, earth and sweet pipe smoke arrive over time in the glass. A mid weight style, with racy fruit flavors of black cherry and ripe strawberry. The noble tannins produce a slight bit of astringency on the dry, lengthy finish. Silky in the mouth, with inviting juicy acidity.* **91.**

**2016 Fort Ross Stagecoach Road Fort Ross Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.8% alc., 140 cases, \$80. 100% Calera selection. 100% de-stemmed, several day cold soak and fermented in 5 and 10-ton stainless steel tanks. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 50% new and 50% neutral. Bottled August 2015 unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. A very savory nose offers aromas of fertile earthy and herbs. Earth-kissed cherry fruit is framed by sinewy tannins that add textural interest. Oak plies the background and surfaces on the finish that has some length.* **90.**

**2016 Fort Ross Top of the Land Fort Ross Vineyard Fort Ross-Seaview Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 13.9% alc., 107 cases, \$80. Calera and Swan selections. 100% de-stemmed, several day cold soak, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 35% new and 65% neutral. Bottled August 2015 unfiltered and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of red and black cherry and graham. A hint of bruised apple (VA) shows up. Mid weight plus in concentration and rustic in style, with voluptuous blackberry and black raspberry fruits, finishing with slight astringency.* **89.**

## Additional Wines

**1849 Wine Company Iris Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.58, \$29.99. Released July 2018. Widely distributed in retail outlets. Striking label that is part of the 1849 Contemporary Art Collection. Aged 10 months in new French and Hungarian oak. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Leading off are aromas of black cherry and dark berry fruits and toasted oak. The modest, silky tannins are folded in around the mid weight black cherry fruit core that is imprinted with oak. There is a burnt quality to this wine on both the nose and palate. Will do in a pinch.* **85.**

**2017 Decoy Sonoma County Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$25. This wine is part of the Duckhorn Portfolio. A majority of the fruit is sourced from Carneros and the Russian River Valley along with estate-grown grapes from Decoy's sister wineries, Migration and Goldeneye. Aged 8 months in French oak barrels, 30% new and 70% neutral. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose offers oak-infused, spiced cherry aromas. Light to mid weight and elegantly styled, with a heavy imprint of oak confining the black cherry fruit flavor. True to the varietal, with gentle tannins, but lacks spirit. Unchanged when tasted a day later after opening.* **85.**

**2017 ess-eff Keller Estate Petaluma Gap Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., 24 cases, \$42. This small San Francisco-based producer of Sonoma and Russian River Valley varietals strives for approachable, food-friendly wines. Wines are available only through the winery by special order or through private tastings. 100% clone 115 from El Coro Vineyard at the Keller Estate. Harvest Brix 25.0°. 2-day cold soak, 7-day fermentation, aged 10 months in French oak barrels and bottled 7/24/18. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. The nose is very savory showing aromas of stem and wood along with demure fruit flavors of red cherry and berry. Light in weight, in an easygoing, shallow, elegant style, offering flavors of red cherry, baking spice and caramel oak. The tannins are restrained and silky and the finish leaves behind some alcoholic warmth.* **86.**

**2016 Joseph Jewell Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.57, 540 cases, \$40. Release July 2019. Sourced from five vineyards - Hallberg, Starscape, Bucher, 800 vines and Horse Shoe Bend. Multiple clones including 777, 114, 115, "828," Pommard, Martini and Swan. Harvest Brix 25.9°. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose is primarily oak-driven with aromas of toast and smoke overriding the black cherry fruit. Mid weight flavors of blackberry, boysenberry and black raspberry with generous toasty oak in the background. An unpolished, voluptuously fruity wine with a modest finish.* **88.**

**2016 Joseph Jewell Hallberg Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.61, 175 cases, \$60. Release July 2019. Clones 777 and Pommard 5. Dry farmed. 100% de-stemmed, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Pleasant aromas of an array of dark red and black fruits with a compliment of oak spice. The flavors mimic the aromas in a nicely balanced mid weight styled wine with gracious tannins and a fruit-driven finish. Silky in the mouth and forward drinking.* **91.**

**2016 Joseph Jewell Bucher Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.58, 100 cases, \$50. Release July 2019. Swan and Pommard 5 clones. 100% de-stemmed, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Bright cherry aromas arrive in the glass over time. Lip-smacking fruit flavors of black cherry and ollaliberry with complimentary frame of oak. Easy to drink and comforting, with suede tannins and an abundance of purple fruits on the very satisfying finish.* **92.**

**2016 Joseph Jewell Starscape Vineyard Martini Clone-Old Girls Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.55, TA 0.61, 75 cases, \$65. Release June 2019. 100% Martini clone planted in 1971. Yield 0.9 tons per acre. 100% de-stemmed, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Somewhat brooding aromas of blackberry compote, dark chocolate and forest underbrush lead off. Locked and loaded in the mouth, with a richly flavored mid weight plus core of blackberry, ollaliberry, black tea cedary oak and spice flavors. Generously fruited, yet possessing good energy with an openness that appeals. This wine has a velvety texture, welcome umami and a finish replete with ollaliberry goodness. A unique wine that reflects the nature of the Martini clone and will appeal to the adventurous.* **92.**



**2016 Joseph Jewell Shiloh Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.62, 125 cases, \$42. Release July 2019. Clone 4 (Wente) planted in 1992 in gravelly loam soil. Barrel fermented, 100% MLF, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of golden apple, buttery lemon tart, yellow cake and a hint of green flora. Graciously styled, with flavors of lemon, pear and vanilla. Pleasant enough, but a bit shallow and mundane challenging me to reach for descriptors.* **89.**

**2016 Ladera Pillow Road Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 311 cases, \$60. Calera, Swan, Dijon 777 and Pommard 4 clones. Small amount of whole cluster, 7-day cold soak, drained without pressing and aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 76% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. There is a whack of new oak on the nose producing aromas of campfire embers and vanilla. Plenty of blackberry, boysenberry and dried black current fruit is at the core, framed by pain grille flavor and a beefy note. The tannins are well balanced and the wine strives to please with a plethora of fruit, but it is hard to find a lot of Pinot character under all the oak.* **86.**

**2016 Ladera Pillow Road Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 14.2% alc., 139 cases, \$50. This vineyard is located southwest of the city of Sebastopol in an area known as the Sebastopol Hills. Old Wente and Mt. Eden 809 clones planted Goldridge sandy loam soil. Whole cluster pressed, cold settled, barrel fermented followed by partial malolactic fermentation. Aged on the lees in French oak barrels, 70% new, for 15 months. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. The nose leads with aromas of stewed apple, willow bark and grapefruit. Very richly fruited with a plethora of yellow peach, pineapple and grapefruit flavors underlain with notable pain grille. Slightly oily in texture, lacking vibrancy and finishing with a buttery note.* **86.**

**2017 Lombardi Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.60, 245 cases, \$48. Sourced from Griffin's Lair, Spring Hill and Sonoma Stage vineyards. Clones 667, 115, 777 and Calera. Aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 27% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with aromas of black cherry, dark red berry, baking spice and graham. Luscious in the mouth, with waves of well-ripened black cherry fruit accented by baking spices and toast. A fruit-driven, unapologetic wine with modest tannins and an ebullient finish. The best Pinot Noir from this producer to date.* **93.**

**2017 Lombardi Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.0% alc., pH 3.31, TA 0.75, 249 cases, \$44. Sourced from Orsi Vineyards, Montrachet clone. Barrel fermented and aged 15 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. Winemaker is Cabell Coursey. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Heaven-sent aromas of buttery lemon, yellow flower blossom, crème brûlée, and a hint of toast. A voluptuous Chardonnay, with a full-throttle complement of well-ripened melon, lemon and pineapple flavors backed by toasty oak. There is enough bracing acidity to bring the package into balance but you won't find "minerality" in this wine. This is an unapologetic mingling of mature fruit and oak, that finishes*





awash in lemon-pineapple goodness. **92.**



**2017 MacRostie Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., 19,095 cases, \$25. Screw cap. Sourced from Sangiacomo and Hi Vista vineyards in Carneros, Dutton and Martinelli vineyards in the Russian River Valley, and Steve MacRostie's Wildcat Mountain Vineyard in the Sonoma Coast AVA. Whole cluster pressed gently, 85% fermented in French oak Barrels, 20% new, and 15% fermented and aged in stainless steel. 85% malolactic fermentation. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. The nose offers a nice mix of lemon, spice, white nectarine, butter and vanilla aromas. Impressive energy with good oak integration, displaying a range of citrus flavors and the slightest note of spice and flint. Slightly creamy in texture, with a lip-smacking finish that leaves a vibrant lemony impression. A terrific value. 90.*

**2017 MacRostie Wildcat Mountain Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.6% alc., 1,595 cases, \$46. Vineyard founded by Steve MacRostie and partners Nancy and Tony Lilly in 1998. Sparse volcanic soils. Cool and challenging, with a fog-shrouded location and exposure to strong winds off the Pacific Ocean most afternoons. Whole cluster pressed, cold settled, barrel fermented, and aged 10 months in the same French oak barrels, 22% new. 100% MLF. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. A complex nose offers aromas of dried apple, grilled lemon, wheat toast and creme caramel. Nice harmony in an mellow style that offers well-ripened fruit flavors of lemon, pineapple and tropical fruits. Oak contributes a little nuttiness and pain grille. The wine has a silky, gossamer finish but I would have wanted more lift from acidity. 90.*

**2016 MacRostie Thale's Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir** 14.3% alc., 983 cases, \$58. This vineyard (named after Steve MacRostie's wife) was added to the winery's estate program in 2013. Since acquisition, the Thale's (Thay-Lee) Vineyard has undergone significant changes to refine the farming under the direction of viticultural guru Allen Holstein. The vineyard is also home to the MacRostie Estate House. 100% gently de-stemmed, open-top tank fermentation, inoculated with select yeast strain after a 3-day cold soak, pump-overs and punch downs, aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 32% new and 20% once-used. *Light garnet color in the glass. The nose is both fruity (dark red cherry and berry) and savory (mushrooms on the grill). Light to mid weight in style, with a charming core of black cherry and blueberry fruits. A gentle, demure Pinot Noir, with well-managed tannins and deft oak treatment. More feminine in style than most Middle Reach Pinot Noirs and some may find the juicy finish a tad shallow but I delighted in its delicacy. 92.*



**2017 Migration Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., 23,000 cases, \$42. Sourced from six vineyards in the Green Valley, Russian River Valley and Petaluma Gap. A blend of more than 80 small lots of wine that winemaker Dana Epperson has to work with. Amazing quality and value considering the huge production. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 40% new and 60% neutral. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. This wine was really a pleasant surprise. Outgoing aromas of black cherry, spice and a hint of toast lead to a gorgeous core of mid weight black cherry fruit framed by silken tannins and infused with proper acidity. A harmonious construct makes this wine instantly enjoyable upon opening. This wine has everything that most consumers welcome in a Pinot Noir and possesses amazing quality at a very high production level. Easy to find in the marketplace and on restaurant wine lists. 92.*



**2017 Migration Sonoma Coast Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., \$40. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 35% new and 65% neutral. 75% MLF. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Demure, but pleasant aromas of lemon custard, pear, pineapple, butter and complimentary oak. Highly flavorful, with tastes of lemon, white peach and nutty oak. Slightly viscous, and easy to cozy up to with enough acidity for proper refreshment. 90.*



**2016 Sanglier Cellars Emilia's Cuvée Bennett Valley Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.62, 115 cases, \$60. Sourced from the Henry David Vineyard that the winery has farmed since 2005. Calera and Swan clones. 100% de-stemmed, aged 19 months in French oak barrels, 40% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Savory aromas of stem, dried herbs, dried rose petal and earth combine with fruity aromas of muddled cherry. Darker fruited on the palate in a middleweight style, featuring flavors of black cherry, boysenberry and red candy spice. Mouth filling with mid palate persistence and a special finish of uncommon length. The velvety texture is particularly seductive.*

*This wine is deserving of the "Reserve" designation. 93.*



**2018 Tongue Dancer Sonoma Coast Rosé of Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.19, TA 0.82, RS 0.5 g/L, 148 cases, \$25. Released March 8, 2019. A saignée with juice left on the skins for two days, fermented and aged in stainless steel. Fermented with a yeast from the Bandol region of France. Partial MLF. *Deep pinkish-orange color in the glass. Clean aromas of cherry, cranberry, dried rose petal and dried herbs. Adroit in the mouth with appealing flavors of red cherry, apricot and orange-tinged cranberry. Very dry, with the slightest tannins and a silky, apricot-lemon infused finish. Bring on the pizza! 90.*

**2017 Tongue Dancer Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.62, RS 1 g/L, 328 cases, \$49. Released March 8, 2019. Clones are Pommard, 777, 115, 667, 23 and a secret clone. Sourced from Placida, Van der Kamp and Putnam vineyards. 100% de-stemmed, fermented in small open-top tanks, 5-day cold soak, aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 36% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Savory aromas of underbrush and spice combine with fruity aromas of cherry on the nose. A charming light to mid weight style, offering elegantly composed fruit flavors of red cherry and berry with not even a touch of oak. Nice harmony, with congruous tannins and an uplifting cherry-driven, aromatic finish. 92.*



**2017 Tongue Dancer Platt Vineyard - Irwin Lane**

**Russian River Valley Chardonnay** 13.95% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.62, RS 1 g/L, 96 cases, \$39. Released March 8, 2019. Pratt Vineyard-Irwin Lane. Inaugural vintage from this vineyard. Grapes are from a certified organic block farmed by Jim Pratt, one of the most respected vineyard managers in Sonoma County. Clone 69. Whole cluster pressed to barrel, barrel fermented with native yeast, 100% MLF, once weekly lees stirring during primary fermentation, and aged 11 months on the lees in French oak barrels, 25% new. Bottled on July 24, 2018 unfinned and lightly filtered. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. A classic Chardonnay nose offering scents of lemon custard, white nectarine, and cozy oak with a bit of flint showing up as well.*

*Lovely flavors of lemon, white stone fruits and graphite. Sleek in the mouth with good brightness and appealing modest, leaner styling. Beautifully balanced with a lemon creme finish. 93.*

# More Recently Tasted California Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

## Calera, Mt. Harlan

Calera is one of California's iconic Pinot Noir focused wineries, offering consistency of style each vintage from its own estate vineyards. Winemaker Mike Waller has been at the helm for more than a decade ensuring that consistency. The estate vineyard complex in Mt. Harlan has a high elevation, marine climate and limestone-rich soils and is unlike any other place in California. Founded in 1975 by Josh Jensen in the remote Gaviilan Mountains, today's 85 certified organic acres spread across six small Pinot Noir vineyards, along with plantings of Chardonnay and Viognier. The winery is now part of the Duckhorn portfolio. Visit [www.CaleraWine.com](http://www.CaleraWine.com).

**2016 Calera de Villiers Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir** 13.95% alc., pH 3.66, TA 0.67, 1,220 cases, \$65. 15.6 acres planted in limestone soil at 2,200 feet in 1996. 1,290 vines per acre, yield 1.09 tons per acre. Calera selection. Harvest Brix 24.0°. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 20% second vintage and 50% neutral. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. A complex nose offers scents of black cherry, fertile earth and mushroom. Mid weight flavors of earth-kissed purple and black fruits are charming and infused with only a hint of oak-driven notes of dark chocolate and vanilla. Silky in the mouth, with a good cut of acidity and a satisfying, slightly drying finish. More fruity and revealing when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. Always the boldest and most tannic of the vineyard-designated bottlings. 93.*



**2016 Calera Reed Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir** 14.2% alc., pH 3.71, TA 0.63, 375 cases, \$75. 5.94 acres planted at 2,200 feet in limestone soils in 1975. 726 vines per acre, yield 1.0 tons per acre. Calera selection. Harvest Brix 25.4°. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 20% second vintage and 50% neutral. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromatically pleasing, with scents of fresh, dark cherry and boysenberry, spice and modest toasty oak. Dark red cherry and purple berry fruits are featured in this mid weight styled wine that is sleek in the mouth and finishes long with waves of sweet strawberry and boysenberry fruit. The wine is exquisitely balanced with tannins that are more reserved than the de Villiers bottling. Much more engaging when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. A superb wine. 94.*



**2016 Calera Jensen Vineyard Mt. Harlan Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc., pH 3.69, TA 0.63, 1,000 cases, \$95. 13.6 acres planted in limestone soils in 1975 at 2,200 feet elevation. 726 vines per acre yield 0.9 tons per acre. Calera selection. Harvest Brix 24.5°. Aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 30% new, 20% second vintage and 50% neutral. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Engaging aromas of plum, blackest cherry, and sous bois. Gracious in the mouth, with a mid weight core of black cherry and black raspberry fruits with deft oak dressing. Firm, but not intrusive tannins and noticeable cut on the the finish that goes on and on. There are several features of this wine that make it special including the seductive texture, the energy imparted by good natural acidity, the purity of fruit flavor, the subtle savory thread, and the extremely long, grand cru finish. Much more appealing when sampled the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. An exceptional wine. 95.*



**2017 Calera Mt. Harlan Chardonnay** 14.5% alc., pH 3.29, TA 0.66, 1,900 cases, \$50. 9.4 acres of own-rooted vines first planted in limestone in 1984 along with a 1998 newer block. Calera selection, some vines own-rooted. Yield 2.7 tons per acre. Harvest Brix 24.5°. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Inviting aromas of white peach, lemon curd, spice and arrowroot. Soft and gracious in the mouth with flavors of yellow stone fruits, apple, and pineapple. There is some appealing chalkiness with a trace of tannins showing up on the dry finish. 91.*

## Minus Tide, Anderson Valley



Minus Tide was founded by Senior Account Executive Miriam Pitt at JAM PR, in collaboration with her fiancé, co-winemaker Brad Jonas, and their best friend, co-winemaker Kyle Jeffrey - all of whom met while studying at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. All three are passionate students of wine. Kyle is currently the winemaker for Campovida in Hopland and consulting winemaker for Bluxome Street Winery in San Francisco. Brad has made wines in California, New Zealand and Australia and has over 12 harvests under his belt. He is the assistant winemaker for Toulouse Vineyards.

The winery's name, Minus Tide, comes from the very low tides that expose hidden gems of the sea, and to evoke the feeling of the Mendocino Coast.

Minus Tide focuses on cool-climate wines from sustainable and organic vineyards of Mendocino County. The 2017 Mariah Vineyard Chardonnay is the winery's debut Chardonnay. The vineyard, located in the wind-swept Mendocino Ridge at an elevation of 2,600 feet, is one of only 18 vineyards in the AVA.

The winery's mentors have included winemaker Michael Fay (formerly of Goldeneye and now of Domaine Serene), winemaker Web Marquez (of Anthill Farms), and Vern and Maxine Boltz, who owns Toulouse Vineyards and let Minus Tide craft their wines there.

The lineup of varietals includes Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Carignan, Malbec and Syrah. The wines are meant to be drunk with food and therefore tend to be high in acid and low in alcohol.

For more information, visit [www.minustidewines.com](http://www.minustidewines.com). The wine is sold online through the winery's website store.



**2017 Minus Tide Mariah Vineyard Mendocino Ridge Chardonnay** 13.4% alc., pH 3.30, TA 0.58, 125 cases, \$36. Whole cluster pressed. Native yeast barrel fermentation in neutral French oak puncheons for 13 months. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Alluring scent of apple pastry, lemon butter, pineapple and flint. Bright and lively in the mouth, blessed with sound acidity and showing no distracting oak overlay. Flavors of lemon-lime, green apple, pear, a hint of pineapple and a saline note are immensely satisfying. The finish is clean and refreshing. The winemakers have done a commendable job of balancing acidic verve with enough fruit richness. 93.*



## Martellotto Winery, Buellton

Martellotto Winery focuses on Bordeaux varietals from the Happy Canyon AVA of Santa Barbara. That said, Greg Martellotto's nearly two decades in the wine business has given him the tools to utilize modern blending and fermenting techniques to craft Pinot Noir as well. The consultant winemaker is veteran Mike Roth, an authority in the fields of biodynamics and natural winemaking.

The Martellotto label was designed by Professor John Langdon who is famous for creating Ambigrams and inspiring Dan Brown to incorporate his graphics in the books and movie around *The DaVinci Code*. Langdon has only designed one label and that is for Martellotto Winery. The label features a spiritual totem, symmetrical down the middle, and a mirror image.

For wine availability and more information, visit [www.martellotto.com](http://www.martellotto.com).

Greg also owns Big Hammer Wines, a top California wine retailer. Visit [www.bighammerwines.com](http://www.bighammerwines.com).



**2017 Martellotto Le Bon Temps Roule Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir** 13.5% alc., 500 cases, \$35. Sourced from the new and organic Spear Vineyard that is located between Sea Smoke and Foley and across Hwy 246 from Dierberg. 66% Pommard, 20% 115, 14% Wädenswil 2A. Aged 12 months in French oak barrels. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 10% new. *Light ruby red color in the glass.*

*Aromas of red cherry and red raspberry combine with pipe smoke and baking spice aromas to draw you into the glass. Fresh and juicy with a dark red fruit character in a mid weight style. Elegantly composed, with good harmony and the slightest hint of friendly oak. My cup of tea. 92.*



## Tolosa, San Luis Obispo

The winery's home vineyard, Edna Ranch, is located a mere 5 miles from the Pacific Ocean. The northwest to the southeast orientation of the transverse Edna Valley allows fog and prevailing winds to funnel into the valley and vineyards from Morro Bay. A myriad of soil types includes volcanic remnants, calcium-rich sediments from deposits of tiny shells, and limestone. More information at [www.tolosawinery.com](http://www.tolosawinery.com).

Although these three Pinot Noir wines are vinified with modest amounts of new oak, they all show significant oak embellishment, even when tasted from a previously opened bottle 24 hours after opening. Some readers will find this perfectly acceptable and even desirable.

**2017 Tolosa 1772 Edna Ranch Edna Valley Pinot Noir** 13.4% alc., 902 cases, \$68. Released November 5, 2018. A blend of five clones of Pinot Noir from five blocks of Edna Ranch Estate Vineyard. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels, 30% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, sandalwood and espresso lead to a charming middleweight offering with a tasty core of vivid cherry and raspberry fruits, baking spices and tobacco. Silky in the mouth, with gracious tannins and a very long cherry-fueled finish. Better oak integration and more enjoyment when tasted from a bottle a day after opening. 91.*

**2017 Tolosa Hollister Edna Ranch Edna Valley Pinot Noir** 14.6% alc., \$125. Black label. Released November 5, 2018. Composed primarily from the Hollister portion of Edna Ranch planted to clone "828". Aged 9 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black fruit reduction, spice, dark chocolate and fertile earth. Mid weight plus in style, offering rich flavors of black cherry and blackberry with oak embellishment. A masculine wine that is deeper and darker flavored than the 1772 bottling with a bigger tannic backbone. Silken in texture, with nice harmony including alcohol integration, and a noticeable long and fruity finish. A good steak wine that would benefit from decanting. 92.*



**2017 Tolosa Primera Edna Ranch Edna Valley Pinot Noir** 13.2% alc., \$140. Heavy bottle, wax closure, metal badge. Released November 5, 2018. A blend of the best of the best. The best of up to 100 small lots from Edna Ranch are chosen. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose opens slowly to release heady aromas of cherry, dark rose petal, underbrush, toast and burnt tobacco. A cherry-fueled mid weighted wine with a noticeable imprint of oak. The tannins are sleek, the mouthfeel is silky and the wine is quite approachable. This wine is a more feminine offering with redder fruit and a pleasing, but not persistent finish. Unchanged when tasted a day after opening. 91.*

## More Enticing Wines

**1849 Wine Company Au Jus Monterey County Chardonnay** 13.5% alc., pH 3.62, \$24.99. Aged 6 months in French oak barrels. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of confected lemon, vanilla and dried herbs. Better on the palate, with flavors of lemon, yellow apple, spice and a subtle herbaceous thread. A lighter, rather*

*austere style that is soft and creamy in texture and has appealing gentleness, but I wanted more acid verve. 87.*



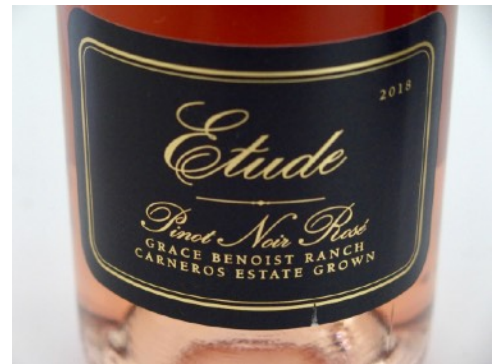
**2018 Cuvaion Napa Valley Los Carneros Pinot Noir Rosé** 13.5% alc., pH 3.40, TA 0.66, \$30. Estate grown, certified sustainable. Grapes grown specifically for Rosé and harvested earlier at lower Brix. Fermented in stainless steel, aged 5 months on the lees in stainless steel. No MLF. *Light pinkish orange color in the glass. Aromas of macerated strawberries, white peach, blood orange and vanilla. Elegant and charming, with a silky texture and fresh flavors of red raspberry, strawberry and apricot. Completely dry, with some finish. A wine of relaxation and cheer. 90.*

**2017 Duckhorn Napa Valley Chardonnay** 14.1% alc., 37,700 cases, \$36. Barrel fermented with lees stirring. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromatically fine, offering scents of lemon, pineapple, honey, spice and vanilla wafer. Straightforward flavors of lemon, grapefruit, honey and vanilla. Slightly creamy with redeeming balance. A reliable everyday drinker. 88.*

**2018 Etude Santa Barbara County Rosé** 13.2% alc., pH 3.15, TA 0.675, 10,800 cases, \$22, screw cap. Primarily Pinot Noir from the estate North Canyon Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley. Dijon 115, 667, 777 and 113. Grapes grown specifically for Rosé. Fermentation in stainless steel fermenters, no MLF. *Moderate pink color in the glass. Fresh aromas of strawberry, peach and white flower blossoms. Crisp and bright, with flavors of strawberry, orange flower water, edible flower and dried herbs. The finish is satisfying and quenching, featuring orange and lemon pith. 88.*



**2018 Etude Grace Benoist Ranch Carneros Pinot Noir Rosé** 13.5% alc., pH 2.19, TA 0.69, RS 0.6 g/L, 798 cases, \$34. Estate grown. Martini, Pommard and 115 clones. Grapes picked and vinified specifically for this bottling. Fermented in older French oak barrels, then aged on the lees for four months with no MLF. *Moderately light pink color in the glass. Fresh aromas of cherry, strawberry, watermelon and pastry creme. More body and intensity than the Santa Barbara Rosé offering, bringing a cordial flavor profile of yellow nectarine, blood orange and Rainier cherry. A noticeably long finish, rare for Rosés, features yellow peach. This is always a fine example of the varietal and a long-time featured wine of this winery. 91.*



**2017 FEL Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.1% alc., \$38. Sourced from the estate Savoy Vineyard as well as Ferrington and Donnelly Creek vineyards. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 36% new. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Heady aromas of dark red cherry and berry and cardamom spice. Light to mid weight styled with a gloriously fresh cherry core. A very friendly wine, with dog's paw tannins, a compliment of oak and a juicy finish. An excellent everyday wine, 90.*

**2016 Goldeneye Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 28,000 cases, \$58. Primarily estate vineyard fruit. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 60% new, 20% second vintage and 20% neutral. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Deep, dark cherry, blueberry-pomegranate and spicy oak aromas. Light to mid weight in style with heady flavors of black raspberry, blackberry and spice with a toasty oak frame. Forward drinking, with modest tannins. The most accessible wine in the 2016 Goldeneye lineup. 89.*

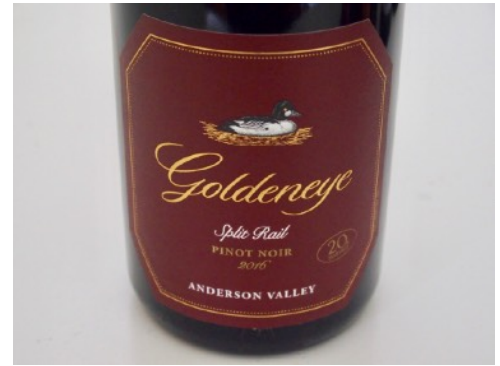
**2016 Goldeneye Gowan Creek Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 1,350 cases, \$86. Vineyard planted in 2000. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 60% new, 20% second vintage and 20% neutral. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of cherry, ripe strawberry, wine cave, anise, char and vanilla. A hardy wine with good vibrancy and expressive dark fruits. The tannic backbone is sturdy revealing some astringency on the finish. Silky in the mouth, finishing with generous blackberry and pomegranate fruits and the slightest hint of alcoholic warmth. 90.*

**2016 Goldeneye Confluence Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 521 cases, \$86. Vineyard planted in 1996. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 60% new, 20% second vintage, 20% neutral. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Good aromatic expression of blackberry jam, graham, underbrush and piquant herbs. A full-bodied wine with a deep well of fruit yet with balancing tannins and acidity, offering flavors of blueberry, blackberry and cassis. Fruit-driven, with integrated tannins and inconspicuous oak. 91.*



**2016 Goldeneye Split Rail Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir**

14.5% alc., 360 cases, \$86. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 60% new, 20% second vintage, 20% neutral. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Nicely perfumed with vivacious aromas of black cherry and friendly oak. Welcome charm in this mid weight plus offering that offers a suave texture that satisfies. The black fruits are well ripened, accented with oak spice and framed by modest tannins. The wine has satisfying vibrancy that shows up on the juicy finish. There is slight alcoholic warmth on the finish. 92.*



**2016 Goldeneye The Narrows Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 462 cases, \$86. Vineyard planted in the “deep end” of the Anderson Valley with vines dating to 1991. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 60% new, 20% second vintage, 20% neutral. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose is medicinal and woody with shy fruit aromas. Lighter in weight in comparison to other wines in the 2016 lineup, featuring flavors of dark red fruits and tobacco. The wine seems flat with a modest finish. This bottle could be corked so I reserve judgment (no second bottle available).*

**2016 Goldeneye Ten Degrees Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., 1,156 cases, \$125. The winery's finest lots and considered the “pinnacle of the winemaking portfolio.” Aged in 100% new French oak barrels. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of blackest cherry, blackberry and pain grille emerge slowly over time in the glass. This wine has a strong physique, with loads of black raspberry and blackberry fruit tangling with muscular tannins. A big boy wine that comes at you with intent. Still compact and unyielding, with a generous infusion of oak. The finish is mildly astringent and this wine will need more time in bottle to meld the tannins and integrate the oak. A wine for the cellar. 92.*

**2016 J. Lohr Highlands Ranch Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir** 14.8% alc. pH 3.76, TA 0.56, 585 cases, \$35. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dark red and black wild berry mash, biscuit and char. A very ripe array of purple and black berry fruits are composed in a mid weight plus style that has noticeable sweetness. There is enough acidity and tannins to balance the hedonistic fruits and the alcohol is submerged, but toasty oak chimes in. Too much sweet fruitiness and not enough acidic verve for my taste. 86.*

**2017 J. Lohr Fog's Reach Arroyo Seco Monterey Pinot Noir** 14.7% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.57, RS 0.10 g/100 ml, 1,173 cases, \$35. Clones 115 and 777. Harvest Brix 26.7°. Aged 8 months in French oak barrels, 60% new. *Dark garnet color in the glass. Brooding aromas of blackberry and cigar oak. A full-bodied flood of oak infused blue and black fruits greets the palate. A huge wine, yet maintains some balance. Lacks classic Pinot Noir character which is subjugated to the sheer volume and ripeness of fruit as well as aggressive oak. The wine tastes good, but this is a Pinot Noir for Cabernet fans. 86.*



**2017 Joseph Jewell Eel River Valley Mendocino County Pinot Noir** 13.2% alc., pH 3.62, TA 0.61, 125 cases, \$36. Sourced from organically farmed Elk Prairie Vineyard (Martini, Pommard and 115 clones) and Alderpoint Vineyard (Martini clone). Harvest Brix 23.5°-24.4°. 100% de-stemmed, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Dark red cherry and berry and spice are featured in the nose and on the palate in a middleweight style. The wine has a charming personality, is easily accessible and displays superb barrel management. 91.*

**2016 Nelson Hill Deep End Vineyard Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.5% alc., \$44. Clones 114, 115, 777 and Pommard. Estate grown. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, sous-bois, and rose petal. A charge of black cherry fruit and spice greets the palate. Nicely composed with gracious tannins, finishing with black raspberry goodness and a hint of alcoholic warmth. 89.*



**2017 Sanglier Tusque Anderson Valley Pinot Noir** 14.0% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.62, 444 cases, \$36. Clones 667, 777, 115, “828”, Pommard and Swan. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry tart and toasty oak. Richly flavored with black cherry fruit framed by modest tannins. The texture is quite sensual, there is less oak input on the palate, and the finish is modest but pleasing.* **90.**

**2014 Sea Smoke Sea Spray Sea Smoke Estate Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Sparkling Wine** 12.01% alc., pH 3.09, TA 0.75, \$80. Released October 2018. A no dosage *méthode champenoise blanc de noirs* from Pinot Noir grapes. Sur lie aging in neutral French oak barrels for 12 months, then extended bottle aging for 24 months prior to disgorging, with 10 months under cork prior to release.. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Complex nose offering aromas of pear, pineapple, apple, hay, yeast and pistachio. Completely dry with an excellent mousse, offering flavors of quince, pear, white peach, green apple and roasted nuts. This excellent wine is “sparkling” with excellent energy along with some finishing generosity and edgy cut.* **93.**

# Pinot Briefs

**Tasting Rooms on the Road** Some wineries are outfitting trailers to take tasting rooms on the road. Malene Wines of San Luis Obispo recently offered Rosé on tap or by the glass in an Airstream trailer parked at the CIA at Copia in Napa.



**Taste of Sonoma** Tickets are now on sale for the Taste of Sonoma sponsored by the Sonoma County Vintners to be held at the Green Music Center at Sonoma State University August 31. Many Pinot Noir producers featured in the *PinotFile* will be participating including Balletto Vineyards, Black Kite Cellars, Emeritus Vineyards, Gary Farrell Vineyards & Winery, Joseph Jewell Wines, La Crema, Moshin Vineyards, Papapietro Perry, Pellegrini Wine Co., Senses, Sojourn Cellars, and Three Sticks Wines. Visit [www.tasteofsonoma.com](http://www.tasteofsonoma.com) for more details and to purchase tickets.

**Farewell Clos Pepe** This former horse ranch in the Sta. Rita Hills was purchased in 1994 by Steve and Cathy Pepe. With the help of grower and winemaker Wes Hagen (Cathy's son), the property was converted into one of the iconic vineyards in the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. Following the 2014 harvest, the owners of Clos Pepe Vineyard decided to retire and leased the running of the vineyard to the Kathryn Hall/WALT winery. As a result, no new wines were made under the Clos Pepe Estate label since 2014. All the remaining inventory of Clos Pepe Estate wines was sold and the Clos Pepe Estate wine label retired. Clos Pepe Estate is no longer available for visits. Walt Wines is farming the vineyard and producing wines from the fruit. Visit [www.waltwines.com](http://www.waltwines.com). Wes Hagen is now the winemaker for J. Wilkes Wines in the Santa Maria Valley.

**Jimmy John's Matching Wine and Sandwich** According to Thrillist at [www.thrillist.com](http://www.thrillist.com), the sandwich chain is offering a limited-release Pinot Noir to be paired with Jimmy John's new sandwich, The Frenchie. It's called Vin de Sandwich (sandwich wine). The grapes are sourced from the Chalone AVA by The Folk Machine in Santa Rosa, CA. The wine is crafted by winemaker Kenny Likitprakong and available for \$29.99 per bottle. There are only around 600 bottles available through [VinDeSandwich.com](http://VinDeSandwich.com).

**Napa Sonoma Live** A new podcast brings the pages of *Napa Sonoma* magazine and more to life. The podcast is hosted by Executive Editor and Certified Sommelier Laura Levy Shatkin and co-hosted by Jean-Charles Boisset, proprietor of the Boisset Collection. These 20-minute podcasts will highlight the best things to see, sip and savor in Wine Country. The podcast is sponsored by Oakville Grocery. Napa Sonoma Live is available for download and subscription at [www.napasonomamagazine.com/live](http://www.napasonomamagazine.com/live) and on iTunes, Spotify, TuneIn Radio and Stitcher. The premier episode explores the historical significance and impact of Oakville Grocery on the food culture of the past as well as today.

**News from Knudsen Vineyards** A public tasting room at the vineyard in the Dundee Hills is in the early design stage and is expected to open in mid-2021, just in time to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the founding of Knudsen Vineyards. Bud break occurred this year around April 18, about a week later than average due, in part, to a cold and snowy February. On the other hand, April and May were relatively warm and dry with the forecast calling for more of the same. It appears that another exceptional growing season is in the works.





**SLO Coast Wine’s “Roll Out The Barrels” Celebration** The San Luis Obispo (SLO) Coast Wine Collective launches its 29th annual “Roll Out The Barrels” grand tasting celebration with a variety of events on June 20-22. On Thursday, June 20, “Barrels in the Plaza” offers wines from SLO Coast Wine’s 30 wine members and food prepared by 20 area chefs (\$60 per person). “Passport to SLO Coast Wine” will be Friday, June 21, and Saturday, June 22. Offerings of barrel samples, vineyard tours, farm-to-table bites, live music and special discounts in the tasting rooms of participating wineries (\$75 per person). Complete event details and tickets may be found at [www.slocoastwine.com/events](http://www.slocoastwine.com/events).

**Sta. Rita Hills 2019 Wine & Fire** Four events are planned the weekend of August 16, 17 and 18 focusing on Sta. Rita Hills wines and Central Coast BBQ foods. Friday night, August 16, is a Barn Party at Foley Winery. Thirty winemakers pour large format and library wines at a casual evening. Saturday morning, August 17, is a Speed Tasting and Lunch with winemakers at Peake Ranch Winery. Attendees will have the opportunity to taste wines from 8 different winemakers followed by a wood-fired lunch. Saturday evening, August 17, will be the Wine and Fire Grand Tasting at La Purisima Mission. Forty plus wineries will be pouring and local chefs and farmers will be on hand for grilling. Only 325 tickets will be sold to the Grand Tasting. Purchase tickets for each event separately or go all in for all three events. Shuttle tickets are available from local Lompoc hotels. Sunday morning, August 18, will be the Santa Rita Wine Center Food Truck Sunday Brunch in Lompoc. A food truck feast with complimentary tastings from Kessler-Haak, Kita, Transcendence and Zotovich. Tickets are available at [www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-wine-and-fire-tickets-61155072468](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/2019-wine-and-fire-tickets-61155072468).

**IPNC Participating Chefs Just Announced** Over 60 guest chefs from the Pacific Northwest team with Northwest farmers to produce cuisine that is the best the Pacific Northwest offers. See the list of chefs, IPNC cuisine and sample menus at [www.ipnc.org/featured-chefs-2019/](http://www.ipnc.org/featured-chefs-2019/). Warning: this will make you hungry. IPNC participating wineries are also listed on the website.

**Anderson Valley Barrel Tasting** The 7th Annual Anderson Valley Barrel Tasting Weekend will be July 20-21. Unprecedented access to winery cellars, taste yet-to-be-released wines, small bites, and purchase wine futures of your favorites at a special barrel tasting weekend price of \$25 (Pre-sale) or \$30 at the door of the participating wineries. Tickets include a commemorative wine glass, wristband, and a copy of the Anderson Valley Barrel Tasting Map at your first stop. Tickets: [www.eventbrite.com/e/anderson-valley-barrel-tasting-7th-annual-tickets-62520492476](http://www.eventbrite.com/e/anderson-valley-barrel-tasting-7th-annual-tickets-62520492476).



**More Upcoming Wine Events** The **International Cool Climate Chardonnay Celebration** will be held July 19-21, 2019, in Niagara, Canada. 50 winemakers, 9 countries, 135 wines and 20+ events. Tickets are now on sale at [www.coolchardonnay.org](http://www.coolchardonnay.org). The **Uncorked San Francisco Wine Festival**, June 25, at Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture, will offer over 150 wines and Champagnes, gourmet local food trucks, food vendors, live music and more. Three sessions are offered (\$65-\$100). Unlimited wine tastings with food sold separately. For tickets visit [www.uncorkedwinefestivals.com](http://www.uncorkedwinefestivals.com). The **Santa Barbara California Wine Festival** is July 19-20. Two events are offered: the Sunset Rare & Reserve Tasting at Chase Palm Park Carousel House and the Beachside Wine Festival the following day at Chase Palm Park Oceanside. For tickets visit [www.californiawinefestival.com/santa-barbara](http://www.californiawinefestival.com/santa-barbara).

**What is “Natural Wine”?** Natural wine is one of the latest trends but also one of the most poorly understood descriptors. There are many false notions of what natural wine is so I was happy to find this article that clears the air on the subject. Consider this article required reading if you want to understand what makes a wine “natural”. <https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/6/10/18650601/natural-wine-sulfites-organic>.

**Geodesy Wine Philanthropic Endeavor** Judy Jordan, the former owner of J Vineyards & Winery, has moved to her next chapter, Geodesy Wine. This winery was founded in gratitude to the agricultural community with the sole purpose of empowering the next generation of young women. All of Geodesy’s profits support the Wild Goat Edge Program that offers agricultural works gratitude by nourishing the bright promise of their daughters to uplift our communities. Young women are connected with teachers, mentors, and internship sponsors who guide, support and empower them through the Wild Goat Edge Program. Judy began her search for exceptional vineyard sites for Geodesy in 2015. She and her team, including General Manager Kathryn Lindstrom acquired vineyards in Oregon’s Eola-Amity Hills and Chehalem Mountains, Sonoma County’s Petaluma Gap and Napa Valley. The wines are made by Megan Baccitich, formerly Director of Winemaking for Paul Hobbs Wines. The wines are released annually in the fall and spring. Three levels of membership are offered to acquire allocations of the wines. The 2017 vintage offering includes a Chehalem Mountain Vineyard and Eola Springs Vineyard Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, and a Sage Ridge Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. To learn more, visit [www.geodesywine.com](http://www.geodesywine.com) and [www.wildgoatedge.org](http://www.wildgoatedge.org).



**2GV Pinot Noir** Three second-generation members of the Willamette Valley’s pioneering wine families have partnered to celebrate the second generation with a wine offering: the 2017 2GV Pinot Noir Cuvée (300 cases with 150 cases for charity, \$100). The collaboration consists of three sibling pairs: Alex and Alison Sokol Blosser, Adam and Anna Campbell of Elk Cove and Maria and Luisa Ponzi of Ponzi Vineyards. The winemakers made a total of nine wines, using fruit from the three vineyards. The final blend is 36% Madrona Vineyard (Ponzi), 32% La Bohème Vineyard (Elk Cove), and 32% Old Vineyard Block (Sokol Blosser). The wine is available at each of the winery’s tasting rooms and online through each winery’s website store.

**Domaine Nicolas-Jay New Vineyard Site and Winery** Partners Jean-Nicolas Méo and Jay Boberg have purchased a site in the Dundee Hills where they will construct a gravity flow winery and plant Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

**2019 International Wine & Health Summit** This biannual event took place this year in May on the UC Davis campus, welcoming renowned scientists and physicians from around the world. The three-day conference reviewed and discussed the latest scientific evidence regarding wine as a lifestyle factor. Summary:

- (1) The J-shaped curve for moderate wine consumers was re-examined for all-cause mortality and for specific diseases and found to be equally valid today as it was ten years ago.
- (2) The importance of the drinking pattern was discussed and there was a consensus that there are no health benefits to those who binge drink. The best pattern is drinking wine moderately and regularly with meals.
- (3) Numerous studies show that by eating a Mediterranean-type diet, exercising moderately, not smoking or being overweight and drinking moderately, one's life expectancy can be increased by several years. Removing one of these lifestyle factors - the moderate consumption of wine included, decreases longevity accordingly.
- (4) There is a shortage of research funding and an increasing lack of studies looking into the health effects of moderate wine consumption. This is in part due to the negative perception of wine and alcoholic beverages caused by misinformation.
- (5) It is critical to educate physicians and health professionals about the scientific evidence of moderate wine consumption for them to be able to assess the individual risks for their patients. Education is also critical for medical journalists.
- (6) In parallel, wine producers should also be sensitized not only to know about the benefits of the moderate consumption of wine but also to recognize the risks of their product. That is the only way to preserve the special image of the cultural asset of wine in the future.
- (7) Since 2007, the initiative Wine in Moderation aims at sensitizing the wine sector. The European-founded movement is now worldwide in 17 countries. Visit [www.wineinmoderation.eu](http://www.wineinmoderation.eu).
- (8) The International Wine & Health Summit invites all researchers, physicians, medical writers and consumers. Visit [www.winesummit.org](http://www.winesummit.org).

**Red Wine Vinegar May Have Important Health Benefits** Red wine vinegar, made by fermenting red wine and then aged to reduce flavor intensity, may have health benefits. (1) Acetic acid, the main ingredient in vinegar, may help lower blood sugar levels. (2) Acetic acid and antioxidants in red wine vinegar may have value in treating bacterial infections and other skin conditions. (3) Red wine vinegar may lead to weight loss by increasing the feelings of fullness and reducing the release of hunger hormones. (4) Red wine vinegar, like red wine, has antioxidants that may assist in preventing chronic diseases. (5) Acetic acid and polyphenols in red wine vinegar may help lower total cholesterol, blood pressure and triglycerides. (6) Red wine vinegar can be used diluted as a facial toner and added to a bath to soothe the skin. Diluted red wine vinegar may heal mild sunburn. Like red wine, red wine vinegar should be consumed in moderation. Read more: [www.healthline.com/nutrition/red-wine-vinegar#section7](http://www.healthline.com/nutrition/red-wine-vinegar#section7).

**Rosé Popularity Continues** Rosé wine sales increased to 16.4 million cases in 2018 according to Nielsen, with a value up 13% to \$1 billion. In 2017, Rosé replaced French red and white wines as the top category in sales in the U.S. One in five bottles of Rosé sold in the U.S. now comes from Chateau d'Esclans, the company behind Whispering Angel. Besides Whispering Angel, the winery has offered more costly Rock Angel and Les Clans. Now the winery is offering Garrus, priced at \$100, a Rosé produced from 8-year-old Grenache and Rolle vines and aged for 5 to 10 years. The Italians are jumping on the Rosé bandwagon as well. Pink Prosecco is currently not allowed, but there are talks of opening the production of Prosecco to include a certain amount of Pinot Noir to blend with Glera to produce a Prosecco Rosé. This would have a major impact on the sales of Italian sparkling wine.