



PinotFile

The First Wine Newsletter Exclusively Devoted to Pinotphiles

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*If you drink no
Noir, you Pinot
Noir*

Columbian-born, French-trained, California-based Winemaker Achieves Remarkable Success

Woman winemakers are in the minority in California, probably making up only 10%-15% of current working winemakers. Woman winemakers from Columbia succeeding in California are so rare I know only of one: Bibiana González Ravez.

Bibiana dreamed of making wine since the age of 14, while growing up in Medellin, Columbia. Because that country had no wine culture, she studied chemical engineering. She preserved, went to work in the vineyards and cellars of Burgundy, the Rhone Valley, Bordeaux, Alsace and Cognac, and earned a Technician of Viticulture and Oenology degree in Angoulême, followed by a Diploma of Oenology with honors from the University of Bordeaux.

After an enlightening experience working at Château Haut-Brion, she moved to California in 2004, gaining winemaking expertise while working fourteen harvests at wineries that included La Crema, Peay Vineyards, Au Bon Climat and Qupé, before becoming the Director of Winegrowing and Winemaking at Lynmar Estate in 2009. Bibiana would leave Lynmar Estate in 2011 to become the winemaker for Pahlmeyer's Sonoma Coast project, Wayfarer. At Wayfarer she crafted exceptional Pinot Noir and Chardonnays that won widespread praise from the wine press including All-American awards from the *PinotFile*.



In 2015, she launched her own label, **Cattleya** (“Cat-LAY-a”), representing a culmination of a dream that began many years prior. Cattleya is an orchid, the national flower of Columbia, and is one of the most beautiful and delicate orchids in the world. Her small-production Pinot Noir and Chardonnays have instantly captured the palates of wine connoisseurs because of their rich, ripe flavors offered in a balanced and charismatic style. While many women Pinot Noir winemakers veer to the delicate, elegant style, Bibiana succeeds with more bold expressions of Pinot Noir.

A second, value-priced label, **Alma de Cattleya**, offers Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay. Alma means “soul” in Spanish. These wines are also distributed in Columbia.

Bibiana most recently became the winemaker for all of **Pahlmeyer** wines, challenging her to divide her energies between the winery’s Napa Valley vineyard and winemaking operations and the winery’s Wayfarer Sonoma Coast project. I have spent some time with Bibiana and she is a very dedicated workhorse, juggling her time between winemaking and vineyard management, and her husband, Jeff Pisoni, the winemaker for Pisoni Vineyards, and their two young boys, Diego and Lucas.

The 2015 wines reviewed here include both spring and fall releases and are highly recommended. Sold through an allocated mailing list, they are not inexpensive, but they reflect the passion and experience of a talented winemaker using grape sources of the highest quality. Large formats are available. For more information, visit www.cattleyawines.com. All wines are produced and bottled by Cattleya Wines, Santa Rosa, CA, except the Alma de Cattleya that was vinted and bottled by Cattleya Wines, Rohnert Park, CA (winery on label may have had little to do with making the wine at the stated address).



2016 Alma de Cattleya Sonoma County Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.64, TA 0.59, \$28. Sourced primarily from Sonoma Coast vineyards. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. Bottled unfixed and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Terrific aromas of black cherry, spice, vanilla, warm brioche and a bit of whole berry ferment. Mid weight flavors of raspberry, dark cherry and pomegranate backed by invigorating tannins. Streamlined with a silky finish, supportive oak and a modest finish. This wine veers into Beaujolais territory, and is a light-hearted wine to enjoy. 90.*



2015 Cattleya Cuvée Number One Russian River Valley Pinot Noir.

14.7% alc., pH 3.52, TA 0.67, 143 cases, \$50.

Spring release. Very limited production. Sourced from Lakeview Vineyard in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Pommard and 115 clones. Each clone fermented in its own open-top fermenter. 100% de-stemmed. 5 to 10-day cold soak, fermented on skins for 22 days. Each clone aged separately in French oak barrels for 11 months. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Soaring aromas of Bing cherry raspberry, redwood grove and sous-bois. Intense on the attack with mouth filling flavors of black cherry and black raspberry fruits. A decadent, powerful wine that is yet demure in character with oodles of persuasive fruit goodness fueled by spirited acidity and backed by invisible tannins. The finish is exceptional long and endowed with uncommon generosity. I tasted this wine throughout a day’s time and it never wavered in its showy character. Wow! 96*



2015 Cattleya Donum Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir. 14.2% alc., 50 cases, \$70. Sourced from the oldest (37-years-old) vines at Donum, the West Slope. Roederer clone. 25% whole cluster. 5-day cold soak, fermented on skins for 18 days then barreled down. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfined and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Lovely nose offering aromas of exotic spices, fertile earth, dark chocolate and blackberry preserves. Silky and seductive in the mouth with impressive harmony, displaying mid weight flavors of darker cherry, black raspberry and pomegranate accompanied by a stealthy earthy tone and the slightest thread of oak. Well structured but integrated tannins with a noticeably long finish that ingratiates with pleasure. 94.*

2015 Cattleya Russian River Valley Chardonnay. 14.2% alc., pH 3.45, TA .66, 200 cases, \$50. A blend of Old Went Davis selections, clone 4 and 78 grown at vineyards located in the heart of the Santa Rosa plain. Bladder pressed. Full malolactic fermentation. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 85% neutral. Bottled

unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lemon curd, pineapple and brioche are replicated in the flavors with added notes of golden apple, nutty oak and a hint of butter. Pleasingly creamy in the mouth, with a bright and lemon-fueled finish. 90.*



2015 Cattleya Pratt Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay. 14.2% alc., 65 cases, \$70. Clone 15 (an old Wente clone). Native fermented and aged 16 months in French oak barrels 66% new. Bottled unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Aromatically alive with scents of lemon oil, honey, toast, baking spice and caramel. Mouth filling flavors of lemon, golden apple, yellow grapefruit and toasty brioche in a discreetly rich style with inviting brightness, gracious texture, exquisite balance and a lasting finish. An seductive wine by all measures. 94.*

Zena Crown Vineyard

Last year I wrote about this new project from Jackson Family Wines, “Jackson Family Wines Infuses New Life into Zena Crown Vineyard,” at www.princeofpinot.com/article/1864/. Jackson Family Wines acquired Zena Crown Vineyard as part of their initial foray into the Willamette Valley in 2013. The inaugural 1,000 cases from the 2013 vintage were crafted from the most expressive and distinctive blocks of the vineyard, and were very impressive.

Zena Crown Vineyard is located on choice real estate in the Eola-Amity Hills region of the Willamette Valley. It's 115 acres dwarfs several very notable adjacent Pinot Noir vineyards, including Temperance Hill, Justice, Zenith, and Bethel Heights. The vineyard's 56 blocks are primarily planted to Pinot Noir, with smaller plantings of Pinot Blanc (1.94 acres) and Chardonnay (6.6 acres). Soils are primarily volcanic Jory and Nekia with areas of Bellpine, Ritner, Steiwer and Witzel).

The vineyard is planted to a variety of Pinot Noir clones including Pommard, Wädenswil 2A, Mt. Eden, “828,” and several Dijon clones. The diverseness of the vineyard and clones allows the opportunity to produce distinctive block-driven Pinot Noirs. Currently there are four wines produced: Slope, Block 14, Conifer, and The Sum. Three of these wines from the fall release of the 2014 vintage are reviewed below. The wines are still very young and would benefit from decanting or more time in the cellar. Aromatics are still rather shy and the flavor profiles are somewhat similar at this stage.



The winemaker is Shane Moore, who relocated to Oregon leaving a position as associate winemaker for La Crema in California. He consults with renowned Oregon veteran winemaker Tony Rynders.

Some percentage of whole clusters may be included in the fermentation depending on the vintage, the clone and the intended result. Typically, the wines are aged 16 months in French oak barrels, with a high percentage of new oak (new oak allows more oxygen ingress allowing the winemaker to limit undue reduction without racking). The wines are bottled with Diam closures and are unfinned as a rule.

Zena Crown Vineyard Pinot Noir is sold exclusively through an allocated mailing list at www.zenacrown.com.

2014 Zena Crown Vineyard Slope Eola-Amity Hills Oregon Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.53, 735 cases, \$100. Sourced from blocks Zena West 6 and Zena East 2, 5 and 6. Harvest Brix 24.6°-25.2°. Pommard 4 and 667, 11-year-old vines. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 84% new (M to M+ toast). This bottling is the “best of the best” from the vineyard. Winemaker Shane Moore identifies the best blocks in the property that he feels fit the style of Slope, often selecting individual rows. The specific rows and blocks vary from year to year, but the top blocks are always hand selected. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of dark berries and leather. Mid weight flavors of blackberry, cassis and spice have an impressive*

attack and length with an amazingly long and generous finish. A hint of oak-driven vanilla and tobacco chimes in. Impeccable balance, with blended tannins and a creamy texture. The most concentrated of the three 2014 wines reviewed here. Much better over time in the glass. 93.

2014 Zena Crown Vineyard Conifer Eola-Amity Hills Oregon Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.54, TA 0.53, 235 cases, \$75. Sourced from blocks Zena West 1A and Zena East 2, 5 and 14. Harvest Brix 24.0°-27.0°. Pommard 4, 114 and 667, 11-year-old vines. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 77% new (M to M+ toast). *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of red and black fruits and fertile earth. A little more refined and elegant than the Slope bottling with a more silky mouth feel. Again, beautifully balanced, with a mid weight charge of blueberry and blackberry fruits that are well spiced and complimented by piney oak. The wine finishes with a delightfully aromatic and sweet blackberry finish. Further bottle aging advised. 93.*



2014 Zena Crown Vineyard Σ (The Sum) Eola-Amity Hills Oregon Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.68, TA 0.51, 286 cases, \$75. Sourced From blocks Zena East 1, 12 and 14. Harvest Brix 14.0°-27.0°. Pommard 4 and 667, 11-year-old vines. 40% whole cluster. Aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 75% new (M to M+ toast). *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Demure, but pleasant aromas of cassis, earthy flora and wood shed. The most harmonious wine of the trio tasted here, with a bit more vibrancy. Nothing is out of place. A discreetly sappy black cherry fruit core is accented with a touch of cardamom spice. Oak is contributory without imposition. The wine has a mouth filling presence, a sleek texture, with integrated tannins, and a potent finish. There is an indefinable special quality to this wine that makes it stand out. 94.*

Sips of Recently Tasted Pinot Noir & Chardonnay

Airlie Winery, Monmouth, OR

This winery was profiled last year: www.princeofpinot.com/article/1855/. Located in the foothills of Monmouth, Oregon, this unpretentious winery is quintessential Oregon in character. Mary Olson, the owner, and Kim Swecker, the winemaker, produce a wide range of varietals, sourced from the estate Dunn Forest Vineyard and the nearby BeckenRidge Vineyard. The wines are reasonably priced considering the high quality. Visit www.airliewinery.com.



2014 Airlie Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.3% alc., 1,335 cases, \$28. Sourced from the estate Dunn Forest Vineyard and the BeckenRidge Vineyard. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. The nose offers aromas of dark cherry, black raspberry and smoky spices. The mid weight flavors of black cherry, pomegranate and blackberry satisfy. Some dry tannins arrive on the modest finish. Much more giving with more intensity of flavor when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 89.*

2014 Airlie Vintner's Blend Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.6% alc., 150 cases, \$40. 50% Dunn Forest Vineyard and 50% BeckenRidge Vineyard. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. The nose offers an appealing marriage of fruit (purple and black berries) and oak. Similar in flavor profile to the Willamette Valley bottling but with more attack, mid palate sap and longer finish. Beautifully balanced, with the right touch of oak spice, a creamy texture and blessed tannins. Even more generous and pleasing when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle. 92.*



2014 Airlie Estate Willamette Valley Chardonnay 13.5% alc., 376 cases, \$20. Dunn Forest Vineyard has some of the first plantings in Oregon of Dijon clones of Chardonnay. Mostly neutral barrel fermented and aged 10 months in oak. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Reading off are aromas of lemon pie, ripe pear and brioche. Silky and easygoing on the palate with demure flavors of apple, baked pear, spice and vanilla. True to the Airlie style of lower alcohol, bright acidity and food friendliness. 89.*



2016 Airlie Willamette Valley Pinot Blanc 13.1% alc., pH 3.26, RS <0.1%, 565 cases, \$20, screw cap. *Very light golden yellow color in the glass. The aromas really pop, including apricot, white peach and pear. Bright flavors of nectarine, pear, lemon-lime and lychee with good length on the palate and a dry, quenching finish. A terrific food wine that is a masterful expression of this often neglected grape variety. 92.*

cedar + salmon, Dundee, CA

This Pacific Northwest label comes from 3 Badge Beverage Corporation. in Sonoma CA, a company that produces a diverse portfolio of wine, spirits and beer, founded in 2009 by August Sebastiani. The name comes from an old fire service badge from the Sebastiani family. 4th-generation vintner, August Sebastiani leads the company out of an old fire station in Sonoma, CA. Labels in the portfolio include Leese-Fitch, Moobuzz, Gehricke, Pennywise and Hey Mambo, as well as these inaugural releases from cedar + salmon. Visit www.3badge.com. Vinted and bottled by 3 Badge Beverage, Dundee, OR.

2016 cedar + salmon Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.78, TA 0.56, \$25. Fermented on skins for 15-20 days, aged in a mixture of oak and stainless steel for 7 months before racking prior to blending and bottling. *Complex nose offering aromas of savory herbs, timber, sweet pipe smoke, pine and timber. Middleweight flavors of boysenberry, blackberry and Damsel plum with an underlying herbaceous oak thread. Balanced tannins, with juicy acidity and a dry, modest finish. 88.*

2016 cedar + salmon Willamette Valley Pinot Gris pH 3.28, TA 0.59, \$19. Sourced from several vineyards with bracketed harvest dates. Fermented in stainless steel tanks, minimal racking and blending for balance. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Very shy aromas of pear, peach and lemon. True to the varietal, with flavors of nectarine, pear and lychee. Rather shallow with vivid acidity and a short finish. 87.*

Ken Brown Wines, Buellton, CA

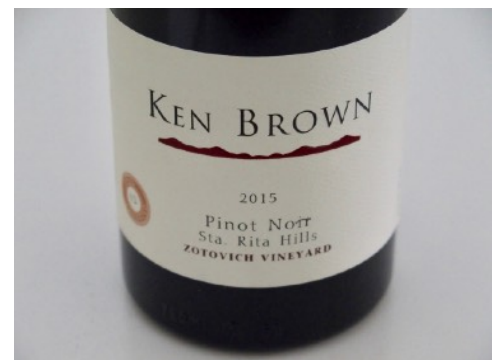
Ken Brown is one of California's most veteran winemakers, crafting wine in the Santa Barbara County area since 1977. He was the founding winemaker at both Zaca Mesa Winery and Byron Winery, as well as his eponymous label, Ken Brown Wines, founded in 2003. The winery's focus is Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, with many single-vineyard offerings. Ken has consulted for many larger labels and has mentored many current Santa Barbara County winemakers. You can depend on his wines for consistent high quality. Visit www.kenbrownwines.com.

2013 Ken Brown Radian Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.7% alc., pH 3.49, TA 0.61, 247 cases, \$70. This vineyard is located at the extreme west end of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA and is one of the coldest vineyards on the entire West Coast. 59% clone 115, 41% clone 667. 100% de-stemmed, aged 18 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Very shy aromas of boysenberry pie, potpourri and pipe smoke. Mid weight plus in style and a bit rustic and rugged in character, with very intense sappy flavors of boysenberry, blackberry, cassis, anise, and earth backed by energetic tannins, reflecting the cool, windy location of the vines. 92.*

2014 Ken Brown Rita's Crown Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.70, TA 0.54, 279 cases, \$60. One of the highest vineyards in region at 600-950 feet elevation planted in 2007. Shallow soils, abundant ocean breezes and southern slope. Clones 777, "828," 115, and 667. 100% de-stemmed, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, spice, clay and fertile earth lead to a mid weight plus assortment of purple and black berry fruit flavors. Earthy, with toasted oak in the background. The finish is notable for its eager persistence. 91.*

2014 Ken Brown La Encantada Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.60, TA 0.54, 178 cases, \$60. Vineyard is located at the cool westernmost end of the Sta. Rita Hills AVA. This 100-acre vineyard was planted in 2001 by Richard Sanford and was one of the first vineyards in Santa Barbara County to be certified organic. Swan selection and Dijon 115 clone. 100% de-stemmed, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dusty cherry, cranberry and oak cask. Light to mid weight flavors of cherry and spice with an underlying earthy tone. Juicy, with redeeming acidity, a silky mouth feel, and immersed tannins. Quite forward and can be enjoyed now but has the balance to age. 92.*

2015 Ken Brown Zotovich Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.5777, 92 cases, \$55. Clone 114. 100% de-stemmed. Aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 29% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Inviting aromas of darker cherries and berries, with complimentary notes of burnt tobacco and oak. Vivid and juicy on the palate, with plenty of black raspberry, blackberry and peppery spice flavors. Silky in texture, with suede tannins and oak in the background. The extended finish leaves an impression. 92.*



Rain Dance Vineyards, Newberg, OR

Ken and Celia Austin acquired the Anam Cara Nicholas Estate Vineyard in 2014 and produce the two wines reviewed here from this Chehalem Mountains vineyard at Alexana Winery in Newberg. Less than 1,000 cases of Pinot Noir, Pinot Noir Rosé, Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, and Riesling are produced annually from the estate Nicholas Estate Vineyard along with Pinot Noir from the estate Rain Dance Vineyard. Since the first release from the 2013 vintage, the wines have increased in quality. Visit www.raindancevineyards.com.



2015 Rain Dance Vineyards Estate Nicholas Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Oregon Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.63, TA 0.525, 220 cases, \$30. Produced from LIVE certified grapes grown in Laurelwood and Jory soils. Harvest Brix 25.5. 115, 667, 777 and Pommard clones. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 33% new, 22% once-filled and 45% neutral. *Gorgeous moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry and marionberry lead to a mid weight plus styled wine with a powerful attack of purple berry, plum and spice flavors framed by notable grainy tannins and supported by balanced acidity. The lingering finish leaves quite an impression. Still a youngster and will undoubtedly benefit from more time in the cellar.* **91.**



2016 Rain Dance Estate Nicholas Vineyard Chehalem Mountains Oregon Chardonnay 13.5% alc., pH 3.37, TA 0.60, \$30. Released November 2017. Harvest Brix 22.8°. Clone 95. Aged in Fresh oak barrels, 33% new, 33% once-filled and 34% neutral. *Moderately light golden yellow color in the glass. Complex and persistent aromas of lemon*

curd, spice, white flower blossoms, tropical fruits and biscuit lead to a wine of lovely composure that is discreetly endowed with flowing flavors of citrus, apple, white peach, banana and vanilla. Very slightly viscous, with a gracious acid backbone and some finishing brightness and resolve. A complete wine and one of the best Chardonnays that I have recently tasted from Oregon. **95.**



Ryan Cochrane Wines, San Francisco CA

A boutique producer of Central Coast Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Ryan learned his winemaking working alongside Roger Nicolas at RN Estate in Paso Robles. Two Pinot Noir and a Chardonnay are offered through the website store and a mailing list. Visit www.ryancochranewines.com.

2015 Ryan Cochrane Solomon Hills Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 220 cases, \$46. 20% 115, 40% 667 and 40% 777. 15% whole cluster fermentation. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. Bottled unfixed and unfiltered. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Endowed with lovely aromas of strawberry, red cherry, bark, anise and oak spice. Light in weight yet flavorful, featuring an array of red fruit flavors with a compliment of spice and smoky oak. Elegant, with lacy tannins and some staying power on the cherry-fueled finish.* **91.**

2015 Ryan Cochrane Fiddlestix Vineyard Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 150 cases, \$46. 60% 115, 20% 113 and 20% 667. 15% whole cluster fermentation. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 20% new. Bottled unfixed and unfiltered. *Light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, savory earthy flora and sandalwood. Light weighted but highly satisfying flavors of red cherry and berry backed by warm spices and a touch of savory herbs. Elegant and juicy with tame, suede tannins. The proverbial iron fist in a velvet glove.* **93.**



2015 Ryan Cochrane Solomon Hills Vineyard Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay 13.4% alc., 74 cases, \$36. Previously this bottling was made from Wente clone 4, but this bottling is made from Dijon 96 clone. Barrel fermented, 100% malolactic fermentation, lees stirring. Aged 10 months in French oak barrels, 33% new. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Beautifully perfumed with aromas of fresh pear, lemon rind, yellow grapefruit and brioche. Appealing leanness on the palate, with flavors of citrus, white flower water, tropical fruits and buttered toast. Nicely balanced with restrained oak and a succulent finish. This wine is ideally suited to food.* **93.**

Scherrer Winery, Sebastopol, CA

Winemaker Fred Scherrer flies a bit under the notoriety buzz, but ask any Sonoma County winemaker about him and they will smile and praise his virtues. He is a bit of an iconoclast, looking more like a bearded winemaker from Oregon and disdaining submission of his wines to any wine publications for review. His winery is very modest and located in a somewhat remote outpost among farm residences in Sebastopol. He is a bit self-deprecating, yet when you spend some time with him you realize his brilliant winemaking talents. He has been at it since 1991, meaning 26 years of hard earned experience. He is in no hurry to release his wines, offering them only when he feels they are ready to drink. Those in the know buy Scherrer wines through a mailing list at www.scherrerwinery.com. The following wines were recently released. Magnums are available.

2013 Scherrer Hallberg Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 48 cases, \$75. Released November 2017. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of black cherry, pomegranate, exotic spices and burnt tobacco (suggesting some whole cluster). A middleweight style with welcome elegance, offering flavors of black cherry, strawberry and pomegranate with noticeable smoky oak in the background, Nicely balanced with a pleasurable and extended finish. This wine grows on you the more you sample it, and was even better when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **93.**

2014 Scherrer Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., 1,190 cases, \$50. Released November 2017. Unfined and unfiltered. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Enticing perfume of dark pie cherries and spice. Tasteful cherry core with good length and finishing persistence. Refreshing, sleek and polished, with gossamer tannins, brotherly oak, and a riff of cherry cola on the finish.* **92.**



2015 Scherrer Helfer Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.5% alc., 140 cases, \$50. Released November 2017. Vineyard is located in the Vine Hill area of the Russian River Valley. The vines are densely planted and must be hand cultivated. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Noble aromas of green apple, honey, spice and ginger. Delicious flavors of lemon, lychee, apple, honeycomb, toast and caramel in a robustly fruited style with a slightly creamy texture and some finishing persistence. Year in and year out one of Russian River Valley's best Chardonnays, yet lightly recognized.* **95.**



The Four Graces, Dundee, OR

This winery was named for the four daughters of the Black family who established this winery. The Blacks bought an existing vineyard in the Dundee Hills in 2003 and later added the Doe Ridge Vineyard property in Yamhill Carlton in 2005. The Doe Ridge Vineyard site is interesting because of the 40 acres planted to Dijon and Pommard clones of Pinot Noir, 20 acres are farmed using sustainable agriculture while the other 20 acres are farmed using biodynamic viticulture. More recently, the winery and vineyards were acquired by Foley Family Wines, and the vineyard adjacent the winery is named Foley Family Vineyard. The winery specializes in Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc. The winemaker is Marc Myer, a graduate of University of California at Davis (2008). His Pinot Noir chops were developed in stints at Gran Moraine and La Crema. The historical farmhouse, now named Foley Family Estate, has been renovated and re-opened as a tasting room on Hwy 99 in Dundee. Visit www.thefourgraces.com. Note: these wines were shipped FedEx ground October 17 at a time when temperatures were quite high at the receiving wine locker, reaching triple digits by October 22. There was

when temperatures were quite high at the receiving wine locker, reaching triple digits by October 22. There was no external evidence of heat damage to the bottled wines.

2015 The Four Graces Willamette Valley Oregon Pinot Noir. 13.8% alc., pH 3.60, 14,140 cases, \$32. Sourced from The Foley Family Estate in the Dundee Hills and Doe Ridge Estate in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels, 15% new. *Moderately dark garnet color in the glass. Shy, but pleasant aromas of black cherry, baking spice and biscuit. Forward drinking mid weight wine with plenty of dark cherry, blueberry and pomegranate fruit flavors to satisfy. Satiny texture with modest tannins that stick out on the finish. A little more oak than I prefer is apparent.* **88.**

2015 The Four Graces Reserve Dundee Hills Oregon Pinot Noir 14.3% alc., pH 3.60, 1,279 cases, \$75. Sourced from Foley Family Estate Vineyard. A specific row and block selection. Aged 9 months in French oak barrels, 25% new. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Shy aromas of tobacco, conifer, cherry and strawberry. Discreetly concentrated flavors of earth-kissed cherry and blackberry with a thread of supportive oak. Silky tannins, bright acidity and a modest finish that still shows some unresolved tannins. Needs more time in the cellar for full aromatic and flavor expression.* **90.**

Wonderment Wines, Napa, CA

South Carolina native Stephanie Cook has had a varied career including model, event planner, caterer and finally winemaker and winery owner. She made her first wines including Pinot Noir in 2011 after honing her winemaking skills at Spottswoode, Anomaly Vineyards, Spy Valley Wines in New Zealand, and Staglin Family Vineyard. Visit www.wondermentwines.com.

2015 Wonderment Dr. Stan's Vineyard Carneros Pinot Noir 14.1% alc., 25 cases, \$65. Release December 15, 2017. Vineyard is less than 1 acre of 30+-year-old Pinot Noir vines located on the northern edge of the Sonoma portion of the Carneros AVA. Clone 115. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Aromas of cherry, strawberry and potpourri lead off. Admirable attack, length and finish in a mid weight style offering flavors of dark red cherry and berry framed by soft tannins and invigorating acidity. Very giving and enjoyable now with the balance to age nicely.* **90.**

2015 Wonderment Dutton-Campbell Vineyard Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.2% alc., 260 cases, \$44. Release December 15, 2017. A 14-acre vineyard planted in the mid 1990s. Pommard 4 clone. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Seductive aromas of fresh cold berries, spice and turned earth. A mouthful of Pinot goodness in a mid weight plus style featuring an impressive expression of black cherry fruit underlain with notes of warm spices and tobacco. Easy to like now, with micro grain tannins, supportive acidity, and a flattering finish. As I have said many times, Pommard is my paramour,* **92.**



More Wines

2015 Arthur Cellars Pride & Joy Russian River Valley Pinot Noir 14.5% alc., pH 3.34, TA 0.69, 50 cases, \$40. Released September 2017. Grapes are sourced from Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Aged 13 months in one-year-old French oak barrels. *Moderately light ruby red color in the glass. Very shy aromas of cherry, blueberry and bramble. More engaging on the palate with light to mid weight flavors of cherry, strawberry and vanilla. Easygoing, with silky tannins and a noticeable cut of citrus-imbued acidity on the finish. Better when tasted the following day from a previously opened and re-corked bottle.* **89.**

2015 Benovia La Pommeraiie Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.5% alc., pH 3.51, TA 0.66, \$48. Vineyard is located at edge of the Green Valley AVA and planted at a very high density of 2420 vines per acre. Dijon clone 548 and 95. Indigenous yeast fermentation in French oak barrels and aged 16 months in French oak barrels, 35% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas arrive nicely over time in the glass including crusty lemon pie, grilled pear and toasted brioche. Delish flavors of lemon, green apple, grilled pineapple and honey. Somewhat boldly fruited, but with cleansing, steely acidity on the long finish.* **93.**

2015 Bravium Anderson Valley Pinot Noir 12.5% alc., pH 3.42, TA 0.65, 1,934 cases, \$34. Released September 1, 2016. Valley Foothills, Donnelly Creek and Wiley Vineyards. Aged 11 months in French and Hungarian oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderately light garnet color in the glass. Aromas of cherry and cranberry are pressed by more notable aromas of toast and cigar. Light to mid weight flavors of cherry and cranberry shot through with a citrus note. Plenty of oak char and tobacco flavor intervenes. Demurely fruited with a tightly-wound, tart cherry finish. The oak continues to dominate the fruit when tasted the following day.* 87.



2015 Bravium Russian River Valley Chardonnay 14.1% alc., pH 3.46, TA 0.55, 1,934 cases, \$20. Released September 1, 2016. Sourced from Windsor Oaks Vineyard, clone 17. Aged 11 months in French and Hungarian oak barrels, 33% new. *Moderate golden yellow color in the glass. Invigorating aromas of lemon oil, curt apple, pear and pineapple. A richer, riper styled wine with good length and finish featuring flavors of pear, golden apple, toast and creme brûlée. Impressive balance in a wine that is classically Russian River Valley in style.* 93.



2015 Briceland Vineyards Humboldt County Chardonnay 13.5% alc., 161 cases, \$25. 40% Rhonda's and 60% Ishi Pishi Ranch vineyards. Organically grown grapes. Fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks (no oak contact). Full malolactic fermentation. *Light platinum yellow color in the glass. Very slight reduction initially. Aromas of green apple, lemon zest and white floral blossoms. Lean and steely in style, with flavors of lemon, pear and apple and a slight flint and green pepper note.* 88.



2015 Briceland Vineyards Humboldt County Sauvignon Blanc 13.5% alc., 135 cases, \$21. Sourced from several small family-owned vineyards around Humboldt County. Organically grown grapes. Fermented and aged in stainless steel, no malolactic fermentation. *Light golden yellow color in the glass. Aromas of lime zest, white stone fruit and the varietal characteristic whiff of green pepper. Impressive typicality in a refreshing style with impeccable balance. The core of white peach is complimented by notes of green pepper and herbs.* I really enjoyed this wine. 91.

NV Eye Chart California Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., \$16.99. Eye Chart Wines is a collaboration between Joel Gott and Dave Phinney (St. Helena, Napa County). Cellared and bottled by Joel Gott Wines, St. Helena, Napa County. I saw this at a market and was curious to try it as I am a retired ophthalmologist. *Aromas and flavors of blueberry, blackberry and pomegranate in a ripe-fruited, mid weight wine with a sweet tone. Some tobacco oak chimes in. Very silky mouthfeel with a modest finish. True to its Pinot Noir origins, but a very simple quaff.* 85.



2015 Luli Santa Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir 14.0% alc., \$21 but often discounted to \$17.99. Master Sommelier Sara Floyd teams with California's Pisoni Family to make this wine. Doctor's, Highlands, Montelinda and Leavens vineyards. 12% whole cluster. Oak barrel aged and bottled unfixed and unfiltered. *A tasty core of black cherry and black raspberry fruit is framed by smoky oak. Silky in the mouth, with balanced tannins in a mid weighted style, with a short, but pleasurable finish. Better over time in the glass as the oak overlay fades. Rare to find a Pinot Noir of this quality for under \$20.* 89.



2014 Purple Hands Freedom Hill Vineyard Willamette Valley Pinot Noir 13.5% alc., 500 cases, \$38. *Moderate garnet color in the glass. Aromas of dusty black cherry, baking spices and toasty oak. The flavor profile veers to purple and black fruits with an earthy, mineral tone. Some oak plies the background and shows up on the finish. The tannins are somewhat robust consistent with wines from this vineyard.* 89.

Pinot Briefs

Menlo Park Wine Walk Featuring Santa Cruz Mountains Wines The Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association and Station 1300, a Greenhart Land Company project, present the fourth Taste of the Mountains Wine Walk on Saturday, December 2, in downtown Menlo Park. All ticket profits will benefit the Menlo Park Atherton Education Foundation (MPAEF). Local boutique wineries of the Santa Cruz Mountains will be pouring wines in various designated tasting locations along Santa Cruz Avenue. Participating wineries will offer wines for sale at the Bottle Booth with 20% of proceeds benefiting MPAEF. Participating wineries include Burrell School, Cinnabar, Kings Mountain, Mindego Ridge, Roudon-Smith, and Silvertip.

California 2017 Harvest Report The California Wine Institute reported that the 2017 harvest wrapped up early following summer heat spurts and a growing season that saw significant rain throughout the state ending a five-year drought. While October wildfires in the North Coast wine communities made international headlines, the state's vineyards and wineries were not significantly impacted. 90% of the harvest in Napa and Sonoma and 85% in Mendocino were already picked and in production at wineries before the fires. The overall crop size is estimated at 4 million tons, down slightly from 2016 and above the historical average of 3.9 million tons. The vintage promises to be of excellent quality.

Outstanding in the Field Grateful Table On Tuesday, November 21, at 1:00 PM, the public is invited to a special Thanksgiving feast prepared by Chef Tyler Florence and friends, featuring the local fall harvest set in an idyllic vineyard on the Napa-Sonoma county line. Outstanding in the Field is partnering with Visit California to produce this feast. While most of the wine region was untouched by recent fires, the people who grow, pour, craft and welcome need your support in rebuilding their communities. The best way to show them your love is to visit. All ticket proceeds of this event will benefit nonprofit fire recovery charities. Tickets are \$500 per seat. Visit www.outstandinginthefield.com.

Rise Up Sonoma On December 3, 2017, Rise Up Sonoma will bring together iconic Sonoma County wineries, chefs from Sonoma County and San Francisco and legendary music stars to benefit those affected by the Sonoma County fires. The event will be held at Sonoma Country Day School Jackson Theater at 4400 Day School Place in Santa Rosa. Limited to 650 seats, each ticket is \$500. VIP tickets, limited to 100 are \$1500. All proceeds will be distributed to charities in support of victims. Participating wineries include Arista, Benovia, CIRQ, Davis Family Winery, duMol Winery, Eric Kent Wine Cellars, Failla Winery, Hartford Family Winery, Hirsch Vineyards, Joseph Swan, Kistler, Kosta Browne, Lombardi Wines, Martinelli Vineyards & Winery, Siduri, Three Sticks Wines and Williams Selyem. For tickets: www.brownpapertickets.com/event/3153869/.



Anderson Valley Winegrowers Event Changes for 2018 The second annual **Holiday Passport Weekends** will be held December 9-10 and 16-17. More than a dozen wineries will host this ticketed event, offering special wine tastings, holiday decor and crafts, food and wine pairings and more. Toys will be collected to distribute to local children by the Anderson Valley Fire Department. The International Alsace Varietals Festival has been renamed the **Anderson Valley Aromatic White Wine Festival** and will be held February 24-25, 2018. Wineries from California, Oregon, Washington, Alsace, Germany, New Zealand, Michigan, Vermont, New York and more will be pouring Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc and

Muscat. The technical session on Saturday morning will include an educational food and wine pairing taught by educators of the Culinary Institute of America and a presentation of German wines by wine writer Dan Berger. The **21st Annual Anderson Valley Pinot Noir Festival** will be held May 18-20, 2018, at Camp Navarro, an historic Boy Scout camp turned “glamping” event center. The majority of the weekend’s events will be held at Camp Navarro, including the educational sessions, grand tasting and winemaker dinners. On-site accommodations like cozy cabins and tents will be available for attendees to book through Camp Navarro. The only summer event, the **Anderson Valley Barrel Tasting Weekend** will be held July 21-22, 2018, allows consumers to taste soon-to-be-bottled wines from more than 20 local producers. Additional information and tickets for all of these events: www.avwines.com.



2017 Sonoma County Harvest Fair Professional Wine Competition This wine judging event is the largest regional wine competition in the United States. Wines must be made with grapes grown in Sonoma County with Sonoma County designated AVA as only region listed on the bottle.

Sweepstakes White Wine: 2016 Davis Family Vineyards Russian River Valley Chardonnay (\$38)

Sweepstakes Red Wine: 2014 Balletto Vineyards Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$29)

Sweepstakes Sparkling Wine: 2010 Gloria Ferrer Anniversary Cuvée (\$40)

Best of Class Pinot Noir: 2016 Balletto Vineyards Sexton Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$44), 2014 Balletto Vineyards Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$29), 2014 Ektimo Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$38), and 2014 Jigar Graham Family Vineyards Green Valley of Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$65)

Double Gold Pinot Noir (unanimous gold by judges): 2015 Balletto Vineyards Cider Ridge Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$44), 2016 Balletto Vineyards Emerson Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$44), 2016 Balletto Sexton Hill Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$44), 2015 Balletto Vineyards Winery Block Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$44), 2014 Ektimo Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$38), 2015 Francis Ford Coppola Reserve Martinelli King Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$38), 2014 Garnet Rodgers Creek Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$36), 2014 Hook & Ladder Third Alarm Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$40), 2015 J. Cage Cellars Nunes Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$40), 2014 Jigar Graham Family Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$65), 2015 McIlroy Cellars Lila Lane Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$34), 2015 Mersenne Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$37), 2015 Selby Calgary Vineyard Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$52), 2015 Sonoma Coast Vineyards Freestone Hills Vineyard Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$40), 2015 Sonoma Cutter Vineyards Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$30), and 2015 Willowbrook JSO Limited Estate Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$42).

Pali Wine Opens Tasting Room in the OC Pali Wine first reached out from its Lompoc base to open a tasting room in Santa Barbara. Now it has opened a tasting room in the Anaheim Packing District in the renovated MAKE building.

Oregon Winemaker Patricia Green Dies The former winemaker at Torii Mor and Patricia Green Cellars was found dead at her cabin retreat in Roseburg, Oregon on November 6. She was a low-profile winemaker who had a dedicated following for her Pinot Noir wines.

Founders Dan Kosta & Michael Browne Leave Kosta Browne Winery *The Press Democrat* reported on November 9 that Dan Kosta and Michael Browne are leaving the winery they founded on a shoestring 20 years ago. Kosta Browne Winery has been owned by J.W. Childs Associates of Boston since January 2015. The 30,000-case-a-year winery plans to start an appointment-only tasting room at the winery in The Barlow center next spring along with some increased retail distribution. Michael Browne's last vintage of Kosta Browne wines was 2014, and he will now concentrate on his CIRQ label. It is hard to imagine that the winery will be able to prosper without the charismatic founders Dan Kosta and Michael Browne at the helm, but the winery name remains one of the most recognizable among Pinot Noir cognoscenti.

Cheese Matches for Pinot Noir (Taken from Windy Oaks Estate, "A Cheese Plate for the Holidays") Cow's milk alpine cheeses: Abundance, Appenzeller, Beaufort, Comté, L'Etivaz, Gruyere, Pleasant Ridge Reserve, Raclette, Tomme de Savoie. Washed-rind cheeses: Fontina, Pont-l'Eveque, Taleggio. Bloomy-rind cheeses: Brie, Camellia, Camembert. Fresh or aged goat's milk cheeses: Monte Enebro, Saint-Maure de Touraine, Tumul Tomme.

University Genomic Study of Grape Evolution University of California at Irvine evolutionary biologist Brandon Gaut and University of California at Davis plant biologist Dario Cantu compared the sequenced genomes of wild and domesticated European grapes and found evidence that people may have begun eating grapes as many as 15,000 years before grapes were domesticated as an agricultural crop. Humans gathered grapes in the wild for centuries before domesticating them. The researchers also found that modern grape genomes contain more potentially harmful mutations than did the grape's wild ancestors. These accumulate through clonal propagation over the centuries and their identification may be useful to winegrowers. The study was published in *The National Academies of Sciences*.

Infographic on Most Important Wine Soils For soil nerds only: 14 Wine Soil Types to Know: www.vinepair.com/articles/illustrated-guide-wine-soils/. For more in-depth reading: *The Dirty Guide to Wine*, written by Alice Feiring and Pascaline Lepeltier, MS.

Moderate Drinking and Atrial Fibrillation A recent cohort Norwegian study published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*, "Does moderate drinking increase the risk of atrial fibrillation?", concluded that although alcohol consumption was associated with a curvilinearly increasing risk of atrial fibrillation in general, the attributable risk of alcohol consumption within recommended limits among participants without binge or problem drinking was negligible in the population studied. A second cohort study published in the journal *JACC Heart Failure*, "Moderate alcohol consumption is associated with lower risk of heart failure but not atrial fibrillation", found that consumption of alcohol in moderation was associated with a lower incidence of heart failure, but not with the development of atrial fibrillation. No association of alcohol consumption with onset of atrial fibrillation was observed.

Effects of Light-To-Moderate Drinking During Pregnancy. A pooled sample of 193,747 live-born singletons from nine European cohorts was studied and reported in the *European Journal of Epidemiology*. This study was discussed in detail by members of the International Scientific Forum on Alcohol Research and reported in *AIM Medical News*. According to Forum reviewers, "We must realize that a glass of wine with polyphenols with a balanced meal during pregnancy is probably harmless, while heavy alcohol intake leads to a high incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome. In addition to recommending abstinence during pregnancy (the safest option), any advice should also include that pregnant women should ensure that if they do choose to drink, they should never drink to intoxication as there is a significantly increased risk of alcohol-related harm to the developing fetus. Alcohol consumption during the first trimester of pregnancy presents the highest risk to the developing fetus. The takeaway is that dramatization of the risk of an occasional drink or very light alcohol during pregnancy should be avoided and like in all other aspects of everyday life, one needs just common

during pregnancy should be avoided and like in all other aspects of everyday life, one needs just common sense.”

Luminous Hills After Harvest As Pinot Noir harvest in California and Oregon has concluded, this photo at Luminous Hills Vineyard in the Willamette Valley posted on Twitter provides a beautiful memory of fall.

