

# WINE News

*Spring for some wines from the Northwest, Southwest and the Golden State.*



## APRIL 25, 2018 FEATURES

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## Home Base for Exploring Domestic Wines

By Ryan Woodhouse

Many of you may know me as the New Zealand, Australia and South Africa wine buyer at K&L, my role here for many years. However, in late 2017 I was given the opportunity to transition over to the company's Domestic category, an opportunity that I jumped at. The local wines of California's Central Coast and Santa Cruz Mountains were actually my first love after moving here from England in 2008. One of my first jobs in California was working for the notorious Randall Grahm at Bonny Doon Vineyards. Emerging relatively unscathed and inspired by Randall's sense of adventure, I moved into the production side of the business, working in the historic cellars of Testarossa Winery in Los Gatos. I joined K&L on 11/11/11 (easy to remember) and the rest is history. I feel lucky to have had many years of experience working with domestic

wines both in the retail and production sectors. I have many old friends throughout the business who have proven to be great resources, keeping me in touch with some of the most exciting wines being produced today. I believe we are currently drinking our way through one of the greatest eras in West Coast wine. We've experienced a string of brilliant vintages. Viticulture and winemaking have never been stronger. Our wine regions have become enological melting pots with ideas and influences coming from far and wide to an environment relatively unconstrained by any particular regulatory controls (like the French AOC system). I believe there has never been a better time to explore domestic wines and I will be diligently searching for the most interesting examples. For now, check out this trio of wines that have piqued my interest so far this year:

**2016 MaidenStoen "Coast View Vineyard" Monterey Riesling (\$19.99)** A razor-sharp, dry Riesling from a high-elevation vineyard in the decomposed granite soils of the Gabilan Mountains above the Salinas Valley. Mike Callahan (an ex-colleague of mine from Testarossa, now assistant winemaker at Chamisal) has dedicated himself to single-vineyard expressions of Central Coast Riesling. This mouthwatering, electric, wonderfully pure Riesling has to be tasted by any lover of this noble grape. **92 WE**

**2014 Comartin Cellars "Cuvée Cassidy" Santa Ynez Valley GSM (\$29.99)** My affection for California Rhône-style blends runs deep and this dynamite Grenache-Syrah-Mourvèdre from Adam Comartin hits the mark. A lovely combination of pure brambly fruit, wild thyme, loamy earth and a lick of exotic French oak. Packed to the brim with forward fruit but beautifully balanced and fresh. The Syrah adds some depth and a dash of Mourvèdre a savory, brooding edge. **92 WE**

**2014 K Vintners "Ovide - Jack's Vineyard" Walla Walla Valley Cabernet Sauvignon-Syrah (\$39.99)** One of the most pleasant surprises of my Domestic assignment so far. This is a stunning, structured wine packed with dark fruit, plum, blackcurrant, cassis, bittersweet chocolate, huckleberry, clove and cedar, with fine but grippy tannins to keep the torrent of fruit in line. Dusty earth and spice blow through the finish. And at a super sharp price! **95 RP, 94 WE**



# ABC: Anything But Chardonnay? Absolutely Brilliant Chardonnay

By Ryan Woodhouse

I believe (and hope) that subscribers to the old adage “ABC—Anything But Chardonnay” are on the decline in recent years. I must admit that since assuming the Domestic buyer position at K&L late last year, I have been thoroughly impressed by the quality and stylistic diversity of Chardonnays I have encountered. Sure, there are plenty of big, oaky styles still out there (and they continue to be some of our best sellers). However, there are also many inspiring, distinctive, restrained, terroir-driven Chards that are among some of the most compelling examples I have ever tasted (white Burgundy included). Here are a few I hope will excite even the most jaded ABCer!

## 2016 Hanzell “Sebella” Sonoma Valley Chardonnay (\$24.99)

A very deliberate, fresh, zesty, crisp style of Chard made without the use of new oak and without the wine going through malolactic fermentation (for those uninitiated, malolactic is typically what gives Chardonnay a rounder, creamier feel in the mouth—“buttery,” if you will). Made mostly from younger vines on Hanzell’s spectacular estate plus some parcels from other top growers on the Sonoma Coast, this is a fantastic value given Hanzell’s pedigree and the quality of the wine. Try with seafood like crab, scallops or moules marinières.



## 2015 Domaine Drouhin “Arthur” Dundee Hills Chardonnay (375ml \$17.99; 750ml \$29.99)

A lovely new release from Domaine Drouhin, “Arthur” is named for Dominique Drouhin’s son and comes from mature (30 year old) vines on the estate. The wine was fermented partly in French oak and partly in stainless steel. The two resulting wines were then married together to create what Dominique likens to a Meursault meeting a Chablis. There’s ripe orchard fruit, with honeysuckle and pear blossom floral notes, warm pie crust and stone ground flour. The palate has great texture and weight without being overly heavy or creamy. The wine has fantastic length and purity on the palate. **94 JS, 93 W&S**



## 2015 Baxter “Oppenlander Vineyard” Mendocino Chardonnay (\$39.99)

I first tasted this Chardonnay with winemaker Phil Baxter at the Aromatic White Wine Festival in Anderson Valley and was floored by its unique saline minerality and shimmering acidity. Phil makes this wine from just a couple tons of Chardonnay fruit from the Oppenlander vineyard in a remote part of coastal Mendocino. Just eight miles inland from the town of Mendocino, the site is very cool with lots of ocean influence. The vines are planted on their

own roots (ungrafted) in a mix of gravelly loam soil. The wine is fermented with native yeast in entirely neutral oak and aged on fine lees. This wine is much more about soil, or terroir-driven nuances than any particular fruit profile; I find it utterly delicious and find new flavors with every visit.

## 2015 Copain “Les Voisins” Anderson Valley Chardonnay (\$29.99)

A wine that is powerful and restrained all at once. From the famed Ferrington vineyard, replanted in 1996 to heritage clones Robert Young and Old Wente that both give concentrated yet vibrant fruit with phenolic density and bright acidity. The wine has a musky, raw almond type character that reminds me of Meursault, great weight on the palate and intensity of flavor, yet crunchy, tangy acidity that teases out on the long finish. Golden tree fruit, baked apple, toasted rye and a nice citric zest on the back end. Really compelling Chardonnay. **91 VN**



## 2015 Shea Wine Cellars “Shea Vineyard” Willamette Valley Chardonnay (\$32.99)

I’ve tasted some fantastic Chardonnay from the Willamette this year. I had long known its potential to produce world-class Pinot Noir but had only scratched the surface of what the Chards have to offer. The Shea vineyard is world-renowned for Pinot Noir but this wine shows just how special their Chardonnay can be as well. This wine is from vines planted in 1998 on a hillside of fractured sandstone. It is packed with bright yellow stone fruits, apricot pit, baked bread and grainy minerals. The oak (just 16% new) delicately frames the freshness and energy of the wine. Beautifully judged and very refreshing. **92 WE**

## 2015 Arnot-Roberts “Watson Ranch” Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$39.99)

This has been a perennial favorite of mine for quite some time. I have always found it to be a compelling California Chard that can stand toe-to-toe with the top-notch white Burgundy that still seems to remain the benchmark for high-quality Chardonnay. This fruit comes from a cool, exposed site in southeast Napa. The soils are quite unusual for the region, being highly calcareous, and it really shows in the wine’s intense minerality. Despite the wine’s very low 12.5% ABV there’s no lack of ripeness and texture. It’s actually quite a rich, dense wine (perhaps from the thick-skinned grapes this windy site produces). Golden orchard fruit, baked pear, dusty white flower and saline mineral tinges linger in the nutty lees-driven finish. Lots of savory umami elements here. **94 VN**



## Favorites from 2015 North Coast Cabernet Sauvignon

By Ryan Woodhouse

If you didn't already know, 2015 was a monumental year for Cabernet Sauvignon in Northern California. The wines are powerful, structured and ultra-concentrated from the several years of prevailing drought conditions. Inclement weather during spring flowering meant a very poor fruit set across almost all major growing regions. Some producers were 50% down on average yields. This small crop meant the vines put all their efforts into the limited bunches they had, resulting in spectacularly flavorful wines. Here's a handful of Cabs from the 2015 vintage that have impressed me:

**2015 Rolute (Aerena) Red Hills Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99)** Made by highly regarded winemaker Aaron Pott, and sourced from a Beckstoffer vineyard at 2,400 feet elevation in Red Hills, an American Viticultural Area (AVA) of Lake County, this tastes like a big, saturated, mountain fruit Cab from some cult Napa producer—except it's \$19.99! Blackcurrant, cassis, mocha, charred oak and graphite. A full-bodied Cab but one that is true to the varietal and an exceptional value.



**2015 Blacksmith "C.L.R.T" Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$19.99)** I was simply blown away by the quality of the Blacksmith wines and couldn't believe the prices being quoted as I was tasting them. Winemaker Matt Smith trained at Beaulieu Vineyards in the 1990s and has day jobs with Dashe and JC Cellars. He started Blacksmith as his own passion project in 2003. Fruit for the 2015 C.L.R.T. (aka Claret) is predominantly from Oakville. It's quintessential Napa Valley stuff: loamy earth, ripe plum, cassis, briary notes. The balance is striking, with beautifully refined structure and purity. Drinks way above its modest price point. Also check out Blacksmith's **2015 Reserve Oakville Cabernet (\$39.99)**... simply stunning.

**2015 Forman "Château la Grande Roche" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$39.99)** A very classic take on Napa Cab. This wine shows the more restrained side of 2015, as one would expect from Ric Forman. The Château la Grande Roche bottling is made from entirely estate fruit, and named after the gigantic pink and gray boulders that the winery was carved from at the base of Howell Mountain. This is simply parcels of fruit that aren't selected for the "first" wine but are grown and made in exactly the same way. Meticulous hand-tending

of the vineyard and small-lot, attention to detail winemaking goes a long way here: this is very serious, age-worthy Cabernet. More savory tones of pipe tobacco, bay laurel, red currant and bramble here, and then some darker plummy fruit comes through on the palate, with lovely grainy tannins, crushed rock and cedar. Beautiful old-school Cabernet. Drink now with a bone-in ribeye or in 5–10 years with a French trimmed rack of lamb.

**2015 Faust Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.95)** A blockbuster wine from one of the premier producers in the valley, Quintessa. I've been keeping an eye on the evolution of Faust over the last few years, seeing the wines go from strength to strength, and the 2015 marks a real leap in quality, in my opinion. It's a lush, rich, modern style with exotic ripe fruit, soft, fleshy texture and beautiful polish. A real crowd-pleaser, this tastes as though it should be much more expensive! The fruit was sourced from sites around the valley, including Coombsville, Quintessa's biodynamic Rutherford vineyard, and even some mountain parcels in the Mt. Veeder and Howell Mountain AVAs.

**2015 Chateau Montelena Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.95)** Brand new from this Napa Valley icon, the 2015 Cab is simply delicious, super accessible, forward and open-knit. Quite perfumed, floral, with fresh-picked blackberries, liquored cassis, subtle vanillin oak and warm earth. Medium-bodied, with ripe, smooth tannins and moderate acidity. Drinking beautifully upon release but will no doubt provide plenty of pleasure down the road as well. **92 VN**

**2015 Philip Togni "Estate" Spring Mountain District Cabernet Sauvignon (\$139.99)**

A wine that was badly affected by the low yields of 2015, with production down by half. What tiny amounts are available are truly special and yet again make my list for potential wine of the vintage. I say "potential" wine of the vintage because this wine's true colors won't reveal themselves for a decade-plus... maybe two. The low yields and drought stress, however, have given this wine a little more softness than in some prior years. There is a dark, sweet core of fruit wrapped around the sinewy, firm structure that defines Togni's Spring Mountain Cab. Gravelly mountain soil minerals and green tobacco notes linger with long-chain tannins and beautifully preserved acidity. A classic. **94 VN**





## New Wines from Historic Vines at Birichino

By Stefanie Juelsgaard

It's becoming increasingly rare to find something that really surprises and excites you in the world of wine, so when you find that rare moment of something new and different, you make a point of learning more. Birichino is that revelation for me. Birichino is not a brand-new winery, having been around for a decade now, but its popularity is gaining strength as people look toward older vineyards for their vibrancy and concentration of fruit. Founders Alex Krause and John Locke source their fruit from family-owned vineyards planted in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The unique environment in which the vines are planted has allowed for phylloxera resistance and therefore they have been able to survive, own-rooted. Because they have such amazing material to work with, these guys aim for minimal intervention in the winery, favoring native fermentations, neutral oak and little filtration. The under-\$20 price tag for all of their offerings is astonishing given the stunning quality of the wines and the historical nature of many of the sites that contribute to them.

**2015 Birichino "Jurassic Park Vineyard" Santa Ynez Chenin Blanc (\$19.99)** Sourced from own-rooted 33-year-old vines, from sandy, Jurassic-aged soils, planted at 1,100 feet in Santa Ynez. Small berries from the low-vigor soils lend great concentration and the heavy limestone content of the soils exudes great minerality. **90 WE**

**2015 Birichino Monterey Malvasia Bianca (\$14.99)** The drought-ridden soils of California really started showing their presence in the fruit in 2015. Yields were lower and fruit more concentrated due to the lack of rain. This led to a richer, if more savory, profile for this wine than in other years. The shale, clay, and granitic soils are well showcased here, leading to notes of almonds, ginger, salinity and citrus blossom.

**2016 Birichino "Bechthold Vineyard Old Vines" Mokelumne River Cinsault (\$22.99)** This wine is made from 130-year-old, head-trained, non-irrigated, organically farmed vines. It shows

intense concentration, dark purple fruits, and dimension resulting from native yeast and varied soil types. After it is picked, the fruit is saignéed for Birichino's vin gris, making the juice that remains for this wine even more intense. **92 WE**

**2016 Birichino "Besson Vineyard Old Vine" Central Coast Grenache (\$22.99)** The vines for this wine were planted in 1910 a short distance from the Santa Cruz Mountains. The lack of irrigation and the advanced age of the vines result in very low yields, producing grapes of great intensity and focus. Unlike some of its counterparts in the Rhône, this Grenache is light and mineral driven, but still shows great depth of flavor and complexity. **93 WE**

**2015 Birichino "Old Vines" Contra Costa County Mourvèdre (\$19.99)** The sandy soil of the Sacramento River Delta in which this vineyard grows has inhibited any phylloxera infection over the years. This has permitted the vines to remain on their original roots, which are now over 100 years old. A lighter hand is used in making this wine and aging is done only in neutral oak, so as to not overwhelm the delicate flavors.

**2016 Birichino "St. George Vineyard Old Vine" Santa Cruz Mountains Zinfandel (\$22.99)** A unique take on Zinfandel. The 96-year-old vines are planted in a cool environment in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The marine influence, along with stainless steel fermentation and neutral oak aging, keeps the alcohol level low, and fruit flavors bright and fresh. This is a lighter take on Zinfandel without compromising on flavors, and the limestone soils really elevate the wine's profile. **90 WE**



# Old Vines in Modern Times

By Ryan Woodhouse

**California has an absolute treasure trove of old-vine vineyards.** Many of these incredible parcels of vines have survived multiple waves of phylloxera (a bug that attacks the roots of vines, eventually killing them), devastating droughts, fires and floods. The largest threat to these vines is often urban sprawl, as strip malls, gas stations and housing developments take priority over some of the most incredible pieces of the country's agricultural history. At last, in recent years these historic sites have started to achieve the recognition and protection they deserve, largely thanks to a handful of dedicated winegrowers and winemakers championing their cause. What follows are a few examples of exactly why these viticultural treasures need to be preserved—because they make delicious and distinctive wines!

**2015 Precedent “Wirz Vineyard” Cienega Valley Old Vine White (\$19.99)** From a patch of 60-plus-year-old, organically farmed, dry-farmed Riesling (and some other mixed whites) in the rugged Cienega Valley. The soils here, mixed up by tectonic movement, are a complex mix of decomposed granite, shale and limestone. Raised in neutral oak foudre not for flavor but for the wondrous texture the lees aging gives the wine, it reminds me of some of the best Rieslings out of the famed Morstein vineyard in Rheinhessen...that effortless power and density while retaining a filigreed expression and delicacy.

**2017 Aarena San Francisco Bay AVA Rosé (\$19.99)** A new edition to our rosé selections here at K&L and one I'm super excited about. Aarena's San Francisco Bay AVA rosé is actually from a single 130-year-old vineyard in the Oakley area that grows in pure river sand. Del Barba Vineyard is organically managed and the vines are own-rooted—it's quite a spectacular sight! The wine is made from roughly equal parts old-vine Mourvèdre and Carignan. It's bright, crisp and refreshing with crushed raspberry, orange zest, pink grapefruit and sandy minerals. This will be constantly stocked in my fridge this summer.

**2016 Bedrock Wine Company “Chuy Vineyard” Moon Mountain District Chardonnay (\$44.99)**

From a stunning old block of dry-farmed, mountain-grown Chardonnay planted to Shot-Wente clone in 1964. You can ask any of our staff members—I have an obsession with this particular version of the Chardonnay grape. Its small, uneven berries are packed with flavor and high malic acidity, resulting in powerful, exotic but fresh and glistening wines. This wine was aged in mostly neutral Stockinger barrels to preserve the character of the fruit. Limited availability.

**2013 Fog Monster “Bedrock Vineyard” Sonoma Valley Red Blend (\$49.99)** Fog Monster is a very cool project from dynamic winemaker Andrea Mullineux. Andrea is better known for her namesake South African-based



wines “Mullineux Family” with her husband Chris in the Swartland region north of Cape Town. Andrea was named global “Winemaker of the Year” by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine* in 2016 and is revered by all who know her in the wine world. A native of the Bay Area, Andrea returns to California annually and makes tiny amounts of the Fog Monster wines from unique sites across the state, often experimenting with unusual winemaking techniques. This wine is a very elegant, perfumed, light-touch expression of one of the state's most highly regarded old vineyards. Planted in the 1880s, this vineyard is a diverse field blend of interplanted varieties. Driven by Zinfandel (60%) and Carignane (20%), the remainder consists of 20-plus mixed grapes. Just 50 cases made.



**2015 Vöcal “Bates Ranch” Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon (\$64.99)** Old-school Cabernet that harks back to an era (largely) gone by. This wine is more reminiscent of the styles being made and consumed back when these vines were adolescents. Planted in the 1960s, these are own-rooted, dry-farmed, head-trained Cabernet vines in the shadow of Mt. Madonna in the very southeastern corner of the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA. The fruit has real “Cabernet” character: that is to say, plenty of leafy, herbaceous notes mingling with huckleberry, plum, graphite and subtle lavender. The tannins are firm but fine and the acidity is markedly present, giving great staying power on the finish and begging for food.

**2013 Amapola Creek “Monte Rosso Vineyard” Sonoma Valley Zinfandel (\$34.99)** From arguably the most famed Zinfandel planting in the world, a site declared a “first growth vineyard” by the inimitable Robert Parker. These gnarly vines were 123 years old when this fruit was picked! This parcel of fruit was expertly crafted by Richard Arrowood who himself has 50-plus years of vinous wisdom under his belt. I love how it beautifully captures the rich and exuberant fruit that old-vine Zinfandel gives but also retains a drinkability and balance. No over-extraction or excessive residual sugar here. Just pure, brambly, lush old-vine fruit immaculately presented for a very reasonable price, especially when you consider the pedigree of both the fruit source and craftsman! **95 RP**

**2016 Carlisle “DuPratt Vineyard” Mendocino Ridge Zinfandel (\$44.99)** From a high elevation, relatively cool climate vineyard site in the remote Mendocino Ridge AVA, Carlisle's DuPratt Zinfandel is sourced from 97-year-old vines and provides a different expression of Zin than the big, broad, lush Russian River or Sonoma Valley bottlings most people are more familiar with. While still being very powerful and ripe, there is more “crunch” to the fruit, some savory, briary notes and wonderfully bright acidity. Brooding slate-like minerals and woody spices linger. Such a cool wine. **94 VN**

## The Side Hustle

By Ryan Woodhouse

Many of us have some kind of side hustle, that little extra gig that's typically either a project motivated by passion or out of economic necessity! Some folks drive for Uber or Lyft; some deliver for DoorDash; make coffee at Starbucks; get crafty on Etsy; play in a band...you get the idea. But in this article I'm referring to winemakers who go above and beyond their "day job" and have their own personal label separate from the winery or brand that pays their regular paycheck. Over the years some of the coolest wines I've tasted have been these side hustle wines. They seem to provide the perfect conduit for creative vinous outpourings. They allow a blank canvas for the artist to work with the varieties or vineyards they choose, apply more experimental winemaking techniques, and break from convention. Here are a few examples that I'm excited to have on our shelves right now:

### Winemaker: Eric Johnson

Day Job: Talley Vineyards  
Side Hustle: Ann Albert Wines

**2015 Ann Albert "Zotovich Vineyard" Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$39.99)** A beautifully focused, mineral-tinged, mouthwatering Chard that is electric on the palate. The soil here is mostly diatomaceous earth and sand, producing highly aromatic wines with a distinctive saline, oyster shell minerality. Eric's expression combines this soil-driven character with zesty citrus and crunchy quince. Beautifully pure and unadulterated. Very Chablis inspired. Fantastic crab wine.

**2015 Ann Albert "Bien Nacido Vineyard" Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay (\$39.99)** From an old block of Bien Nacido Chardonnay vines planted in 1973. A very concentrated, textural wine. Still tight and refined but with an innate sense of density and power, likely from the old vines, this is more in the baked orchard fruit spectrum: roasted pears, golden pie crust, raw almond and toasted chestnuts. A creamy, lees-derived mid-palate texture is beautifully counterbalanced by bracing acidity that this cool site is known for. A very complete wine with layers and intrigue.



### Winemaker: Coby Parker-Garcia

Day Job: Claiborne & Churchill  
Side Hustle: El Lugar

**2015 El Lugar "Rincon Vineyard" Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir (\$39.99)** A fantastically fresh, bright, crunchy Pinot Noir with compelling forest berry fruits, sweet herbs, bramble and mulling spice. The floral, lifted nose is followed up perfectly by the expressive, energized palate. Nothing big or sappy here; this is pure, focused, elegantly proportioned Pinot Noir with drive and vibrancy in spades. Love it. Just 96 cases made. **94 WE**

**2015 El Lugar "Bien Nacido Vineyard" Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (\$39.99)** Predominantly from old-vine, own-rooted blocks planted in the 1970s with some younger vines from 1999, this is based on Pommard and Martini heritage clones. It's a brooding wine, showing the more savory side of Pinot Noir. Beyond wild raspberry and dark rose petals is forest floor, rocky earth, dried porcini and truffle. The palate is mid-weight and layered with fine tannins. Very serious Pinot Noir that deserves to be savored. **93 WE**



### Winemaker: Mike Schieffer

Day Job: Turley Wine Cellars  
Side Hustle: Fine Disregard

**2015 Fine Disregard "Millhouse Vineyard" Oak Knoll Napa Valley Sémillon (\$29.99)** Inspired by his time making wine in Australia's Hunter Valley, Mike is somewhat infatuated with Sémillon. He strives to make a style purely expressive of its site. This wine is from a special half-acre block in the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley. Fermented in stainless steel (one-third) and neutral oak (two-thirds), this wine perfectly captures Sémillon's textural weight and presence plus the searing acidity that ensures it long ageability. White blossom, preserved lemon, key lime and baked bread. The length on the palate is seeming endless. A wine that is sure to age beautifully.

**2016 Fine Disregard "Lost Row" Stag's Leap District Syrah (\$34.99)** From a single row of Syrah planted to an old Barossa Valley massale selection in Napa Valley's Stag's Leap District. The rest of the vineyard has been re-grafted but Mike picks this one row, plus a few other single vines of Sémillon that rejected their re-graft, in order to co-ferment this wine. Hauntingly perfumed with the quintessential violets, cracked pepper and smoked meat that signifies to me that I'm likely in for a treat. Bursting with juicy, purple fruit, dried Provençal herbs, pink peppercorns, beef drippings; mid-weight with lively acidity and appropriate tannins; this is a lifted, elegant Syrah but one that certainly has a serious muscular core and plenty of longevity all but assured.



# Be Prepared for Summer Sippin'

By Ryan Woodhouse

It seems in this day and age you can never quite tell what the weather is going to do. We swing from historic drought to historic flood. Dormant vines are woken from their slumber by unseasonable heat spikes only for the mercury to plummet back to record lows just days later. The SF Giants got rained out in April for the first time in 12 years... a few days later it's pushing 80 degrees Fahrenheit in the City by the Bay. But one thing you can almost always depend upon in California is that at some point summer will arrive and it will be long and glorious. So in an effort to help you prepare for flip flop and grilling season I thought I would outline some of my favorite domestic rosés I have selected this spring:

## 2017 Flowers Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir Rosé

**(\$29.99)** In a few short years Flowers' rosé of Pinot Noir has quickly become a benchmark wine. Made from some of the finest Pinot Noir fruit the Sonoma Coast has to offer (including a good chunk of their Sea View Ridge estate vineyard). The hand-picked grapes are whole-cluster pressed on a gentle cycle and juice is fermented with native yeast in stainless steel and neutral French oak. Malolactic is partially blocked to keep the acidity zesty and fresh. Aromas of tart alpine strawberry, yogurt, spiced orange peel and bramble leaf. Flavors follow suit. The palate has a subtle creamy feel and then the bright acidity rushes back, drawing out the wine to a juicy, mouthwatering finish. A pure, fresh, aromatic take on Pinot Noir rosé and one that is sure to be a favorite again this year.



## 2017 Copain "Tous Ensemble" Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir Rosé

**(\$24.99)** Another perennial favorite of mine and this year truly fantastic, this subtle salmon pink wine shows aromas and flavors of golden raspberries, melon, peach and brioche. Quite a lees-driven style with some nutty elements adding complexity to the fruit. A soft mouth-filling texture with racy acidity to finish intertwined with stony minerals. Very quaffable.

## 2017 Bedrock Wine Company "Ode to Lulu"

**California Rosé (\$21.99)** A fantastic edition of this wine, Ode to Lulu pays homage to the great Lulu Peyraud of Domaine Tempier in Bandol, the origin of some of the finest rosé wines the world has ever seen. The 2017 Lulu is composed of 75% Mataro (Mourvèdre) and the rest Grenache, all from very old vines. Light in color but packed with crunchy berry fruit flavors, mulling spice, dusty earth and torn herbs de Provence. Very Bandol-like indeed. Another wine I plan to drink plenty of this summer...at least until the supply runs out.



## 2017 Vaughn Duffy Mendocino Carignane Rosé (\$17.99)

A very interesting wine from an 80-year-old patch of Carignane near Ukiah in Mendocino County. A focused, dry style with macerated raspberries, citrus zest, baking spice, rose petals and flint. Made by husband-and-wife team Matt Duffy and Sara Vaughn, whose wines continue to impress me across the entire range. Watch out for this semi-under-the-radar brand; they also make dynamite Pinot Noir, Syrah and Sauvignon Blanc that are not to be missed.



## 2017 Tyler Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir Rosé (\$24.99)

A tart, crunchy take on Pinot Noir rosé showing some of the more savory, sultry elements of the varietal, this is made from the free-run juice that collects in the picking bins as the clusters of Pinot get squeezed under their own weight. A patchwork of fruit from across Santa Maria Valley and the Sta. Rita Hills. Very fragrant and floral. Alpine strawberry, bramble, wild thyme and orange peel. The wine also has a distinct saline, mineral quality, maybe from Sta. Rita's calcareous soils. Super elegant and refreshing rosé.

## 2017 Brander Los Olivos District Rosé (\$16.99)

A bit of an outlier among our rosé selections that are dominated by Pinot Noir and Rhône varietals but nonetheless delicious! This Merlot (70%) and Cabernet Sauvignon (30%) based rosé comes from Brander's Los Olivos estate and Mesa Verde vineyards, both in the Los Olivos District of Santa Ynez Valley. The fruit was grown and picked specifically for rosé production and picked early for bright flavors and acid retention. A crunchy, zesty wine with white strawberry, lemon, cranberry and spearmint, this is also a very versatile food wine for alfresco dinners this summer season.





## The Desert is Blooming with Great Wine

By Mari Keilman

**With Napa Valley vineyard land reaching astronomical prices per acre, and the threat of climate change driving wine companies on a northerly march in pursuit of cooler sites, it's somewhat anomalous that an up-and-coming player in the wine game may be coming from Arizona.** Yup, that's right, I said it—Arizona.

Most people think of Arizona as a dry, flat desert wasteland with no rain and sweltering heat almost every day of the year, but Arizona has its diverse regional climates, a few of which are quite suitable for growing grapes. One such area is in the central-northern part of Arizona near Flagstaff, while two sites just north of the Mexican border are home to high-altitude vineyards that sit between 3,500 and 5,000 feet. This elevation gives the vineyard sites huge diurnal swings that allow grapes to achieve phenolic ripeness and sugar necessary for fermentation, while the cool nighttime temperatures help them to preserve acidity.

The other meteorological phenomenon that contributes to successful viticulture in this arid climate is that during the late summer, tropical moisture travels north to Arizona, a much-needed refreshment that keeps the grapes from drying out before phenolic ripeness can be completed.

The Spanish priests planted winegrapes all the way back in the sixteenth century for sacramental use, but Arizona didn't start making fine wines until the early 1980s, when the quality cultivars were introduced. And while there are currently over 110 wineries, vineyards and cellars across Arizona, I think it's safe to give due credit for bringing Arizona wines to the national stage to Maynard James Keenan and Caduceus Cellars.

In 2002, Keenan (who first found success in the music industry as the frontman of the band, Tool) moved to Jerome, Arizona and realized that the terroir resembled winegrowing regions he had visited all over the

world. He began making wines under the Caduceus label with consulting winemaker, Eric Glomski. After seven years, the two amicably split, with Keenan deciding to focus his efforts on his Caduceus Cellars and Merkin Vineyards labels.

Under the Merkin label, **2016 "Chupacabra" Blanca (\$19.99)** is a blend of Riesling and Chardonnay, and **2016 "Chupacabra" Arizona Red Blend (\$24.99)** is a Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre blend coming from vineyards in the southernmost part of Arizona. The Merkin wines are fun, easy-drinking and pleasurable wines that will please almost every palate.

The **2014 Caduceus "Anubis" Arizona Red Blend (\$49.99)** is Keenan's version of a Bordeaux-inspired blend, with 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 30% Cabernet Franc and 20% Petite Sirah. Previously, Keenan blended grapes from other AVAs, sometimes even out of state, but his goal has been to have the Caduceus wines come solely from his estate vineyards in Arizona. The Anubis is a big, bold, dense and meaty red that has enough stuffing to sink your teeth into and satisfy all those with a big Cali Cab palate.

The **2013 Caduceus "Nagual de la Naga" Arizona Red Blend (\$49.99)** is Keenan's homage to the Italian varieties that thrive in the Arizona climate. Sangiovese with a splash of Cabernet Sauvignon, this delightful little blend is exactly how I envision the future of world-class caliber wines from Arizona. It's evident how well Sangiovese takes to the climate. It is a bright yet ripe, full bodied yet sophisticated, quenching yet indulgent red wine.



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