

WINE News

Your one-stop shop for the latest and greatest Domestic selections.



APRIL 1, 2019 FEATURES

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A Blast from the Past, Old School Style

By Ryan Woodhouse

Many of you reading this will remember the K&L newsletters of years gone by. I still have a handful of them at home myself. All those pages and pages of wines listed out, in physical copies that were mailed out on a monthly basis. Of course, we updated the format of the newsletter some years ago now to include more images (and in full color too), more “editorial” content, and fewer lists of wines by category. We also went to a bimonthly electronic PDF format, plus a limited run of hard copies for distribution in the stores and with wine shipments.

All in all, I love the changes that we’ve made to the newsletter. It keeps the content fresh and engaging, and the interactive PDF format is very user-friendly in the age of online commerce. But a little piece of me still yearns for those old school, “buying guide” type newsletters. All those fascinating lists of wines tempting you — price and press all laid out neatly on the page. They made perfect coffee table (or even bathroom)

reading. Lots of our brick-and-mortar customers used to bring those newsletters with them as shopping lists, with wines circled, starred, or highlighted on the pages, and would browse the shelves as they flicked through the pages. Other folks would call the customer service team and list off the wines aloud, building an order as they went.

So, with these thoughts in mind, I figured it would be fun to put together a newsletter in a slightly old-school format—the key categories, varietals, and price points set out like a smorgasbord of domestic goodness for your browsing pleasure. Of course, it will be interspersed with some more in-depth commentary when needed. Plus, the lists are focused on what we believe to be the best of the best in their respective categories. The wines contained in the following pages are only a fraction of the total inventory we have, but I hope it will provide some guidance on what we think is worth your attention in a category-by-category fashion.

Cabernet Sauvignon

As the old saying goes, “Cab is King,” so what better way to kick off this newsletter than a rundown of our favorite Napa Cabs? While the price of admission for Napa Cab continues to creep up, I truly believe we are currently seeing a stellar class of mid-priced (\$30–\$50) Napa Cabernet, helped along by a run of great vintages and ever-improving viticulture and winemaking. And once you step up into the \$50–\$100 zone, you’ll find truly world-class wines that rival the most expensive cult wines in both power and ageability. Here’s my selection of some of the best Napa Cabs that grace our shelves:

Napa Cab Under \$30

2016 Buehler Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$23.95) Always a standout value in Napa Cab. The 2016 has lovely focus, freshness, and structure. **91 JS**

2016 Scattered Peaks Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$29.95) Made by Napa icon Joel Aiken, winemaker at Beaulieu Vineyards for 27 years.

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Biodynamically grown grapes piled high at Ehlers Estate, a few vintages back.

Cabernet Sauvignon

(Continued from page 1)

2015 Buehler “Estate” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$29.99) A selection from all estate fruit. Very hard to beat at this price point. **93 VN**

2016 Gibbs “Three Clones” Saint Helena Cabernet Sauvignon (\$29.95) All estate grown, St. Helena Cab for sub-\$30? Under-the-radar producer making some excellent wines. **92 JS**

2016 Terra Valentine Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$29.99) Fruit from St. Helena, Spring Mountain, Rutherford, and Calistoga. Intense, powerful Cabernet for a song.

Napa Cab \$30–\$50

2016 Amici Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$39.99) We have super sharp pricing on this new release from our friends at Amici Cellars! **94 Tasting Panel, 93 JD, 93 JS**



2016 Forman “Château la Grande Roche” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$39.95)

Second label of Napa legend Ric Forman. Made with the same attention as Forman Cabernet, with fruit from the same estate vineyard, but for less than half the price of the premier label. Old-school, structured Cab.

2015 Inglenook “1882” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$44.95) All estate fruit from Rutherford—declassified Rubicon, basically!

2016 Turnbull Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$44.95) A popular staff pick here. Turnbull make some of the finest Cab in the valley. This Napa Valley bottling remains a relative steal in this day and age. **92 JS**

2015 Ehlers Estate St. Helena Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.95) From a historic, biodynamic estate with beautiful property in St. Helena. **93 RP, 93 WS**



2015 Tether Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.95)

Made by Anna Monticelli, a rising star in Napa who, I think, is making some of the most distinguished Cabs in the valley. **93 JD, 92 RP**

2015 White Rock Napa Valley Claret (\$49.99) Elegant, classically styled wine from this under-the-radar estate that was ravaged by recent wildfires but continues to produce very classy wines. **94 VN**

2015 Gamble Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.95) Blockbuster Cab packed with dark, smoky fruit and cocoa nib. **94 VN, 92 WS**

2015 RAMA Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.95) A stunning release from winemaker Mario Bazán. Pure, refined Cabernet. Quite Margaux-like with its lifted aromatics and silky tannin structure.



Napa Cab \$50–\$100

Featured Wine:

2015 Oakville Winery “Estate” Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.95) Sleeper alert!

From a vineyard right next door to Opus One and directly across the street from Beckstoffer To Kalon, estate grown (certified organic), and produced and bottled by...for under \$50?

2016 Teeter-Totter (Fait-Main) Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.95)

A whimsical label for a very serious wine! Made by Benoit Touquette (Realm, Kata, Fait-Main, ex-Screaming Eagle), one of the stars of Napa right now. **95 JD**



2016 Chappellet “Signature” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$64.95)

Always punching *well above* its weight, the 2016 Signature from Chappellet is probably pound-for-pound the best value in all of Napa Cab. **96 JD, 96 RP**



2016 O’Shaughnessy Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$74.95)

One of the more complex, layered wines in this price point and always possessing that mountain fruit power. **95 JD, 94+ RP, 94 VN**



2015 Kobalt Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$84.95)

Made by cult winemaker Mark Herold. **96 JD, 95 RP**

2016 Shafer “One Point Five” Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.95)

A new double 95-point release from Shafer and still keeping this wine of pedigree under \$90. **95 RP, 95 JS, 93 VN**

2016 Familiar Air Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.95)

One of the more impressive wines I’ve tasted so far in 2019. Again, made by Benoit Touquette (Realm, etc.). Very polished, aromatic, sexy Cab. **96 JD**

2015 Mt. Brave Mt. Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99) Lokoya’s little brother. Intense violets, cassis, and black currant. **96 RP, 94 WS, 94 VN**

2016 Amici Cellars “Reserve” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$79.99)

Fruit from three Beckstoffer vineyards (Georges III, Missouri Hopper, Bourn) plus a dash of Kenefick Ranch (next door to Eisele) make up this wine. To be honest, it embarrasses the competition at this price point. **96 JD, 94 RP, 94 JS, 93 VN**



2007 Spring Mountain Vineyard Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99)

Old-school mountain Cab with over a decade maturing in bottle. This is steak wine. **94 WE&S**

2015 Corison Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$94.95)

Cathy Corison is still showing just about everybody in Napa how it’s done when it comes to elegantly styled but very ageworthy Cabernet. The 2015 is dreamy. Just try and cellar it for a while—you’ll be pleased you did. **97 WE, 94 WS, 93 JS, 93 WE&S**



Napa Cab \$100-plus

2015 Forman Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$114.95) Put this in the cellar for 10–15 years and forget about it. As Galloni writes: “One of the classiest wines of the vintage.” **96 VN**

2015 Larkmead Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$119.95)

I think Dan Petroski is one of the most talented winemakers in the country and his 2015 Larkmead wines rival anything I’ve tasted from the vintage. **97 WE, 95 JD**



2014 Mayacamas Mt. Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon (\$124.95) A “new” release from Mayacamas and a wine that never fails to impress. Classic Veeder. **97 JS, 96 JD, 96 VN, 95 WS**



2014 Dunn Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$129.95) Brawny, dark fruited, graphite-infused Dunn Howell at its very best. **96 DC, 96 VN, 95 RP**

2015 Beringer “Private Reserve” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$149.95)

Meticulously crafted from seven vineyard sites across the valley. The backbone (68%) being from Steinhauer Ranch on Howell Mountain, complemented by lots from Spring Mountain and St. Helena. A real wine of pedigree. **99 JS, 97 JD, 95+ RP**



2015 Larkmead “Dr. Olmo” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$159.95) In the top three wines of the vintage for me. Very classy stuff. Flawless. **97 JS, 97 VN, 96 JD, 95 WE**



2015 Pahlmeyer Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$179.95) Full-throttle, rich, lush, exotic, powerful Cabernet. **97 JS, 95-97 RP**

2015 Chappellet “Pritchard Hill Estate” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$235.95)

If you can afford it, buy this. Stupendous wine that is simply unique and utterly compelling. **100 JD, 97 RP, 96 JS, 96 VN**





Beautiful deal: We can offer Martin Ray Winery's appellation Pinot for a song.

Pinot Noir

The fickle beauty that is Pinot Noir! This grape continues to chase down Cabernet for the red grape crown. The category grows from strength to strength, and despite the varietal's notoriously difficult nature, it seems many folks are really dialing in their Pinot programs. Overall quality is up across the board, and the top wines are nothing short of divine. While truly inexpensive Pinot Noir worth drinking is still somewhat scarce, as with Cabernet, I think the middle of the pack offers the greatest bang for your buck. Many of the wines in the \$29.95 to \$49.95 zone offer spectacular drinking, rivaling many of the more expensive wines on flavor alone. Here's a cross-section of our current selections:

Pinot Under \$20

2016 The Crusher California Pinot Noir (\$9.99) Crushable (ha ha!) Pinot Noir in the sub-\$10 price point! I was shocked by this wine, as were many colleagues. **91 WE**

2017 The Pinot Project California Pinot Noir (\$11.95) Another top-notch entry-level Pinot with lovely purity and balance. **91 JS, 90 WE**

2016 Martin Ray Sonoma County Pinot Noir (\$14.95) I'm not sure how they made such a dynamite Pinot for this price point, but I'm certainly not complaining! **94 JS**

2015 J. Wilkes Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.95) Made by longtime K&L favorite winemaker Wes Hagen (formerly of Clos Pepe), the J. Wilkes wines hugely over-deliver on value for money.



Pinot \$20–\$50

2016 Eric Kent "Appellation Series" Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$22.99) A new inexpensive Pinot Noir from EK. All the class and refinement you'd expect from this house but at an economical price point.

2016 Gainey Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$24.95) Juicy, crunchy, berry-fruited Pinot Noir from Sta Rita. Classy stuff with great freshness and vivacity. **93 WE, 92 VN**

2017 Drew "Mid-Elevation" Mendocino Ridge Pinot Noir (\$29.95) Delicious Pinot Noir—the drinkability factor is through the roof here.

2015 Talley "Estate" Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir (\$29.95) Talley are pretty much in a class of their own in this region. Consistently the best Pinot and Chardonnay from the Central Coast. **93 VN**



2016 Hanzell "Sebella" Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$29.95) From top sites across the region. Very polished, elegant Pinot Noir with lovely varietal typicity.

2016 Sandhi Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$29.95) This wine is essentially declassified Domaine de la Côte—i.e., estate-grown, biodynamic, close-planted Pinot Noir from some of the most incredible sites in Santa Barbara. **93 VN**

2016 Piro Wine Company "Points West" Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (\$29.99) Marc Piro works in the cellar at Qupé and Au Bon Climat and makes tiny amounts of wine under his own label. Vinous recently wrote about Piro, calling him "one of California's most promising young winemakers." We agree! **93 WE, 92 VN**



2016 Anthill Farms Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$37.95)

Very expressive, open, supple Pinot. Unfined, unfiltered. From very coastal sites. **92 VN**

**2016 Capiaux “Widdoes Vineyard” Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$39.95)**

Old vine (planted in 1984) dry-farmed Pinot Noir. Farmed by DuMol. Deep and brooding. **93+ VN**

2016 El Lugar “Hilliard Bruce Vineyard” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$39.99) Suave, sophisticated, brilliant Pinot Noir from boutique producer El Lugar. A staff favorite here at K&L.

2014 Varner “Three Blocks – Spring Ridge Vineyard” Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir (\$44.95) A lovely expression of this vineyard and sadly the last time we’ll see this wine from Varner. **94 VN, 93 RP, 93 JD**

2015 Deovlet “Sanford & Benedict Vineyard” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$39.95) A visit this year with Ryan Deovlet left many of our staff astonished by just how good this under-the-radar winemaker is. Every single wine in his lineup impressed. This old vine, Sanford & Benedict Pinot was a highlight! **93 RP, 93 VN**

**2016 Anthill Farms “Campbell Ranch” Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$49.95)**

From the very remote, coastal village of Annapolis. Right on the fog line. Very cool site. Haunting aromatics. **93+ VN**

Pinot \$50–\$100

2016 Talley “Rosemary’s Vineyard” Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir (\$59.95) World-class Pinot from Talley. **96 JD, 95 VN**



2016 Talley “Rincon Vineyard” Arroyo Grande Valley Pinot Noir (\$59.95) More world-class Pinot from Talley. **95 VN, 95 JD, 94 WE**

2015 Mount Eden “Estate” Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir (\$59.95) A phenomenal, if tiny, release from Mount Eden, whose yields were decimated by continued drought and poor flowering in 2015. Nonetheless the wine they did produce is magnificent! **96 JD, 96 WE, 94 VN**



2015 Cobb “Rice-Spivak” Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (\$64.95) Ross Cobb’s new Rice-Spivak release is the best yet. Elegant, bright, spicy, silky texture. **95 VN**



Chardonnay

Is Chardonnay becoming cool again? I hope so! Those who subscribe to the ABC (Anything But Chardonnay) movement are really missing out on what I perceive to be a golden era for Chard. Some folks pushed this impressionable grape too far on the oaky, buttery side of the spectrum, and then the pendulum swung back (a little too far, in my opinion) to the super lean, high acid, no malo way of thinking. But right now, so many producers are getting it right on the money with styles that are flavorful, textural and rich, but also have great acidity, moderated, subtle oak influence, and great overall balance. Here’s a few to consider:

Chard Under \$20

2016 Foxglove Central Coast Chardonnay (\$14.95) The best value in CA Chard. Period. Don’t believe me? Ask Vinous’ Galloni: “Quite simply, this is one of the best values in California Chardonnay.” Or Wine Advocate’s Kelly: “It’s hard to think of a better Chardonnay for the money.” **90-91 VN, 90 RP**



2017 Bishop’s Peak San Luis Obispo County Chardonnay (\$14.99) Talley Vineyards’ entry-level range, Bishop’s Peak, delivers serious value for money. Eric is clearly one of the most talented young winemakers in California. **91 VN, 90 WE**

2017 Brea Santa Lucia Highlands Chardonnay (\$15.95) “Cool kid Chard” for \$16? What looks like a run-of-the-mill SLH Chard on the surface is actually from 40-year-old, biodynamically farmed vines and made essentially as a natural wine. **91 WE**

Chard \$20–\$30

2016 Talley “Estate” Arroyo Grande Chardonnay (\$24.95) My “house” Chard. Consistently one of the best values for money in all of Chardonnay. Can be drunk young but also ages beautifully. **92 VN**



2016 Neyers Carneros Chardonnay (\$24.95) A perfectly proportioned Carneros Chardonnay that consistently over-delivers in price.

2017 Hanzell “Sebella” Sonoma Valley Chardonnay (\$29.95) A huge staff favorite, Sebella is largely made up of younger vine Chardonnay from Hanzell’s historic Sonoma estate. Raised in all neutral oak and stainless. The antithesis of the stereotypical “oaky, buttery” Chard—a crisp, refreshing summer sipper.



2016 Thomas Fogarty “Estate” Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay (\$29.95) Nate Kandler at Fogarty is on a roll, making some of the appellation’s finest wines. This estate Chard is the perfect intro to his stuff, combining weight and concentration with pinpoint acidity and tension. **93 JD, 91 RP**

2016 Deovlet Santa Barbara County Chardonnay (\$21.99) A racy, focused, powerful wine from two of the best vineyards in the region (Zotovich and Sanford & Benedict). Lovely flinty, mineral, mouthwatering style. **94 W&S**

2017 Diatom “Katherine’s” Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay (\$29.95) Tiny production wine from Greg Brewer, sourced entirely from old vine fruit. **94 JD, 94 VN**

Chard \$30–\$50

2016 Au Bon Climat “Sanford & Benedict Vineyard” Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$34.95) Reminds me of fine Meursault. Subtle flint, matchstick aromas are met with stone fruit, hazelnut and baked bread. The 23rd edition of this wine! **95 VN**



2016 Failla Sonoma Coast Chardonnay (\$34.99) A mainstay in Sonoma Coast Chardonnay. Ehren’s style combines lush, ripe fruit with vibrant acidity and freshness. A perfect crowd pleaser. **92 JD**

2016 Talley “Rincon Vineyard” Arroyo Grande Valley Chardonnay (\$39.95) The old vines at Rincon are famed for producing intense, concentrated, and long-lived Chards. **95 VN, 94 WE**

2016 Talley “Oliver’s Vineyard” Edna Valley Chardonnay (\$39.99) Oliver’s combines lovely bright, ripe fruit with mouthwatering salinity and nutty oak. The complete package. **94 VN, 94 WE**

2016 Auteur “Green Acres Vineyard” Carneros Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$49.95) A recent tasting at Auteur left me seriously impressed. This wine was a highlight. Powerful, old vine Chardonnay from Wente selection at Sangiacomo’s original 1969 planting! This can mix it up with Grand Cru Burgundy. **96 JD, 95 RP**



2016 Mayacamas Mt. Veeder Chardonnay (\$49.95) New vintage, same delicious expression of mountain Chard. A staple for many decades. **95 WE, 94 VN**

2016 Calera Mt. Harlan Chardonnay (\$49.95) A singular wine. A complex and mineral-driven expression of Calera’s unique terroir or granite and limestone. A perennial favorite.

2014 Hanzell “Estate” Sonoma Valley Chardonnay (\$49.95) A supremely elegant, refined expression of the varietal from some of the oldest Chardonnay in the state.

Chard \$50-plus

2016 DuMol “Wester Reach” Russian River Valley Chardonnay (\$54.95) A new proprietary name, a more stringent fruit selection, same DuMol deliciousness. **95 RP, 94 JS, 93 JD**

2015 Argot “Sympatico” Bennett Valley Chardonnay (\$59.95) A fascinating wine, packed with stony minerals, greengage plum, crunchy pear. Wisps of smoky flint, citrus oil and fennel. **95 RP**



2015 Mount Eden “Estate” Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay (\$59.95) I think this is one of the absolute benchmarks for Santa Cruz Mountain Chardonnay. Pronounced minerality and phenolic density. **95 JD, 93 WE**

2016 Wayfarer “Wayfarer Vineyard” Fort Ross-Seaview Chardonnay (\$79.95) Rich, decadent Chard with baked orchard fruit, peach cobbler and brioche. Vibrant acidity gives fine line and length. Impressive scores for an impressive bottle. **98 JD, 97 RP**



2013 Rhys “Horseshoe Vineyard” Santa Cruz Mountains Chardonnay (\$99.99) Broad and expansive Chard. Lovely weight on the palate with soft yet persuasive acidity. Drinking beautifully with a few years in bottle. **94+ RP, 93 VN**



Chardonnay ripens in the sun, destined for another delicious bottle from DuMol.



The rugged beauty of old vines. These are farmed by Sonoma County Zinfandel specialists, Seghesio.

Zinfandel

Zinfandel is something I consider to be inherently Californian and very special to the vinous history of our state. The old vine Zins and field blends of centuries gone by represent some of the most unique and interesting wines on our shelves. Good Zin also just flat-out tastes good, and drinkability is high on my list of importance when it comes to wine. Here are some to check out when you're firing up the grill this summer:

Zin Under \$20

2016 Arzezin "Old Vine" Mendocino County Zinfandel (\$11.95) A truly stunning value in authentic old vine Zin. Wow! **93 WE**

2017 Cline "Ancient Vines" Contra Costa County Zinfandel (\$13.95) Primarily from 100-plus-year-old vines in the deep, sandy soils of Contra Costa.

2017 Sobon Estate "Rocky Top" Amador County Zinfandel (\$14.95) "House Zin" here at K&L! This wine never disappoints.

2016 Ancient Peaks Paso Robles Zinfandel (\$15.95) More elegantly styled than many Paso Zins. This comes from the cooler Santa Margarita AVA with tempering ocean breezes and pure calcareous soils. **90 JD, 90 RP**

2014 Hendry "HRW" Napa Valley Zinfandel (\$17.99) All estate, neutral oak, a very easy-drinking, balanced Zin without sweet jamminess.

2016 Seghesio Sonoma County Zinfandel (\$19.95) Year in, year out, one of the best value-for-money wines in CA. Bright, high-toned, pure-fruited Zin of pedigree. **93 WS**



2017 Valravn "Old Vine" Sonoma County Zinfandel (\$19.95) Always an explosive wine and a top contender for value on money front. Vines dating back to 105 years of age!

2015 Renwood Fiddletown Zinfandel (\$19.95) In a room full of hundreds of Zinfandels at ZAP 2018, this wine was a true standout. Silky texture, delicious purity of fruit.

Zin \$20–\$50

2017 Bedrock Wine Company "Old Vine" California Zinfandel (\$23.95) Probably my most commonly recommended bottle of Zinfandel. This wine tells the story of old vine California Zin like few others can. Sourced from some of the very best old vineyards across the state with an average vine age of 85 years. **93 WS**

2016 Day (Failla) Sonoma County Zinfandel (\$26.95) A new project from Ehren Jordan. Since he made the Turley



wines for a while there isn't much he doesn't know about Zin. A lush, silky, pure-fruited style. Perfect with baby back ribs. **92 JD**

2015 Mike and Molly Hendry "R.W. Moore Vineyard" Napa Valley Zinfandel (\$36.99) An amazing wine from the only block of Zin in Napa's cooler AVA of Coombsville. Planted in 1905. Brambly, spicy fruit. **93 WE**

2016 Limerick Lane "Estate" Russian River Valley Zinfandel (\$39.95) It seems these guys can do no wrong when it comes to delicious Zin. **95 JD, 95 VN**

2016 Carlisle "Piner-Olivet Ranches" Russian River Valley Zinfandel (\$39.95) A cool bottling from Mike at Carlisle, the "Piner-Olivet Ranches" designation basically combines some of his favorite single vineyard big guns into a sub-regional blend showcasing this magical part of the Russian River and its historic Zin plantings. **91-94 VN, 93 RP, 93 WS, 93 JD**



Syrah

Oh, Syrah—are you the “next big thing?” Or is your fame confined to those who know and love you already? Either way, here are some seriously good ones to check out, whether you’re just curious—or already smitten:

2017 Piedrasassi “PS” Santa Barbara County Syrah (\$21.95) Sashi is a legend in these parts and his “entry level” wine is as good as most folks’ top bottlings. Wild fermentation, 500-liter neutral oak. Lovely restraint, pure varietal expression.

2017 Tensley Santa Barbara County Syrah (\$23.95) A stunning release from Tensley. Lashings of black fruit, spice, scorched earth. A nice freshness and focus give the wine lovely energy and drive. **93 JD, 93 WS**

2017 Bedrock Wine Company “Coast to Foothills” California Syrah (\$24.95) A new bottling from Bedrock combining some of the finest Syrah vineyards in California: Hudson, Griffin’s Lair, Alder Springs, Shake Ridge Ranch. At \$25! For real? **94 JD, 93 WS**



2015 Nelle Wines Central Coast Syrah (\$29.95) A powerful, blockbuster style with intense deep fruit, scorched earth and dried herbs. Unbelievable value given the quality. **94 RP, 92 WE, 91 VN**



2016 Halcón “Alturas” Yorkville Highlands Syrah (\$29.99) California’s answer to Hermitage. **93-95 JD, 94 RP, 93 WE**

2014 Stolpman “Hecho Por Ruben” Ballard Canyon Syrah (\$29.99) Stunning bottling from Stolpman paying homage to Santa Barbara’s head vine whisperer, Ruben Solorzano. **93 RP, 94 WE**



2015 Marietta “Gibson Block” McDowell Valley Mendocino Syrah (\$32.95) Perhaps the oldest block of Syrah in California, interplanted with some Grenache. A powerful, inky, brooding Syrah. **93 JD**

2017 Pax “Sonoma-Hillsides” Sonoma County Syrah (\$47.95) This wine picked up a perfect 100 points from Vinous last vintage. This one is equally compelling. A savory, reductive, gamy rendition of the grape. 100% whole bunch in concrete.



2014 Ramey “Rodger’s Creek Vineyard” Sonoma Coast Syrah (\$59.95) **96 JD:** “Reminds me of a good vintage of the Côte Rôtie La Mouline from Guigal.” **93 DC, 93 RP, 93 VN**



2014 Argot “Estate” Sonoma Mountain Syrah (\$69.95) Justin’s wines somehow manage to capture bold, rich, exuberant fruit but without losing the more complex

savory, elements that make Syrah so fascinating—cracked peppercorns, char-grilled meat, dried herbs. Delicious. **97 JD, 93 RP**



2015 Shafer “Relentless” Napa Valley Syrah (\$94.95) One of the most iconic and sought-after Syrahs in Napa Valley, this bottling never disappoints. **95+ RP, 94 WE, 93 VN**



2015 Jonata “La Sangre de Jonata” Santa Ynez Valley Syrah (\$149.99) Jonata’s wines are absolutely mind-blowing. The attention to detail in farming and winemaking is beyond meticulous. The wines also age extremely well. **100 JD, 96 VN, 95+ RP**

Grenache

(Yes It Gets Its Own Section)

My obsession with California Grenache continues. I just can’t help thinking these wines deserve more attention than they get—though I have recently seen some great articles focused on Grenache, which gives me (and the folks behind these wines) hope!

2017 Birichino “Besson Vineyard” Old Vine Central Coast Grenache (\$22.95) From 100-year-old, organically farmed vines at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains. As with all of Birichino’s wines the value is almost unfathomable. **92 W&S**

2015 Mathis Sonoma Valley Grenache (\$24.95) A tiny hand-tended vineyard on the slopes of Sonoma Mountain produces this stellar Grenache coaxed into the bottle by Peter Mathis, who learned his trade, and learned it well, during decades at Ravenswood.



2014 Site Wines “Larner Vineyard” Grenache Ballard Canyon Santa Barbara (\$39.95) Biodynamically farmed vines growing in pure sand. A lavish, exotic take on the varietal executed perfectly by winemaker Jeremy Weintraub (Adelaida). **95 RP, 93 WE**



2016 I. Brand & Family “Brosseau Vineyard” Chalone Grenache (\$42.95) Elegant, floral, seductive, Grenache from the highly sought-after Brosseau Vineyard in Chalone. Organically farmed vines grow in very rocky granite and limestone soils.

Red Blends

I agonize about lumping these “red blends” together like this. Many have long traditions as blending partners (Rhône styles, Bordeaux styles, ancient field blends) and others are just kitchen sink blends put together for no other reason than the fact that they taste good! But hey, I guess what they all have in common is that blending often means the whole turns out to be greater than the sum of its parts.

2016 Le P'tit Paysan “Le P'tit Pape” San Benito County Rhone Blend (\$19.95) Killer value from this Châteauneuf-du-Pape look-alike. Combining fruit and earthiness perfectly. **93 WE**



2016 Margerum “M5” Santa Barbara County Rhône Blend (\$19.95) A seamless, pure rendition of this classic blend and a simply stunning value. One of my favorite bang-for-the-buck wines of 2018. **93 VN, 92 JD**

2016 Tablas Creek “Patelin de Tablas” Paso Robles Rhône Blend (\$19.95) A California Côtes du Rhône, perfectly executed. Incredibly versatile food wine. **91 VN, 91 WE**



2017 Brander “F/Red” Santa Ynez Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$19.95) I love the Brander wines across the board and the F/Red is a perfect intro to their classically styled, Bordeaux-inspired wines. Killer value.

2016 Angels & Cowboys Sonoma County Red Blend (\$19.95) A great pick for an all-around crowd-pleaser. This red blend checks all the boxes and has become a real staff and customer go-to. **96 DC**

2017 Birichino “Scylla” Old Vine California Red Blend (\$19.95) Despite this being the inaugural release of Scylla, the average vine age is 99. Carignane, Grenache, and Mourvèdre. As the guys at Birichino put it so stylishly, this wine is “all Scylla, no fylla.”



2016 Y. Rousseau “Son Of a Butcher” California Red Blend (\$19.99) I love Yannick’s wines. This is his entry-level red combining his native Tannat with Cabernet and Merlot. It’s hearty and delicious.

2015 Calluna “Cuvée CVC” Chalk Hill Bordeaux Blend (\$29.95) Inspired by Bordeaux, this aromatic, elegant, balanced style is truly impressive. **93 JG, 91 RP**

2017 Bedrock Wine Company “Evangelho Vineyard” Contra Costa County Red Blend (\$34.95) One of the most incredible old vine vineyards in all of California. **94 WS**



2014 Site Wines “Larner Vineyard” Red Blend Ballard Canyon Santa Barbara (\$39.95) A torrent of brambly, exotic fruit, scorched earth, garrigue notes and rubbing spices. A show-stopping wine from Jeremy Weintraub. **94 RP, 94 WE**

2015 Aaron Wines “Citizen” Paso Robles Red Blend (\$39.95) A powerful blend of Syrah and Petite Sirah that is not for the faint of heart! Aaron Jackson is an up-and-coming star in Paso Robles. Don’t miss his wines. **95 JD, 95 VN**

2016 Arietta “Quartet” Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$59.95) From a small vineyard planted by David Abreu in the cool sub-region of Coombsville. This producer goes from strength to strength. **94 RP, 93 JD, 92 JS, 92 VN**



Aromatic Whites

Aromatic whites have a special place in my heart. I just love drinking fresh, bright, crisp white wines for their refreshment factor. After a long day of tasting and assessing wines at work (often lots of big reds) there’s nothing better than a glass of Sauv Blanc or Riesling to cleanse the palate (besides maybe a Jever). Beyond just simple refreshment and drinkability, I love how white wines can encapsulate so much flavor, texture and minerality into a beverage that looks essentially pretty close to a glass of water. With an inky, opaque, full bodied red, you kind of expect it to have lots of flavor and structure. But when a white wine delivers the same elements, it amazes me just that much more. Here are a few favorites to check out:

2018 Viña Robles “Jardine Vineyard” Paso Robles Sauvignon Blanc (\$14.95) I have always enjoyed Viña Robles’ Sauv Blanc and the new 2018 is no exception. Lip smackingly delicious.

2017 Giornata “Il Campo Bianco” Paso Robles White Blend (\$18.95) A delicious quaffer made from Pinot Grigio and Falanghina. Super aromatic and vibrant.

2017 Brander Los Olivos District Sauvignon Blanc (\$15.99) Classy Sauv Blanc from this longtime stalwart.



2017 Voss Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$18.95) Highly perfumed, passionfruit, citrus blossom. Juicy, refreshing and ultimately quaffable.

2017 Lieu Dit Santa Ynez Valley Chenin Blanc (\$19.95) Lieu Dit is a project that is dedicated to Loire Valley varietals. Their Chenin is top-notch and very inexpensive. **93 VN**



(Continued on page 12)



Pretty as a picture: Oregon producers like Arterberry Maresh make wines with artistry.

Oregon

Last year I had the pleasure of attending Oregon Pinot Camp (OPC). This is a three-day wine industry event in the northern Willamette Valley, when around 500 “campers” come from all across the globe to celebrate Oregon’s significant contribution to the world of Pinot Noir. The event is simply incredible. I had spoken with several folks who attended in prior years and who raved about the experience, yet I was still overwhelmed by just how good the trip was. The wine, the food, the landscapes, the people—everything exceeded my already high expectations. I must have tasted 500-plus wines in those three days and I don’t remember a single one that I would have categorized as “bad.” Sure, I enjoyed some more than others, but the overall level of quality and consistency was spectacular. The region has also experienced a killer run of vintages: 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017 have all produced top-notch wines. Any conversation about Oregon wine is likely to center around Pinot Noir, and rightly so. However, I was also flabbergasted by the quality of Chardonnay being produced up there. In fact, although my extensive tasting led me to believe the average Pinot Noir being produced in the region surpassed the average Chardonnay in quality, I thought the very finest Chardonnays surpassed the very finest Pinot Noirs. I think we’ll see Willamette Chardonnay take more of a position in the global conversation about world-class Chard alongside Burgundy and some of the more elegant California styles. Here are a few wines I’d love to highlight:

Oregon Pinot Noir

2017 Broadley Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$16.99) Exceptional value from a site in the southern Willamette. Broadley is on a roll right now. **92 WE**

2017 Averaen Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.95) Longtime staff fave. The Averaen label is now spun off from the Banshee line. This is made by Adam Smith, whose winemaking resume includes: Shea Cellars, Domaine Serene, Bethel Heights and Domaine Nicolas-Jay (the Oregon project of super star Burgundian producer Dom. Meo-Camuzet). **91 VN**



2016 Trisaetum Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.95) We continue to have super sharp pricing on this consistent stalwart. **91 WS**

2016 La Crema Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$24.95) Maybe La Crema isn’t the first brand you’d look to for classy OR PN? But dig a little deeper. La Crema is under the Kendall-Jackson family that have bought some of the very best vineyards and wineries in Oregon and recruited some of the best winemakers. There is killer juice in this bottle and it has the points to prove it. **93 WS, 91+ RP, 91 WE**



2017 Arterberry Maresh Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$26.99) Dusty red fruit, freshly turned earth. A more restrained style than many from the deep Jory soils of Dundee Hills, but one we love here at K&L.

2016 Gran Moraine Yamhill Carlton Pinot Noir (\$34.95) Another Kendall-Jackson property making amazing wines. **95 JS**

2014 Cristom “Estate” Eola-Amity Hills Pinot Noir (\$39.95) Elsewhere \$50. Again—super sharp pricing on a perennial go-to here at K&L. Cristom are Willamette royalty when it comes to Pinot Noir. **95 VN, 93 WS, 93 W&S**



2014 Brittan Vineyards “Basalt Block”**Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$39.95)**

Elsewhere \$50. Absolutely delicious wine from a fascinating site with volcanic soils.

94 JS, 93 RP, 92 VN, 92 WS

2017 Antiquum Farm “Passiflora”**Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$59.95)**

Antiquum Farm is a holistically farmed, organic, biodynamic property. Farmed by hand and horse. These wines are compelling and not to be missed.

2016 Nicolas-Jay Willamette Valley Pinot**Noir (\$59.95)**

One of my favorite wines from OPC. Rock star Pinot (pun intended) from Nicolas-Jay. 94 WS

2016 Cristom “Jessie Vineyard” Eola-Amity**Hills Pinot Noir (\$59.95)**

I could have picked any of the single block wines from Cristom for inclusion. As per usual they are up there with the very best wines in the region.

95+ RP, 94 JS

Oregon Chardonnay**2016 Sokol Blosser Dundee Hills****Chardonnay (\$19.95)**

Elsewhere \$30. One-time pricing on a very Chablis-inspired Chard from a founding family winery, established in 1971. 93 JS, 91 W&S

2016 St. Innocent “Freedom Vineyard”**Willamette Valley Chardonnay (\$24.95)**

If you like Meursault check this out. Powerful, flinty, nutty, leesy Chard with so much flavor intensity, and drive. Amazing value.

2016 Lingua Franca “AVNI” Willamette**Valley Chardonnay (\$34.95)**

One of the more complex, layered Chards from Burgundy legend Dominique Lafon and winemaker Thomas Savre. 93 WS, 92 WE

2015 Brittan Willamette Valley Chardonnay**(\$39.95)**

This is a perfect example of the potential of Oregon Chard. This wine is as pure and compelling an expression of the varietal as you’ll find anywhere at any price.

94 JS, 93 WE, 92 RP, 91 VN

2015 Lavinea “Lazy River Vineyard” Yamhill-Carlton**Chardonnay (\$39.99)**

Snappy, racy, mineral-driven Chard. Winemaker Isabelle Meunier trained under fellow French Canadian Pascal Marchand of Domaine de la Vougeraie in Burgundy. She was then recommended by Pascal to Dominique Lafon when he was establishing Evening Land. So basically she trained under two of the best Pinot/Chard producers on the planet. 97 WE, 93 VN

**2016 Bethel Heights Estate “Casteel” Eola-Amity Hills Chardonnay (\$69.99)**

If this wine doesn’t knock your socks off then I don’t know what will. After tasting this wine at OPC I immediately texted our distributor back in CA to lock some down. Truly world-class Chard by any measure. Mostly old Wente clone planted in 1977. 96 JS, 95 RP

Washington

The quality of Washington wines is pretty hard to miss. From the inexpensive red blends to the upper-echelon Cabs and Syrahs, there is something to look for across the board. I think Washington is excelling in more traditionally styled Bordeaux blends. Cabernet Sauvignon is often the driver. But, a great deal of time and attention is also given to Merlot and Cabernet Franc, which I believe leads to some beautifully balanced, layered wines that can be more complete than straight varietal Cab Sauv. A run of very good (if not pretty hot and dry) vintages in the Columbia Valley region has given rise to some powerful, slightly more modern styles that provide a perfect bridge between the blockbuster styles that generally persist in Napa and the more savory, earthy styles of Bordeaux. Here are some wines that I think warrant your attention:

NV Horseshoes & Handgrenades**Red Blend (\$19.95)**

A bold, powerful, red blend that packs a lot of punch into a very well priced bottle. The metaphorical bang for the buck here is exceptional. The wine actually blends Oregon Syrah with Washington Red Mountain Cab.

**2016 Requiem Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**

(\$19.95) A total sleeper wine that over-delivers massively. Made by the folks at Averaen, this \$20 Cab contains fruit from some of the most highly sought-after vineyards in Washington: Champoux (planted in 1972), SeVein (planted circa 1980 in Walla Walla), and Loess Vineyard (of Leonetti!).

2017 Andrew Rich “Rich Table” Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99)

Wow! This is very serious wine with incredible purity of fruit for a song!

2016 Seven Hills Walla Walla Valley Merlot (\$19.99)

Merlot is having a renaissance and this is a great example of how good and inexpensive Walla Walla Merlot can be.

**2015 Avennia “Gravura” Columbia Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$29.95)**

Elsewhere \$40. Incredible pricing on this Graves-inspired red blend with aromatic blue fruits, cedar and stony minerals. 93 JS, 93 JD, 92 RP

2015 Avennia “Valery” Columbia Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$39.99)

Elsewhere \$50. This is a wine that competes toe-to-toe with the finest from its namesake region. Valery, the patron saint of St-Emilion, is a delicious wine showcasing truly world-class Merlot and Cab Franc. 93 RP, 92 JD, 92 VN, 92 WE

2013 Andrew Will “Sorella” Horse Heaven Hills Red Blend (\$49.99)

Elsewhere \$80. We still have the best price in the country on this formidable wine by \$10! 95 W&S, 94 RP, 94 JS, 93 VN

2015 Quilceda Creek Columbia Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

(\$189.99) A powerhouse Cab from one of the state’s marquee producers. 99 JD, 96 RP, 96 WE





DeLILLE CELLARS

Featured Producer: DeLille

I just love the wines of DeLille. They have long been my favorite all-around Washington producer, and I just wanted to conclude with a little feature on their wines that have become staples for me:

2015 DeLille “Chaleur Blanc” Columbia Valley White Bordeaux Blend (\$29.95)

A simply stunning white Bordeaux-inspired wine that truly reminds me of Smith Haut Lafitte Blanc (which is the winemaker’s intent, so bravo). Blend of Sauv Blanc and Sémillon, barrel fermented. **93 VN, 91 RP**

2015 DeLille “D2” Columbia Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$39.95)

A painstakingly crafted wine including over 60

individual lots. Inspired by the great wines of the Right Bank in Bordeaux (Pomerol, St-Emilion.) This is packed with briery, leafy, brambly fruit, cigar box, graphite and earth.

2015 DeLille “Four Flags” Red Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.95)

A pure expression of Cabernet from four of the finest vineyards on Red Mountain. Big, bold, structured and immensely ageworthy.

94 RP, 94 JD, 94 W&S, 93+ VN

2013 DeLille “Grand Ciel Vineyard” Red Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$139.95)

Reminds me of top Pauillac. Black and blue fruits, cedar, pencil shavings, graphite. Fine but notable tannins. Juicy acidity and incredible length. Top-notch Cabernet. **95 RP, 95 JS, 94 VN**



2017 Desparada “Fragment” Santa Barbara County Sauvignon Blanc (\$24.99) One of my favorite Domestic Sauv Blancs. From two great vineyards—McGinley and Presqu’île—and aged in a variety of vessels including amphorae and acacia wood barrels.



2016 Ladera Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$27.99)

Longtime favorite from Napa. Pungent varietal typicity, lovely use of subtle oak. Textured and long. **94 DC**

2014 Site Wines “Stolpman Vineyard” Santa Barbara County Roussanne (\$29.95)

Full bodied but lively and with great cut on the palate. This captures the unique texture of Rhône whites but without becoming oily or too heavy. **94 RP, 93 WE**

2017 Aequeorea “Spanish Springs Vineyard” San Luis Obispo County Viognier (\$29.95)

Racy, mineral, mouthwatering Viognier from a fascinating vineyard just two miles from Pismo Beach. **93 VN**



Aromatic Whites

(Continued from page 9)

2017 Cliff Lede Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$19.95)

One of the more interesting Sauv Blancs from Napa. This has Sauvignon Musqué, Sémillon, and Sauvignon Vert in the blend. Fermented in a combination of steel, oak, and concrete egg.

2016 Ferdinand California Albariño (\$19.95)

From Vista Luna vineyard in Lodi, farmed by Marcus Bokisch. Wild fermented in neutral

oak; no malo; 8 months on lees to build texture. Winemaker Evan Frazier’s day job is GM at Kongsgaard.

2017 Bedrock “Wirz Vineyard” Cienega Valley Riesling (\$24.95)

From old own-rooted, head-trained vines planted in 1963 in the remote Cienega Valley.



2017 Deovlet “La Encantada Vineyard” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Blanc (\$34.95)

Unicorn wine! A tiny production from a little-known block of Pinot Blanc at La Encantada!

2016 Lexington “Alma – Gist Ranch Vineyard” Santa Cruz Mountains Sauvignon Blanc-Semillon (\$44.95)

A white Bordeaux blend that stands toe-to-toe with the finest wines of Pessac-Léognan. **95 RP**

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