

# WINE News

Exploring California's  
Central Coast.



## SEPTEMBER 24, 2018 FEATURES

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 Top Staff Picks           | 5 Dark Horse of Sunny Catalina                            |
| 2 Cool Paso: Adelaida, Site | 6 Vinous Wonderland of Mr. Matt Dees: The Hilt and Jonata |
| 3 Aaron and Aequorea        |   |
| 4 SB Burgundian: Tyler      |   |

## There and Back Again: Our Trip to the Central Coast

By Ryan Woodhouse

Back in early August I took a small group of K&L staffers on a whirlwind tour of California's Central Coast. In three days we visited: Paso Robles, San Luis Obispo, Edna Valley, Santa Maria Valley, Sta. Rita Hills, Ballard Canyon and Chalone! We tasted (by my estimation) over 300 wines. What fills the following pages are the new finds, old favorites and everything in between that we are excited to share with you after our travels. I'd like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all the folks that came on the trip for: enduring my hectic, over-booked itinerary; eating multiple Clif bars and cookies in lieu of lunch when

we were running behind schedule; following the many rules at our tiny Airbnb in SLO; navigating (almost always) successfully; but mostly for your professionalism at all of our appointments and dedication to finding great wines. I'd also like to give a special mention to "Bruce" our trusty Dodge Caravan who was well and truly put through his paces on this trip. Bruce the "Dad Van" ate up many miles on Highway 101 and he got us safely (just) to the top of a rutted gravel road high above Chalone Vineyard in the Gabilan Mountains. Thanks, Brucey! But first, check out these top picks from myself and four other staffers on the trip:

### 2016 Levo "Right to Bear Flowxrs" Santa Barbara County Grenache

(\$39.95) This lavish, exuberant Grenache has tons of ripe fruit, soft texture and lifted, exotic spice. Explosively aromatic and rich but with lovely freshness and balance.

—Ryan Woodhouse



### 2015 Deovlet "Sanford & Benedict Vineyard" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir

(\$54.95) A gorgeous wine and my favorite of the trip. Incredibly aromatic and concentrated with plump blackberries, cherries and baking spices, and extraordinary depth and elegance from an amazing vineyard!

—Stephanie Vidales  
93 RP, 93 VN

### 2016 Dunites "Spanish Springs Vineyard" San Luis Obispo County Syrah

(\$24.99) Classically styled, cool-climate Syrah. Beautiful aromatics of dark rose petals, violets, bacon fat. Medium-bodied, but richly fruited, with balancing savory notes.

—Jim Boyce  
93 VN



### 2015 Ann Albert Wines "Zotovitch Vineyard" Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay

(\$39.99) Made by Eric, the winemaker at Talley Vineyards, but under his private label. I love this wine because of its stunning aromatics, mineral-driven, crisp style, excellent balance and poise. It represents the sandy soils and the coastal influence in the region.

—Heather Gowen

### 2015 Rusack "El Rancho Escondido" Santa Catalina Island Zinfandel

(\$65.95) Fresh and lively, this is full of peppery spice and bright red fruit. If you're a fan of lighter-bodied, complex and interesting reds, try this unique, intriguing wine to try. One of the most memorable wines of the trip.

—Morgan Laurie  
94 RP



Adelaida and Site winemaker Jeremy Weintraub.

## Cool Paso: Adelaida and Site

By Stephanie Vidales

**The first stop on this year's Central Coast trip was Adelaida Vineyards, one of the first ten wineries established in Paso Robles.**

The Adelaida District AVA is unique to this hot, dry area of California in that its main soil types are calcareous and limestone, and it has a much cooler mesoclimate than other Paso districts. This terroir allows Pinot Noir and Chardonnay to thrive, though they are rarely seen grown elsewhere in Paso Robles. Adelaida's wines really show a sense of place, which stood out to me as we were tasting with winemaker Jeremy Weintraub.

Adelaida owns a small handful of vineyards in the area, but Hoffman Mountain Ranch, or HMR Vineyard, is where the winery had its beginnings. In 1964, Dr. Stanley Hoffman planted the first Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay in Paso Robles. The winery was established by the Van Steenwyk family, who purchased HMR in the late 1970s. This winery is certainly worth keeping an eye out for, or visiting if you're in the Paso area.

**2016 Adelaida "HMR Estate Vineyard" Adelaida District Chardonnay (\$34.95)** The Chardonnay from HMR vineyard is quite unlike other Paso expressions of this varietal. The combination of these old vines and shallow, limestone soils really shows on the mineral-infused palate intertwined with fine acidity from the cooling coastal breezes. Remarkably refined and elegant, a surprise favorite for many of us on the trip.

**2015 Adelaida "HMR Estate Vineyard" Adelaida District Pinot Noir (\$49.95)** The 2015 Adelaida HMR Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir comes from the oldest Pinot Noir vines planted on the Central Coast, and really showed the character of the soil it comes from. An aromatic nose expresses ripe raspberry, black cherries, oak spice and earth. The district's clay and limestone soils are perfect for Pinot Noir with explosive aromatics. **92 RP, 91 WE**

**2015 Adelaida "Anna's Red" Adelaida District Red Blend (\$29.95)**

An homage to the legendary wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape, grown on steep, south-facing slopes at high elevations, this GSM blend has a dash of Petite Sirah. Rich, full-bodied, smoky dark fruits. Leather, dried herbs, scorched earth. Ripe tannins, lovely purity and balance.

**2016 Adelaida Estate Adelaida District Zinfandel (\$24.95)**

Adelaida's Zinfandel block was planted in 2003 with cuttings taken from two of the oldest vineyards in Paso Robles (planted in the 1880s). The heritage clones are head-trained and dry farmed at 1,500–2,000 feet in elevation in the district's mountainous terroir. Lots of brambly fruit, briary notes, lift and freshness from the calcareous soils.

Jeremy Weintraub's winemaking brilliance doesn't end with Adelaida. He is also makes Site Wines, a personal project based on tiny parcels of fruit sourced from some of the most distinctive single vineyard sites in California including Bien Nacido and Larner Vineyards.

**2013 Site Wines "Bien Nacido Vineyard" Santa Maria Valley**

**Syrah (\$39.99)** This is a stunner of a wine. The fruit source, Bien Nacido Vineyard, is the most famous site in the Santa Maria Valley, dominated by Los Osos clay loam soil and greatly influenced by the nearby Pacific Ocean. Other well-known wineries that grab fruit from here include Sine Qua Non, Jonata, Au Bon Climat and Ojai. About 85% of the fruit was destemmed, 15% foot-stomped, and then it was aged 20 months in new barrique. This Syrah is powerful and concentrated without losing balance of acidity and finesse. Notes of smoked meats, raspberries, spices and herbs really take the stage with ageworthy structure and a long finish that'll keep you coming back. **94 RP, 92 VN**

**2013 Site Wines "Larner Vineyard" Ballard Canyon Grenache**

**(\$39.99)** This is another wine that Jeremy poured for us that was really impressive. Larner Vineyard, dominated by sandy soil, is on the southern end of Ballard Canyon, a warmer wine growing region in Santa Barbara County. Like the Site Syrah, this wine possesses real power with black cherry, blueberry, baking spice and floral notes. Fresh, with fine tannin, this wine will easily continue to age for another 6–8 years. **94 RP**

**2013 Site Wines "Stolpman Vineyard" Santa**

**Barbara County Roussanne (\$24.99)** Jeremy also makes a great Roussanne from the famed Stolpman estate. A deft balance of power and finesse, this wine combines rich stone fruit flavors, spicy lees notes, broad texture and crystalline acidity. Lovely length and complexity. Aged in 500-liter puncheons. **92 VN, 91 RP**

The Site wines are worth getting your hands on, especially since the production is very small and the wines have started to receive great critical recognition. Both Adelaida and Site wines are a great representation of Weintraub's talents and decades of winemaking experience.



# Aaron and Aequorea: One Man, Two Labels, Endless Aromatics

By Heather Gowen

On our recent Central Coast trip, we met many producers and tasted wines of various styles, but the one man whose wines made the biggest impression on me was Aaron Jackson. Jackson has two labels, the ironically simple label “Aaron,” and the newer label, “Aequorea.” They represent two very different styles of wine, and with different focuses. While the Aaron label is centered around the more classic red varieties of Westside Paso Robles, Aequorea (Latin for “of the sea”) showcases cool-climate varieties, grown in extreme coastal vineyards.

On the second day of our trip, Aaron hiked with us through the Spanish Springs vineyard in a hilly area above Pismo Beach. It was cold and foggy, with a chilly breeze coming off the ocean, but the berries, just beginning to hit veraison, were destined for some stunning wine. Aaron makes a single-vineyard Viognier from this site, as well as Pinot Gris and Pinot Noir.

**2017 Aequorea “Spanish Springs Vineyard” San Luis Obispo County Viognier (\$29.95)** The Viognier was stunning. I’m not even a fan of this varietal, but this wine is changing my mind. It’s pretty, with floral and white peach aromas, while the palate stays crisp, clean and citrus-tinged. It is fermented and aged in stainless steel and neutral barrels, and the wine sees no malolactic fermentation. This keeps the profile leaner and more focused than is typical in the varietal, but it’s far from astringent.

**2015 Aequorea “Seafarer” San Luis Obispo County Pinot Noir (\$34.95)** The second Aequorea wine we tasted was the Seafarer Pinot Noir, blended from grapes off of Spanish Springs as well as two other coastal sites. I’m a big Pinot Noir fan, and like the varietal in many guises, but this one stopped me in my tracks. The only

thing I could think to put in my notes was “Yes. Dead right.” The wine has complete balance: it’s restrained and elegant in style, while simultaneously displaying boisterous, fresh berry fruit. The tannin is extremely fine-grained and silky, adding the perfect texture, and the aromatics are endless. **91 VN**

I’d be completely won over if he only made these two wines, but what is most surprising about Aaron Jackson is the range of his styles. Under the older Aaron label, he makes bold, full-bodied wines with deep, saturated color and generous fruit.

**2016 Aaron “Keola” Paso Robles Red Blend (\$29.95)** The Keola GSM is a great example. It’s Grenache dominated, with a deep, silky and plum-infused palate. Well balanced, and almost too easy-drinking, this wine has phenomenal layers of flavor and texture, making it so seamless that it’s hard to argue against.

**2015 Aaron Wines Paso Robles Petite Sirah (\$39.95)** Finally, we tasted the Aaron Petite Sirah. One of my favorite experiences in tasting wine is when I find a wine that is close to the opposite of my personal palate preference, but is so well made that I just can’t argue. Here is that wine. I like my reds light and delicate, and Petite Sirah is anything but that. This masterful blend of Petite Sirah from Westside Paso doesn’t pretend to be delicate, but still strikes a beautiful symmetry with a great integration of tannin, new oak and bountiful cassis, plum and huckleberry fruit. The trick with this grape is to manage the tannin and keep it in check—Aaron does an excellent job of that and everything else here.



Right: Fractured Monterey Shale soil in Aaron’s Aequorea Pinot Noir block at Spanish Springs Vineyard. Left: Winemaker Aaron Jackson showing us the diverse soils at Spanish Springs Vineyard in San Luis Obispo County.

## Santa Barbara Burgundian: Cool-Climate Wines of Tyler

By Morgan Laurie

“Isn’t Santa Barbara County too hot to grow Pinot?” I was asked, as I was grabbing a bottle of **2016 Tyler Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir (\$36.99) off the shelf**. I understood where the assumption lies, given the number of big, rich, powerful Pinot Noirs that can be found throughout many of California’s winemaking estates. A large share of the American marketplace prefers full-bodied, high-alcohol wines, so that’s what was (and still is, in many cases) made. In the discussion that ensued, I shared some of my recent experiences from our Central Coast trip and talked about how varied the terroir and climate had been depending on which AVA we were visiting. Throughout much of our time in the Sta. Rita Hills I wished I had brought my jacket, and spent most of our late-afternoon vineyard site visits curled up like a pretzel trying to rub my arms vigorously for warmth.

This cool, maritime influence is exactly what Justin Willett of Tyler Winery requires to produce his precise, poised and balanced wines. He seeks to make wines that he describes as “restrained,” favoring structure and nuance. In essence, this restrained approach boils down to wines with a lower alcohol content that are more apt to pair with food; minimal use of oak; and wines that he describes as “more cerebral.” This all begins in the vineyard. He works with some of the best vineyard sites throughout the Sta. Rita Hills and the Santa Maria Valley, focusing his efforts on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. These are the varietals he feels best express each site. Many of his vines are own-rooted, and working with these older vineyard sites is essential to obtaining the purity and intensity he seeks in his wines. Justin’s approach to winemaking favors minimal handling of fruit and of the wine itself. All harvesting is done at night and the fruit is picked by hand. The Pinot Noir is then evaluated for stem



inclusion, and if it’s fruit from the Sta. Rita Hills, he typically includes about one-third whole-cluster during fermentation. For fruit from the Santa Maria Valley, he finds the grapes are not as well suited to whole-cluster fermentation due to their savory character and thicker stems. The fermentation occurs from all native yeasts, with no addition of inoculated yeast strains. The Chardonnay is pressed whole-cluster and the juice is then exposed to oxygen as it settles overnight. This is like giving the wine a booster shot to protect against future oxidation. The usage of oak varies by vineyard, vine age and vintage, although Justin mainly utilizes neutral barrels during production.

During our visit, we were treated to samples of his 2016s. In tasting all twelve samples he laid before us, I saw exactly what he seeks to accomplish. The wines were elegant, extremely well balanced and absolutely gorgeous. If I had tasted them blind, I most likely would have mistaken them for Burgundies. I honestly couldn’t wait to get



*K&L’s Central Coast team Tasting with Justin Willett at Tyler.*

back to the store and sing the wines’ praises to anyone in search of an amazing bottle of Pinot Noir or Chardonnay.

Although you’ll have to wait a few months for the release of the 2016 vintage, we have several wines from Tyler’s previous vintages to keep you occupied until then. I suggest the **2015 Tyler “La Encantada” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$56.99)**. This site was the first certified organic vineyard in Santa Barbara County, planted in 2000 by Richard Sanford. On the nose, there are notes of black cherry, sliced mushrooms, fig and wet pebbles. The palate is earthy and savory with fine tannin, bright acidity, and excellent length on the finish.

For a taste of the Santa Maria Valley, try the **2016 Tyler “Dierberg Vineyard Block 5” Pinot Noir (\$49.95)**. Wonderfully structured and complex, the nose has a darker fruited and exotic profile with notes of blood orange zest, pomegranate and iron with an expressive palate full of crushed berries and dried floral notes, with a precise, laser-like finish. **93 RP**

For Tyler’s Chardonnays, the **2015 Tyler “Bien Nacido Vineyard W Block” Santa Maria Chardonnay (\$49.99)** is incredible. Richly textured and lush on the palate, it’s balanced beautifully with a firm streak of acidity cutting through. Aromas of honeysuckle, saline, citrus and orchard fruit with a hint of hazelnut give the nose serious depth. **95 VN**

The entry-level offering is spectacular as well. The **2016 Tyler Santa Barbara County Chardonnay (\$29.95)** offers notes of baked apple, white flowers and mint with an energetic, pure palate full of verve. **90 RP**

Justin and several other winemakers like him are succeeding at changing the landscape by bringing fresher, more balanced wines to the marketplace, and I’m glad they’re here.



## Rusack Vineyards: The Dark Horse Visit

By Ryan Woodhouse

While researching places to visit on our Central Coast trip, I came across Rusack Vineyards, tucked away in Ballard Canyon. I knew absolutely nothing about the property, winemaker or the wines, but seeing as they were surrounded on all sides by some of the best producers in the region (Jonata, Stolpman, Larner) I figured they warranted further research. A quick browse around the website yielded some interesting results. The winery makes a range of wines, including some from their “home” estate vineyard in Ballard Canyon, and others sourced from some of the very best growers in the broader Santa Barbara County (Solomon Hills, Bien Nacido Fiddlestix, Vogelzang, etc) and perhaps most intriguingly, some wines from a second estate vineyard, El Rancho Escondido, on Santa Catalina Island! My mind boggled as I read the story of how the family took cuttings from 120-plus-year-old Zinfandel vines found growing wild on Santa Cruz Island after a pre-Prohibition winery there had been decimated. The cuttings were given a new home and propagated on the family’s ranch on Catalina. The rest of the vineyard was planted to Pinot Noir and Chardonnay because of the island’s very cool, oceanic environment.

I was sold. We had to check these wines out! Fast forward a few weeks and our crew is climbing out of Bruce the Dad Van (our rented minivan if you missed the intro) at 9:00am sharp outside Rusack’s winery and tasting room in Ballard Canyon. We’re greeted cheerfully by winemaker Steve Gerbac and dive right into tasting wines under the lovely porch in the front of the tasting room. Right off the bat, we’re impressed with wine number one:

**2016 Rusack Santa Barbara County Sauvignon Blanc (\$22.95)** A precise varietal rendition of Sauvignon Blanc. Beautiful, juicy aromas and flavors of ripe citrus, passion fruit, and lychee. Crunchy and fresh on the palate, ultimately refreshing. Long, shimmering finish with river stone minerals. **90 VN**

Next, the Chardonnay, hailing from Bien Nacido and Sierra Madre vineyards:

**2015 Rusack Santa Barbara County Chardonnay (\$24.99)** The day before our Rusack visit we had extensively tasted some of the most highly regarded Chardonnays in the region (Tyler, Sandhi, The Hilt, Deovlet). Yet this wine more than held its own. Classic drive and racy quality from the cool sea breezes, lovely spiced orchard fruit, quince, nectarine. Lovely weight and density but never loses focus. **90 RP**

Sticking with Chardonnay we moved into tasting the wines from Catalina Island:

**2015 Rusack “El Rancho Escondido” Santa Catalina Island Chardonnay (\$59.95)** The first thing that comes across from this wine is the sense of place... a beautiful salinity, freshness, lightness of touch, oyster shell minerality. Perhaps something in common with the very best Sonoma Coast Chards, but more elegant and linear... Chablis? Pure, refined, delicious Chardonnay that challenges the very best restrained styles from anywhere. **96 RP:** “Approachable now, this should age beautifully over the next seven to nine years.”

**2015 Rusack “El Rancho Escondido” Santa Catalina Island Pinot Noir (\$69.95)** Just as superbly done as the Chard is Rusack’s Pinot Noir from Catalina. Grown in clay loam soils in a *very* cool climate, this wine has ethereal textural softness and elegance. An intensely aromatic wine with crushed rose petals, baking spices, berry compote and wet clay. Medium-bodied with layers of brambly fruit and spice. Light on its feet but packed with flavor. Wow. **95 RP:** “Rockstar Pinot!”

**2015 Rusack “El Rancho Escondido” Santa Catalina Island Zinfandel (\$69.95)** Perhaps the coolest climate Zin grown anywhere!? These vines were cuttings from a 120-plus-year-old derelict vineyard on Santa Cruz Island re-propagated on Catalina. Beautifully perfumed, elegant Zinfandel of top quality. This wine really stopped us in our tracks and was the favorite wine of the whole trip for several folks. Classic Zin fruit flavors but only medium-bodied, with juicy acidity and super fine tannins. **94 RP**



*Santa Catalina Island vineyard.*

Last but not least was the Syrah from the home block in Ballard Canyon:

**2014 Rusack “Estate” Ballard Canyon Syrah (\$24.95)** A quintessential expression of this region where Syrah is king. Big, bold, dark smoky fruit, cracked black pepper, lush, luxurious textures contrasted beautifully with sandy tannins and good acidity. A really classic example of why this tiny sub-AVA is so well renowned for this varietal. Great value given the quality. **91 WE**

All in all, our visit to Rusack was one of the big highlights of the entire trip and we are excited to share these wines with you!



*K&L crew tasting at Jonata-The Hilt with winemaker Matt Dees.*

## The Vinous Wonderland of Mr. Matt Dees

*By Ryan Woodhouse*

**In recent years winemaker Matt Dees has become known as one of the top winemakers in the state of California.** He makes the wines for Jonata, The Hilt, and Paring, plus a few other side projects and consulting roles. Jonata is the sister winery of the legendary Screaming Eagle estate in Napa and focuses largely on Bordeaux and Rhône varietals planted at their fascinating site in Ballard Canyon. The Hilt is essentially Jonata's Pinot Noir and Chardonnay project from top vineyards in Sta. Rita Hills (plus some Santa Maria fruit, namely Solomon Hills vineyard). Paring is a project that underpins both Jonata and Hilt, taking parcels of fruit and barrels that don't fit the style of either brand and essentially ends up being some exceptionally delicious juice for an incredibly modest price point!

When we arrived at Jonata's winery in Buellton we weren't even sure if we were in the right place. Located in a kind of cul-de-sac, in a semi-industrial part of Buellton, it has no signs, no logos. After making a couple of U-turns in the street we settled on a building that has silver foam insulation put up against all the windows—"That's gotta be the winery, right?" We traipse in through the door to the sound of blasting music coming from within. The winery is TARDIS-like... from the outside you would never believe they could squeeze in so many tanks and so much equipment. The crew are finishing up racking last year's barrels to tank for blending and pre-bottling. The place is humming with activity, hoses and pumps everywhere. Matt

and a few of his cellar crew greet us warmly as we walk in. "We knew you'd be late from Domaine de la Côte," he laughs. "All right, let's taste some wine!"

Next thing I know we're in a warehouse space, next door to the bustling cellar, that is full of partial pallets of wine. It's a mixture of past, present and future releases of Jonata and Hilt, plus a few random piles of cases that turn out to be wine they've traded with other producers and interesting stuff brought back from overseas by the travelling cellar crew. It's a vinous wonderland of cool stuff. Matt grabs a selection of bottles for us to taste, basically and armful of whatever we requested plus some of his own favorites, and we head back to the cellar. We stand around a little table in the lab and blending trial area that's squished into one corner of the main cellar. I continue to be amazed that Matt and his team work so efficiently in that space. Clearly the winery is very well equipped and modern, but I'm just amazed at how well they seemed to fit everything into such an unassuming, modest building. I knew how special Matt's wines were from previous tastings but many of them were new to my colleagues. Right off the bat I see their faces light up as we taste the first wine: The Hilt's new Brut Blanc de Blancs sparkler.

Here are my tasting notes on these fabulous Jonata, The Hilt and Paring wines:

**2014 The Hilt “Blanc de Blancs” Brut Sta. Rita Hills Sparkling Wine (\$59.95)** The diatomaceous and flint soils in Sta. Rita Hills, plus the cold, ocean-influenced growing conditions seem to lend themselves perfectly to sparkling wines, though you don’t see too many people producing them. This bottling is one to take notice of. Super focused and racy; citrus, quince, rye toast, chalky acid and electric acidity.

Next we moved into a couple of The Hilt’s delicious Chards:

**2015 The Hilt “Estate” Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$39.99)** A perfect reflection of Sta. Rita’s soil and climate, capturing the cool sunlight, saline breezes and white soils. White flowers, crunchy orchard fruit, oyster shell, brown butter, raw almond. Lovely drive and brightness. **91 RP, 91-93 VN**

**2015 The Hilt “Old Guard” Santa Barbara County Chardonnay (\$54.95)** A specific selection of old vine parcels makes up the Old Guard. Fruit from some of the very best (if not the best) vineyards in the region in the mix: Solomon Hills, Bien Nacido, Sanford & Benedict and Bentrack. Wonderful, understated power and depth. You can feel the concentration of the fruit and dry extract on the palate. Perfectly ripe baked apples, poached pears, freshly kneaded dough, almond paste, sea salt and wet stone. Rich yet fresh and focused; oak plays a minimal supporting role. I think this will age beautifully. Very serious, top-notch Chard. **95 WE, 93 RP, 93 JD, 93 VN**



Then into the Pinot Noir:

**2015 The Hilt “Estate” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$44.95)** Stunning Pinot representing The Hilt’s top-notch estate holdings at Bentrack, Radian and a dollop of fruit from Sanford & Benedict’s 45-year-old Pinot block, the oldest Pinot Noir in the Sta. Rita Hills. Lots of lifted floral and spicy notes, dried rose petals, baking spice, agar wood. The palate is bright and pure with great depth and textural nuance. This was a personal favorite of the winemaker... and it’s easy to see why. **93 WE, 92 RP, 92 VN**

**2015 The Hilt “Old Guard” Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$59.95)** This is seriously world-class Pinot Noir by any measure. Sourced predominantly from Sanford & Benedict’s 45-year-old blocks with more wind exposure and leaner soils. Subtle power, presence and structure, intense minerality and sense of place. A Grand Cru bottling. **96 VN, 94 JD, 93 RP, 93 WE**

Next we moved into the Jonata wines:

**2013 Jonata “Todos” Central Coast Red Blend (\$49.95)** Todos, meaning “everything,” is a conceptual wine that is designed to capture the entire vineyard in one bottle by incorporating all the varieties that are planted here. The blend is dominated by Syrah (78%) bringing rich dark fruit, muscular structure, smoky, meaty nuances and scorched earth. Other grapes seem to add some floral nuances, spice, and soft, silky tannins to embrace that powerful core. A really complete, balanced and expressive wine. **95 JS, 94 RP**



Left: Bruce taking on Chalone. Right: The team at Domaine de la Côte. Left to right: Jim Boyce, Ryan Woodhouse, Heather Gowen, Stephanie Vidales, Morgan Laurie, Joe Bruno.



View of Sanford & Benedict vineyard.

**2014 Jonata “El Desafio de Jonata” Santa Ynez Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$139.99)** This wine really shows the Screaming Eagle connection. Dominated by 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, this is very serious wine that will age like the very best Cabernet based wines from anywhere in the world. 20-plus years of potential...if you have the patience! Very reminiscent of Left Bank Bordeaux, with tons of black currant, cassis, cedar, tobacco, graphite. Fine but grippy tannins, subtle wisps of oak. Stunning. **97 JD**

**2014 The Paring (Jonata) Red Bordeaux Blend (\$24.99)** So here's where you can make a very savvy purchase: Jonata estate fruit that doesn't quite make the cut for the wine above trickles down into this Paring bottling—for twenty-five bucks! 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Franc and 10% Petit Verdot. Aged in the very best French oak money can buy, including Taransaud and Sylvain. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. It's a ludicrous value for the money, mostly intended for by-the-glass pours in restaurants—but we got our hands on some!



Don't miss these other Paring bottlings, also made with all declassified Hilt and Jonata estate fruit:

**2015 The Paring (Hilt) Santa Barbara County Chardonnay (\$24.99)** **92 JD:** “A clean, crisp style, medium-bodied richness and outstanding notes of spiced apples, citrus blossom and brioche. It's a Chardonnay that's going to compete with wines that cost 2–3x its going rate.”

**2015 The Paring (Jonata) Santa Ynez Valley Syrah (\$24.99)** Declassified from Jonata's **100** point Jeb Dunnuck 2015 La Sange de Jonata Syrah—enough said. **90 VN**

Finally, Jonata also makes a few heavenly, sweet dessert wines:

**Jonata “La Miel de Jonata” Santa Ynez Valley Sémillon-Sauvignon Blanc (375ml \$44.95)** 81% Sémillon, 19% Sauvignon Blanc. Kept in small oak barrels using a “solera” method from vintages 2004–2007. Kept un-topped, un-sulfured to develop flavors. Mostly *vin de paille* style wine made from dried fruit. Unctuous, honeyed, wonderfully complex nutty, sherry-esque notes. I'm looking forward to showing off this wine during the holidays. **93 VN**

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