

THE
tastingpanel
MAGAZINE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

Shining a
NEW LIGHT

*Ole Smoky
Moonshine*

ADDS FOUR READY-TO-
DRINK COCKTAILS TO ITS
BRIMMING PORTFOLIO





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CORRECTION

In the story on our "Spirits Speed Tasting" webinar in our November/
December 2020 issue, we mistakenly misspelled the name of Ole
Smoky owner Joe Baker. We regret the error.

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20/21 Vision



PHOTO: JENNIFER OLSON

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Bruce Weber". The signature is fluid and cursive.

This issue is filled with examples of people who see the forest for the trees, however “crusted with snow” or “shagged with ice,” in Stevens’ words, they may be.

It’s my opinion as a once-aspiring poet that no one

ever envisioned vision itself more clearly or profoundly than Wallace Stevens. From “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” to “The Emperor of Ice-Cream” (with its famous dictum to “let be be the finale of seem”), many of his poems explored the idea that objectivity is not antithetical to but vital to creativity—that true imagination depends on the ability not to fantasize but to see things as they are. Or, as he put it a century ago in “The Snow Man,” “one must have a mind of winter” to look out over a bare, frozen horizon and dare to behold “nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.”

That may sound terrifying, but it’s actually optimistic in its own way. The irony of the fact that “2020” is a term for perfect eyesight was not lost on most of us as we were blindsided by the darkest, coldest, and bleakest year of our lifetimes. So in 2021, I wish for us all something even sharper than 20/20 vision: a mind of winter that allows us “*not* to think / of any misery in the sound of the wind” but simply to listen to it blow—that allows us to survey the landscape before us with equanimity. Only then can we begin to look purposefully beyond it, with an eye toward springtime.

This issue is filled with examples of people who see the forest for the trees, however “crusted with snow” or “shagged with ice,” in Stevens’ words, they may be. On- and off-premise beverage professionals who are responding to the crises of the past year as opportunities for structural change in their industries. Wine and spirits producers who are acknowledging the long-term costs of doing business and aiming to offset them in all sorts of ways—whether by implementing more sustainable agricultural, manufacturing, and labor practices or by creating products that are better for mind and body than they were before. People, in short, who aren’t blinking in the face of reality but rather looking it squarely in the eye and acting in accordance with it.

We at *The Tasting Panel* have no illusions regarding the challenges that face those we love in the industries we cover over the next several months. But we do have faith in them—not despite all that happened in 2020, but because of it. Here’s to you, Snow People.

FLYING HIGH

IN THE

Columbia Valley

A VISIT TO
WASHINGTON'S
GOOSE RIDGE
VINEYARDS

Taking a gander at the Goose Ridge team: owner/president Bill Monson; his wife, Darci Monson; his sister Valerie Monson; his mother, Suzanne Monson; and his sister Molly Monson-Stutesman and her husband, Rob Stutesman.



What may be Washington State's most exciting wine region right now isn't the well-known Walla Walla Valley but a sagebrush-speckled expanse that sips on just 6 or so inches of annual precipitation. Here in the arid Columbia Valley, there's still an aura of potential, as new varietals continue to be planted and sub-AVAs are established that will encapsulate its vast variations in soil type, microclimate, and other winegrowing conditions. It's already home to such up-and-coming appellations as Red Mountain, where producers are digging in and carving out a reputation.

One of the largest family-run operations in the region, Goose Ridge Vineyards strives to emphasize the uniqueness of the Columbia River Plateau through its compelling wines. Prior to becoming a sprawling estate on the outskirts of Benton City, the Goose Ridge property was open country—an untamed stretch of land nestled among topographical outcroppings that include Candy Mountain, Red Mountain, and Badger Mountain. As company president Bill Monson says, it was a place where the local old-timers would come and shoot geese during hunting season.

During a visit early last November, I immediately saw that the winery was and still is aptly named. The sky was filled with V-shaped masses of migratory birds ditching the dramatically cooling autumn weather for something more approachable to the south. Sprawling new subdevelopments outside of the nearby cities of Kennewick, Pasco, and Richland trickled into the landscape and there was steady traffic on I-82, but overall, the area still felt pretty rugged.





The V-shaped trellising at Goose Ridge resembles the formation of geese in flight.

The Monson family settled here four generations ago and began building an estate devoted to diversified agriculture. Many of their original projects continue—cattle ranching and orchard tending, for instance. But the lion's share of the massive property is devoted to grape growing, with some 2,200 acres of vineyard all told. While a healthy chunk of each year's grape yield is sold to other producers, Goose Ridge still manages to keep some for itself. "None of the fruit leaves this site," Monson notes; instead, it's funneled into the main production area at the base of the hill and turned into custom crush lots for customers as well as wine for a number of Goose Ridge labels. These include g3, StoneCap, and Tall Sage as well as VIDO Vodka and Cascadian Outfitters, the brand's strong entry into the canned market.

"My father always taught us that to be successful in farming, you need to diversify your crops. We are always looking for new ways to innovate and expand," says Bill's daughter Taylor Monson, who serves as Goose Ridge's director of national sales and marketing. Like so many in her family, she attended Washington State

University before returning to help with the business. And it remains a diverse one, dealing primarily in wine but also in commercial crops of cherries and apples, cider, and spirits. One of its latest projects came about unexpectedly: Just as the company was kickstarting its spirits line with VIDO, an estate-grown Cabernet grape vodka made in honor of Bill's late father, Arvid "Vido" Monson, the pandemic

arrived. Practically overnight, there was a much more pressing need for ethanol and the distilling equipment Goose Ridge had access to. Enter a substantial hand-sanitizer enterprise that offered some much-needed protection to the community.

Goose Ridge continues to turn out sanitizer, but wine production remains at the heart of the family business. The Monsons' team has four tasting rooms





This vodka, made with estate-grown Cabernet grapes, honors Bill Monson's late father, Arvid "Vido" Monson.

to run in Walla Walla, Richland, Woodinville, and Leavenworth on top of overseeing a distribution chain with placements all over the country. They also recently launched Destination Brands, an umbrella organization that will encompass all of

the aforementioned labels, including VIDO Vodka (see also page 114). Given that Goose Ridge planted its first vine as recently as 1998 and debuted its maiden vintage the following year, the scale of its growth is impressive.

Perhaps most excitingly, a new AVA called Goose Gap is pending approval, a development the Monsons have spent years advocating for. It will help draw attention to the place the family has called home for well over a century—a place that Goose Ridge winemaker Andrew Wilson says possesses the big, tannic qualities of neighboring AVAs like Red Mountain while maintaining its own distinctive freshness. It'll be interesting to see how Goose Ridge's experiments with grapes like Roussanne and various Cabernet Sauvignon clones evolve going forward.

Pouring in the barrel room with the 2020 harvest mostly behind him, Wilson walked me through the current releases. He has been part of the Pacific Northwest wine scene since 2003, doing stints at lauded producers like Long Shadows and Forgeron Cellars. He was the general manager at Artifex Wine Company in Walla Walla before landing at Goose Ridge, where he's supported by assistant winemaker Casey Cobble and consulting winemaker Peter Devison, among others.

Wilson is justifiably proud of



Peter Devison
is consulting
winemaker for
Goose Ridge
Vineyards.

Cascadian Outfitters, which has released some of the most aromatic and balanced canned wines to be found in the ever-growing sector. Also of note is the g3 2018 Merlot, with its nice mix of brightness and umami; a pleasant barrel-fermented g3 2018 Chardonnay; and the 2016 Vireo, a blend of Cabernet, Merlot, and Syrah whose finesse was earned in part by 26 months in barrel.

Yet he's even more excited about where the 2020 vintage is headed. Calling it "intense," Wilson noted that while the growing season had its share of issues—from spring frost and lower yields to, of course, a pandemic—he believes that challenging vintages are the most rewarding, not only in the winemaking stage but also in the glass. Besides, the team could count on

both their collective experience and their viticultural wealth to ensure that Goose Ridge remains a label to watch, especially as its vines mature and its appellation attracts increased attention far beyond state borders. **LT**



Cascadian Outfitters represents Goose Ridge's entry into the canned market.

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Sharing the Best
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PHOTO: DEVIN BERKO

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Jerry Lohr and his team helped pioneer the now world-class winegrowing regions of Monterey and Paso Robles. In 1998, Arroyo Vista Chardonnay and Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon debuted as the first two wines of the J. Lohr Vineyard Series. Today, with a fresh look, they eloquently speak to our long experience in our home appellations.

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Scheid Family Wines Announces Two New Hires



Scheid Family Wines, based in Monterey County, California, recently announced the hiring of Joanne Schmidt to the North Midwest sales team as the area sales manager covering Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa, and Patrick Baker as a new member of the production sales team. Schmidt will be based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, while Baker will be based at Scheid's winery campus in Greenfield, California.

Schmidt joins the Scheid team with more than 14 years of sales management experience in the alcohol beverage industry. Prior to joining Scheid Family Wines, she worked for Gérard Bertrand, where she spent two years as the Midwest regional manager. Baker brings over 17 years of diverse wine-related experience to the sales team; most recently, he worked as the VP of sales for Agrothermal in grower relations.

"We are excited to have Joanne and Patrick join the Scheid team," says Scheid Family Wines chief sales officer Tony Stephen. "They both bring deep foundational experience and enthusiasm for building relationships to generate new opportunities for Scheid Family Wines."



First Tasting Space Dedicated to Luxury California Brandy Opens in Downtown Napa

California Brandy House, the first standalone tasting room dedicated to luxury California brandies, opened last November at First Street Napa, a collection of artisan retail businesses and restaurants in the heart of the city's downtown. It will initially showcase two leading brandy producers, Germain-Robin and Argonaut, for guests to discover through expert guided tasting flights that include limited offerings and exclusive single-barrel samples. Tastings will temporarily take place in the California Brandy House outdoor parklet; to ensure proper social distancing, reservations must be made in advance at californiabrandyhouse.com/tasting-reservations. Visitors can also purchase bottles from the full Germain-Robin and Argonaut portfolios and customize them with laser engraving.

"Our California brandies, like Germain-Robin and Argonaut, are crafted from world-class white and red grape varieties exclusively grown on California soil," says Britt West, vice president and general manager of Gallo Spirits, a division of E. & J. Gallo Winery. "These fine brandies are as rich, vibrant, and complex as the land itself. There is no better place than Napa Valley, the heart of wine country, to reestablish California brandy among the world's best distilled spirits."



Debbas Gourmet Crafts Wine-Filled Chocolate

Equally exquisite as Debbas Gourmet's handcrafted truffles are its chocolates filled with sumptuous private-label wines from various estates. The company has been collaborating with wineries for over 30 years to craft chocolates that can be custom packaged with their respective wine's labels.

Any wine can be infused into Debbas' milk, dark, or white chocolate. We particularly love the Cabernet Sauvignon from Wine Spots and the deliriously delicious Zinfandel-filled dark chocolate. For more information, contact Mark Drake at 703-400-3605 or email wines@debbasgourmet.com.

Delicato Family Wines to Launch Stoneleigh in the United States

Delicato Family Wines, the sixth-largest wine supplier in the United States, recently announced a long-term agreement with Pernod Ricard Winemakers to become the exclusive importer of Stoneleigh in the United States and the Caribbean. Based in Marlborough, Stoneleigh is the number-one wine brand in New Zealand, selling more than 794,000 9-liter cases globally in 2019.

"Stoneleigh is a global wine brand with a pedigreed history in Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc and an established track record of strong consumer appeal," says Chris Indelicato, CEO of Delicato Family Wines. "The addition of Stoneleigh to our Transcendent Fine Wine portfolio diversifies Delicato's range of ultra-premium and luxury offerings and provides Delicato with a powerful entry point into the fast-growing New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc category."

Stoneleigh Sauvignon Blanc comes from estate-owned vineyards that contain some of the oldest and most historic vines in Marlborough, expressing the terroir of the prime subregion of Rapaura in the Wairau Valley. The U.S. bottling was crafted as a collaboration between Stoneleigh winemaker Jamie Marfell and Delicato Family Wines and incorporates 5% Sauvignon Gris. Its luxury packaging, which includes Burgundian glass, a Stelvin LUX screwcap, and a foil-embossed label, is likewise unique to the U.S. market. The wine will launch in March for a suggested SRP of \$19.



Brian Connors Named the Director of the Bacardi Center of Excellence

Florida International University's

Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management has named Brian Connors director of the Bacardi Center of Excellence,


an educational partnership between the FIU hospitality school and Bacardi USA. The Bacardi Center of Excellence offers the only spirits management curriculum of its kind in the country for students interested in a career in the spirits industry. Connors' appointment results from an educational partnership created after Bacardi USA made a \$5 million gift to the Chaplin School last February.

Connors has served as the center's interim director since its creation. Under his leadership, the Bacardi Center of Excellence launched the spirits management major in fall 2020, offering classes such as beverage law and beverage marketing. "It's an honor to be leading this unique partnership between FIU hospitality and Bacardi," Connors says. For more information about Florida International University's School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, visit hospitality.fiu.edu.

375 Park Avenue Spirits Will Import Tequila Tromba to the U.S. Market

375 Park Avenue Spirits recently announced that it will serve as the U.S. importer for Tequila Tromba. Under this agreement, 375 Park Avenue Spirits and Sazerac Company's Bond and Royal craft division will assume responsibility for all sales and operational functions and will support the brand's marketing efforts.

"Tequila Tromba is a young brand by industry standards, but [it] has been able to quickly establish strongholds in Mexico, Canada, and Australia. It's that success, coupled with the unique story around how this brand was first developed by the co-founders, Eric Brass and Nick Reid, that has our team incredibly excited about our first entry into the agave category," says Jason Schladenhauffen, president and CEO of 375 Park Avenue Spirits.

Tequila Tromba will join the company's portfolio on February 1. Product SKUs will include Tromba Blanco, Tromba Reposado, and Tromba Añejo in a 750-milliliter format; Tromba Extra Añejo and Cantina Style Blanco, as well as a series of ready-to-drink canned cocktails—Tromba Margarita, Tromba Paloma, and Tromba Soda—will be available at a future date. Suggested retail pricing ranges from \$36 to \$40 for the Blanco, \$40 to \$46 for the Reposado, and \$52 to \$55 for the Añejo. For more information, visit 375park.com. 





French-born winemaker Julien Fayard has crafted four new Napa Valley wines for Gelson's.



Branded Beauties

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA RETAILER **GELSON'S** COLLABORATES WITH WINEMAKER JULIEN FAYARD **by Meridith May**

While all 27 locations of Southern California-based specialty-grocery chain Gelson's provide the full amenities of a traditional supermarket, they also offer the ambience of a welcoming neighborhood grocer. "Our customers trust us for the quality we offer, in food and in wine," explains Ray Brych, the company's category manager for wine, beer, and spirits.

In addition to attention to detail and expert service, Brych sees custom-label wines as playing an essential role in the intriguing shopping experience at Gelson's, augmenting its array of beautifully arranged produce, meats, custom deli salads, and cheeses. What sets the store apart is the fact that these branded cuvées come from well-known winemakers who craft them as part of a formal collaboration—not from private labels whose liquids can be renamed and repurposed for other chains.

One such star collaborator is Napa Valley winemaker Julien Fayard, a French native who earlier in his career worked in Bordeaux at two Grand Cru chateaux: Pauillac's Lafite Rothschild and Pessac-Léognan's Smith Haut

Lafite. "We are excited that Gelson's will continue to make superior-quality wines from Julien available exclusively to thousands of our wine-loving customers," says John Bagan, Gelson's chief merchandising officer.

Four new wines crafted by Fayard under the Gelson's label rolled out last November. I recently tasted them with Brych and Gelson's director of marketing Jake Cheung.

Gelson's 2019 Reserve Sauvignon Blanc, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$30) Whole cluster-pressed, fermented in stainless steel, and aged in French oak for about 12 months, this big and cheery white with a brisk acid structure was made with fruit from the McGah Vineyard on the benchland of Rutherford on the Silverado Trail. Aromas of apple tart, citrus, pineapple, peach, and toasted corn pop out of the glass and the liquid coats the tongue, leading to a lemon-mango finish. **93**

Gelson's 2018 Red Cuvée, Napa Valley (\$24) Aged for 22 months in French oak, this blend of 58% Cabernet Sauvignon, 28% Cab Franc, and 14%

Syrah overdelivers in substance and elegance for the price. Meaty aromas are joined by white pepper and violets, leading to a fleshy palate with dry cocoa-blackberry tannins. Dried floral notes ensue on the well-structured and rich palate before the roast-coffee finish. **93**

Gelson's 2018 Reserve Cabernet Franc, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$39) With its seductive perfume of chocolate, violets, and blueberry, this wine is a true homage to its variety. The tannins are sturdy but graceful and the liquid is silky and sumptuous, with notes of balsamic and dark cherry. Melting dark chocolate glides on the finish with a hint of salinity. **94**

Gelson's 2018 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$59) This single-vineyard wine is juicy and generous, with scents of cigar leaf, blackberry, and sandalwood representing the terroir of its unique sub-AVA. Blueberry and espresso appear up front on the broad-shouldered palate, whose focused tannins are all about textural luxury. **95** *LT*

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NOMADIC FLAVORS,
ELEVATED TV DINNERS,
AND THANKSGIVING
IN LIQUID FORM GOT
D.C. IN A FESTIVE
MOOD



PHOTO COURTESY OF LAZY DOG

Lazy Dog Restaurant & Bar offers a lineup of TV Dinners, including chicken parmesan with green beans and a Nutella brownie—prime for nights spent at home binge-watching Netflix.

Spirit of the Season

Spending so much time at home, I'll bet I'm not the only one bingeing more shows than usual these days—so I'm grateful for Lazy Dog Restaurant & Bar's popular lineup of frozen TV Dinners. Last fall, I visited the firepit-warmed, dog-friendly enclosed patio of the Chantilly, Virginia, location to sample new menu items like fried white-cheddar cheese curds and lamb shank pot pie; pairing them with an

oven, cued up a new episode of *The Crown* on my telly, and dug into a meal that was way better than the rubbery Swanson Salisbury steak you might remember from childhood.

But I'm still going out when I can. In the District, the 14th Street neighborhood's dining scene has a new addition: the second location of Atlanta-based pan-Mediterranean restaurant Gypsy Kitchen, operated by Southern Proper Hospitality. We asked our server about the pejorative meaning some associate with the term "gypsy," and he told us it's intended to describe the menu's nomadic journey through Spanish, Greek, Lebanese, and Moroccan cuisines as interpreted by executive chef Eric Milton, formerly of ThinkFoodGroup.

My companion and I began with two very different but highly aromatic cocktails: The Tia Valentina got its herbal bitterness from Manzanilla Sherry, Cocchi Americano, blanco vermouth, and Tempus Fugit, while the Cerdo on a Vespa was a fun take on the G&T with Spanish gin, rhubarb amaro, Cocchi Americano, lemon, and tonic. Among my favorite small plates were hakurei turnips topped with crispy greens that we dragged through labneh and sliced flat iron steak with spiced

Lebanese couscous. As for entrees, we adored the crispy duck confit with rice pilaf beneath a drizzle of harissa and the paella-inspired, pan-roasted branzino, served over saffron risotto studded with plump mussels. But Milton told us as we were tucking into his pistachio semifreddo that we would have to return for the braised pork shank with goat-cheese tarhana. Consider it done, chef.

Finally, as restaurants switched things up for Turkey Day—with many offering traditional or eclectic feasts to go or for delivery—Jack Rose Dining Saloon continued a boozy fall tradition that it started in 2015. Creative director of cocktails Andy Bixby assembled a five-course kit of bottled libations for two, including a Yam Casserole Old Fashioned with marshmallow syrup and graham-cracker tincture; a Daiquiri made with stuffing-infused rum and fermented garlic honey; and a shaken cocktail that combined bourbon with bone-washed citrus amaro, Aperol, and lemon. Drinking our Thanksgiving dinner? Now *that* sounds about right for 2020. **W**



Jack Rose Dining Saloon's five-course kit of bottled cocktails for two carried on a boozy fall tradition.

Old Fashioned featuring bacon-washed Tincup Mountain Whiskey, cedar smoke, maple, and sweet-and-spicy bacon "candy," I thought things couldn't get much better—but then my server brought me a welcome surprise: a selection of those dinners to take home. The next evening, I popped a retro foil tray with chicken parm, green beans, and a Nutella brownie into the

The pistachio semifreddo at the new Washington, D.C., location of Gypsy Kitchen.



PHOTO: SCOTT SUCHMAN

the Women Behind

WENTE
VINEYARDS



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PICTURED: 4TH & 5TH GENERATION LEADERS OF THE WENTE FAMILY



The Ransom Note is a monthly column by Tasting Panel East Coast editor-at-large David Ransom. Each month, David connects readers with some of the people, products, and events making news along the Eastern Seaboard.

Business as (Un)Usual

DESPITE UNFAVORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, EAST COAST PRODUCERS MADE THE MOST OUT OF THE 2020 HARVEST SEASON

Having no events to cover in New York City last fall, I decided to hit the road instead—fully masked, of course—to see how wineries and distilleries along the East Coast were faring during this unprecedented time.

My travel companions, as I mentioned in my last column, were my wife, Melanie, and our dog, Sazerac. In September, we found ourselves in New York's Finger Lakes region, where wineries like Shaw Vineyard were open, albeit on a limited scale. I asked Steve Shaw Jr., who was accepting a few visitors at a time in his West Seneca Lake tasting room, about the growing season. "We had possibly the driest summer we've ever had," he told me, "with literally no measurable rain from June through August. We'll have to wait and see how the vines react and regroup this winter."



Shaw Vineyard's Steve Shaw Sr. and his son, Steve Jr.

Business was brisk on the day we visited Finger Lakes Distilling, home to McKenzie Whiskeys, with tastings underway in both the spacious tasting room and at the outdoor cocktail bar in accordance with strict social

distancing restrictions. "People must have a reservation, and we meet them outside the door and go through the guidelines for entry," said owner Brian McKenzie. "So far, everyone has been very understanding."

October saw us in Virginia wine country, visiting some of the East Coast's most historic and visionary wineries. At Barboursville Vineyards, founded in the 1970s by Italy's iconic Zonin family, Luca Paschina—who has served as the winery's winemaker/general manager since 1990—was welcoming guests with reservations in the members-only club room as well as walk-ins to the main tasting room. Neither venue offered bar service, instead opting to hold seated tastings in the club room while issuing debit cards to visitors in the main room for use at self-serve wine dispensers.

Down the road at Horton Vineyards—a two-time Virginia Governor's Cup winner, most recently in 2019 for its phenomenal 2016 Petit Manseng—second-generation owner Shannon Horton mused about the difficult 2020 vintage, which saw early budbreak followed by April frosts, a mid-May polar vortex, extensive rains, and, finally, drought: "It's the kind of vintage where you'll find out how good your winemaking

skills are," she said while tasting us through about a quarter of Horton's 62 current offerings.

Finally, up in the Blue Ridge Mountains in northern Virginia, we spent an afternoon with Linden



PHOTOS: DAVID RANSOM

Barboursville's Luca Paschina celebrates the end of last year's harvest with vineyard manager Fernando Franco.

Vineyards owner Jim Law. Widely regarded as the godfather of Virginia wines, Law planted his vineyards in the mid-1980s and has been a mentor to many of the state's younger vintners. He's not one to seek the limelight, however; he does not host events at his winery, and he limits access to visitors by taking only online reservations—a policy that obviously has not changed in the COVID-19 era.

There was hope in the air, in short, as autumn on the East Coast unfolded and wineries harvested grapes, reopened for attenuated tourism, and finally started to make some much-needed income from visitors. It was not nearly enough to offset the circumstances that 2020 had handed many, especially those relying on their event facilities to stay in (or get back into) the black—but still, harvesttime and its fanfare gave some semblance of normalcy to an otherwise horrible tourist season. **LT**

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In Austin, L'Oca d'Oro general manager Adam Orman and chef Fiore Tedesco have temporarily retooled their business model by offering a subscription service for chef-prepared meals with wine pairings.



PHOTO: LORI MOFFATT

Keeping Up the Good Work

AUSTIN'S L'OCA D'ORO REINVENTS ITSELF TO WEATHER THE PANDEMIC

In 2016, chef Fiore Tedesco and his business partner, Adam Orman, opened a modern Italian restaurant called L'Oca d'Oro (Italian for “the golden goose”) in the heart of central Austin. With Prosecco on tap, housemade bitters and liqueurs, and a wine list featuring small-production Old World wines—not to mention handcrafted pastas, mozzarella, breads, and other items—L'Oca d'Oro built its reputation on a foundation of premier ingredients, gracious attention to guests, and the philosophy that hospitality work is a profession, not a job.


While restaurants and bars have opened sporadically since the national shutdown in March, L'Oca d'Oro has remained closed to dine-in visitors. Operating it solely as a takeout venue in the early months of the pandemic, Orman and Tedesco pivoted over the summer to providing meals to essential workers and vulnerable populations via city contracts, grants, and public donations. In addition, they recently unveiled a weekly, customizable

subscription service featuring chef-prepared dinners; grocery items such as breads, pickles, cheese, and salumi; and wine pairings. Thanks to these combined efforts, Orman has been able to rehire 15 full-time employees. “We brought back everyone who wanted to come back,” he says.

Yet Orman had his eye on a broader role for hospitality even before the pandemic. Several years ago, along with a group of other small-business owners, Orman co-founded an organization called Good Work Austin, which advocates for favorable legislation and resources such as access to low-cost health care for small-business employees. This spring, GWA got to work establishing protocols for safe reopening that went beyond state requirements; they're now followed by nearly 100 Central Texas establishments. “Guests need to feel confident if they are going to return to restaurant dining,” says Orman, noting that each member business has different challenges due to size, layout, and

other variables. In L'Oca d'Oro's case, he explains, a small footprint that precludes profitable distanced dining meant getting creative to generate other revenue streams.

Tedesco, who makes a weekly video for meal subscribers in his aqua-and-white home kitchen, says he's happy to be back cooking for guests. Though working on camera initially made him nervous, he admits, “I'm getting less self-conscious—and I love having the opportunity to teach people about cooking.” For fans of the restaurant, it's a rewarding way to learn some new techniques and connect with the chef as a person.

Meanwhile, Orman is already looking ahead. “Maybe this collective experience will change the way restaurants interact with the needs of the population in the future,” he says. “Maybe restaurants can assume a broader role in the community, taking some of the burden from food banks, for example. I'd like to aim higher than ‘back to normal.’” 

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BY PARIS VASSER



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Souley Vegan chef-owner Tamearra Dyson.

Souley Vegan's cornbread is offered as a side with such dishes as seitan jambalaya.

Recipes for Success

TAMEARRA DYSON OF OAKLAND'S SOULEY VEGAN PUTS A FRESH TWIST ON TRADITIONAL SOUL FOOD

Those who have gathered around heaping plates of gumbo, étouffée, and collard greens know that soul food is more than a meal, it's an experience—one that connects the mind, the stomach, and, of course, the soul. And for chef Tamearra Dyson of Oakland, California's Souley Vegan, making that connection is what owning a restaurant is all about.

Dyson started her business in the midst of the recession in 2009, leaving her full-time nursing job with just \$20 in her pocket, fierce determination, and a whole lot of belief in her cooking. That belief paid off, as she has since opened locations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Jose, and Las Vegas as well as a second branch in Oakland.

Her roots are in Louisiana, and her recipes come from years of cooking with her grandfather and mother there. Vegan from a young age, Dyson never

learned to cook traditional soul food; instead, her mother taught her how to carefully replicate its flavors with alternative ingredients. "The spices of Louisiana run through my blood, and I apply that to my vegan cuisine," she explains. Forging its own path in what was at the time a niche market, Dyson's restaurant earned praise for making vegan food approachable.

Yet in Dyson's opinion, truly appreciating soul food involves understanding its origins. "Honestly, historically speaking, the traditional story of soul food is that the enslaved had to reimagine what was given to them in terms of food and scraps [and] making that into something that would allow us to sustain," she says. One example, gumbo—which, she points out, derives from the Nigerian word for okra—is typically made with andouille sausage or shrimp, but Dyson makes it with okra, corn, tomatoes,

seaweed, and the "Creole holy trinity" of celery, onions, and bell peppers.

Another creation, Southern-fried tofu with grits, evolved from an experiment in her kitchen at home into one of her most popular dishes, joining other staples such as seitan-based fried "chicken," coconut-zucchini étouffée, and a soy-based macaroni and cheese. And to pair with the made-from-scratch food, Souley Vegan also serves a rotating list of cocktails such as Cayenne Lemon Drops and Pomegranate Mimosas as well as beer, fresh-pressed juices in flavors like strawberry-ginger, and lemonade that's more sour than sweet.

Ultimately, Dyson credits her artistry in the kitchen to trusting her instincts. "I do what is in my heart, and I put it on my menu," she says. "There's a lot of energy [and] a lot of experience, love, and history that [go] into what we do." **LD**

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The old cliché that you can't sell what

you don't have definitely rings true in the wine business. I get that managing cash flow is important; nobody wants to tie up funds in overstocked inventory. However, over the course of nearly two decades as a buyer, I can think of hundreds of times that an intended purchase or placement failed to happen because the wine in question wasn't available. Of course, distributors cannot be expected to stock according to the whims of every buyer; however, there seems to be an increasing lack of commitment to inventory that is ultimately preventing a lot of wine from being sold.

I don't pretend to know the first thing about bin spaces and operations logistics in a distribution warehouse. But I do know that if a distributor is going to commit to carrying a wine, then they need to stock it. To be clear,

I'm not talking about rare or allocated wines—I'm talking about reasonably priced, everyday labels with by-the-glass and/or core-list potential.

You might be inclined to point out that, by nature of the product, no wine is available indefinitely. You'll be met with no argument from me on that point. However, where I draw the line is when distributors—especially the very big and very small companies—are unwilling or unable to keep proper stock for buyers. It was mind-boggling to me as a buyer that, knowing I might be going through as many as eight cases of a by-the-glass pour a week, my supplier wouldn't just stock a pallet and reorder when it was down to 16 cases or so.

In short, if you know that a restaurant or retailer is working with a wine, you owe it to them to protect that placement. It's infuriating for buyers to

discover that their distributor is carrying just enough product for weekly or monthly needs without accounting for spikes in demand or other contingencies. The ramifications (and costs) of an unfilled purchase order are vast and painful, be it scrambling to reprint menus before service or apologizing to a frustrated guest that the wine they just ordered isn't available.

In fairness, buyers owe it to you in turn to notify you if and when a given placement is changing. After all, they can be fickle—which is all the more reason to remember that, once they feel wronged, they might never revisit a placement out of principle. Given how hard suppliers and distributors work to gain placements in a competitive business, it would be folly not to do everything they can to protect them by ensuring shipments to willing buyers—on time and in full. **W**

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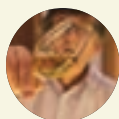
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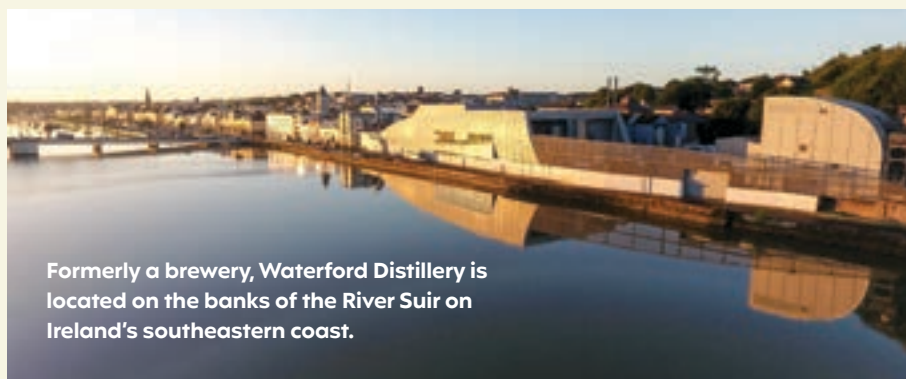
DISTILLERIES AROUND THE WORLD ARE EXAMINING TERROIR IN WHISKY

Can we detect terroir in whisky?

For previous generations of distillers, the question scarcely arose, and even today, it remains of little concern to conventional producers whose aim is simply to make a blended whisky that sells well.

But a new breed of boutique distilleries is challenging that orthodox approach, claiming to demonstrate that terroir—the influence of soil, climate, and agricultural practice so central to wine's identity—can and in fact should play a major part in how whisky is made and enjoyed.

Take Mexico's Abasolo corn whisky, for example (from parent company Casa Lumbre Spirits of Manhasset, New York). Distiller Dr. Iván Saldaña works solely with a heritage corn variety called Cacahuazintle, treating it with quicklime according to the ancient technique of nixtamalization to create a distinctly Mexican take on whisky that honours the country's gastronomy. Or take Finland's Teerenpeli Distillery (imported by Anthem Imports of Chamblee, Georgia), which was recently awarded Worldwide Whisky Producer 2020 at the International Wine & Spirit Competition. It makes its Finnish single malt exclusively with locally grown and malted grain to develop a Nordic twist on traditional styles of whisky.



Formerly a brewery, Waterford Distillery is located on the banks of the River Suir on Ireland's southeastern coast.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WATERFORD DISTILLERY

But the distillery most committed to the exploration of terroir must surely be Ireland's Waterford, established by former Bruichladdich CEO Mark Reynier in 2015. In his words, "We're embarking on a long journey, as ambitious as it [is] pioneering . . . to create not just the most compelling Irish whisky but the world's most profound single malt."

With his background in the wine industry and experience on Islay, Reynier has long defied those who maintain that terroir has little or no impact on whisky's final flavour. So after he left Bruichladdich, backed by many of his previous investors, he bought a former brewery in Waterford and converted its state-of-the-art equipment to produce whiskies demonstrating his philosophy.

It's home to what he and his team call the "Cathedral of Barley," which stores grain grown on 19 distinct soil types on 86 different Irish farms, some of which are organic and Biodynamic. A custom-

designed digital logistics system keeps track of each crop, which is harvested, stored, malted, and distilled separately in order to capture the spirit of each farm's *téireoir* (Irish Gaelic for terroir): that subtle character shaped by microclimate and soil.

This approach makes for lots of different expressions, and as Waterford gets into its stride, there will be many more with their own distinctions, both nuanced and marked. A code on every carton enables purchasers to pore over maps and details about the grower, the harvest, the distillation process, and the cask-aging regimen.

Waterford will enter the U.S. market courtesy of Glass Revolution Imports of Las Vegas, Nevada, which is introducing the distillery's signature Waterford Organic as well as three unique Single Farm Origins not available anywhere else in the world. Reynier may not have the last word in the great "terroir in whisky" debate, but he has certainly made his point. *JD*

Waterford sources grain from more than 80 Irish farms to produce its terroir-driven single malt expressions.

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FIVE MINUTES WITH ...

Allyson Dreyfuss

BEVERAGE MANAGER, VIEWPOINT
BREWING CO., DEL MAR, CA

by Michelle M. Metter



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLYSON DREYFUSS

Allyson Dreyfuss has been part of the Southern California beverage landscape for most of her career.

We sat down with her to learn about her role as a wine buyer at a brewery and the ways she's focusing on her mental health in the midst of the pandemic.

Q What led you to Viewpoint Brewing Co.?

I was working at a prominent Michelin-starred French restaurant called Joe's, owned by the late chef Joe Miller in Venice, California. It was my first extensive wine list, so the studying began. I got my Level 1 Introductory [certification through the Court of Master Sommeliers] and knew I had to continue. I got certified at Level 2 the following year and I hope to sit for my Advanced [certi-

fication] in the future. Ultimately, my dream is to open my own wine bar that also features classes and culinary retail. I decided to move to San Diego after 16 years in Venice and was offered a chance to take over the wine list at Viewpoint as beverage manager. I was thrilled at the opportunity and am beyond grateful to be working here today.

Q What is your average day like?

It starts with a quick inventory and ordering of what's needed [while] checking pricing and profit margins to make sure I am staying below my cost goal. I also serve at Viewpoint, so I like to check in with my fellow servers to see if they have any questions on the wines. Since it's a brewery, I often offer assistance with service to elevate the wine game. When I have extra time, I go online and catch up on wine news.

Q How has the pandemic shaped your role?

COVID-19 has crushed the restaurant world and it breaks my heart that so many restaurants are struggling to survive. Viewpoint was absolutely blessed to already have a huge outdoor space, so we have not had to suffer like so many others. I wouldn't say my role has changed too much. I am just trying my hardest to spread the ordering around to as many reps I can.

Q What are you doing for your mental health through all the turmoil?

I've been exercising as much as possible. On my days off I spend time with my boyfriend, Ryan, and get our workouts in through long walks, runs, hikes, and taking my dog, Sir Kensington, to the beach.

Q You have ten minutes and one bottle of wine. What are you drinking and who are you with?

Attempting to choose one specific bottle of wine for this answer is torture, so I will describe the wine instead. It would be big, bold, juicy, and full-bodied, with a perfect balance of fruit and alcohol—the kind of wine so mouth-watering that every sip you take drives you to moan over how delicious it is. I would be with my best friend, Steph, and we would be enjoying a bountiful cheese plate! *TM*

San Diego-based wine journalist Michelle Metter is the cofounder and director of SommCon USA. The Tasting Panel and The SOMM Journal are proud supporters of SommCon and its mission of continuing education and training for the global wine industry. Follow her on Instagram @michellemettersd.

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TAKING INVENTORY YOUR BUSINESS, YOUR VOICES

If you could transform one thing about the U.S. hospitality industry in 2021, what would it be?



Gregory Huston

Lead bartender, Elm & Good, Dallas, TX

Honestly, [considering that] what's been going on in 2020 is most likely going to continue in 2021, the biggest thing to me is restaurants, bars, and clubs all getting on the same page about the way we treat this pandemic. While so many smaller restaurants and bars are taking very proactive steps to distance and wear masks, it's like a free-for-all at other places. There are these giant clubs that are able to somehow [flaunt] the regulations, and because of how much money they bring in, the [enforcement agencies] are turning their heads. And I was talking to someone the other day who went to a restaurant in a suburban Texas town where there was no sign on the door about masks; their server was wearing one, but they looked in the open kitchen and no one had a mask on. The [owners] were leaving it up to the employees whether they wanted to wear one. It's a lack of respect for the general public that's prolonging this pandemic, prolonging us from getting back to normal. That affects the smaller places that don't have the money or manpower to survive [much longer].

So [first,] I'm all about another shutdown. It'll suck for us, but in the long run it'll be more beneficial. Besides, some of us are making 40 or 50% less in tips than we used to anyway, so what's the point?

[Second,] setting an industry standard that would actually be enforced would be great.

It'll come down to ownership—what their individual standards are and [whether they're] more concerned about money than public health. But since restaurants are the main scapegoat, we really need to show that we do care. There are many other things I'd like to change about the industry—but until this changes, nothing else will.

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Carlin Karr

Wine director, Frasca Hospitality Group, Boulder, CO

The obvious answer is that restaurants need to be reopened with the end of COVID. Certainly Bobby [Stuckey, MS and Frasca partner] will continue to fight for the industry with the Independent Restaurant Coalition; I don't think there will be many restaurants left a month from now without government support. Everyone's just waiting on the supposed stimulus. Before I never would have said something like, "Government needs to help restaurants," but now, it's a thing.

[Meanwhile,] the [issue] of how restaurants operate and how they're structured is all coming to a head. This will have to be a year of incredibly difficult transformation. It's not just about COVID; it's about a lot of hard questions and decisions. A lot of people

just aren't coming back to work, and the "why" of that is pay inequality: The reality is that they're making more on unemployment than they would be working. So we're not even going to be able to rehire staff unless we're asking: What is a fair wage? The inequity between back-of-house and front-of-house has to be addressed and has to be solved. How are we structuring our operations? The hours, everything. We have to transform the industry in order for it to evolve into the future. The next generation is not like our generation; they don't want to work 50–60 hours a week the way we're OK with working.

And it's so difficult because restaurants already run on very small margins, and labor is what's really going to kill you. To not rely on tipped minimum wages and pay everyone appropriately means raising prices, which means guests need to be OK with paying more across the board. They need to be comfortable paying \$20 for a salad and \$30 for a burger. But that didn't work

for Union Square Hospitality Group; they really tried, with the most qualified team of professionals to execute it, and basically quietly gave up.

So there has to be a cultural shift, there has to be a societal shift, and it has to [start with] leadership. Perhaps some sort of government assistance can be a way to ease into this change, but I don't think everyone realizes how difficult reopening is going to be [regardless]. It's not as though we're going to be starting at 100%; it didn't happen that way last summer. We'll reopen at 25%, 50%, 75%; it's going to be gradual.

In the meantime, can you pay your rent? How many nights do you have to be open to pay it? How many bodies have to be in the dining room to pay it? Right now, I'm looking out the windows of Frasca, and across the street, most of the windows are boarded up. These small businesses can't survive if the rent is too expensive. It doesn't take a finance expert to figure that out. **LT**



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Cork & Fork at Work

A FRENCH FAMILY WITH FIVE CENTURIES OF HISTORY IN CHAMPAGNE
CATERS TO WASHINGTON, D.C.'S DISCRIMINATING PALATES

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CORK & FORK



Cork & Fork CEO Antoinette Landragin with her father, founder Dominique Landragin.



Cork & Fork's Logan Circle storefront.


With a legacy in the wine business dating back to the 16th century, the guidance of an experienced flying winemaker, and the savvy of a CEO tapped into market trends, Cork & Fork has earned its reputation as one of Washington, D.C.'s top retail wine outlets.

Dominique Landragin and his wife, Anna, opened their shop in northern Virginia in 2005 before settling into their current space in the District's thriving Logan Circle neighborhood. But the pedigree of the Landragin family goes back 500 years to Champagne, and Dominique's grandfather and father both worked in Champagne houses. With bubbly flowing in his veins, Dominique studied in the region as well as in Burgundy and went on to become first a sought-after sparkling-winemaking consultant in France and Australia, then the president of Prince Michel Vineyard and Winery in Virginia, a role he held until 1993.

In 2017, the couple passed the torch of ownership to their daughter, company CEO Antoinette Landragin, whose training through the Wine & Spirit Education Trust and Wine Scholar Guild and experience as a wine buyer serve her well in promoting the business' mission. The focus of their 1,200 offerings is on estate-grown and -vinified wines crafted by small producers that practice natural, polyculture, sustainable, and Biodynamic farming and minimal-intervention winemaking, explains Antoinette, who describes the selection as "quality-driven, elegant, balanced, and food-friendly." The team also considers suppliers' policies concerning fair wages, diversity and local hires, employee benefits such as educational opportunities, and contributions to the community.

When it comes to what her customers are buying, Antoinette has recently seen rosé losing ground to natural and orange wines; an increased interest in bottles coming out of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and, to a lesser extent, Mexico and Uruguay; and an uptick in sales of bubbly, including Crémants and sparklers from England and South Africa. "Producers are trending away from overripe fruit and leaning more to balanced alcohol, zero sugar, [and] less oak," she points out. "Terroir is center stage, and there is emphasis on amphora wines and [other examples of] experimentation." Price is also a factor, of course; luckily, the Landragin family's experience in running not only the flagship store but two (since-closed) satellite locations during the Great Recession prepared them for the economic fallout of local lockdowns. Tweaking inventory to account for a decline in average sale price per bottle, they saw an increase in sales of wines under \$20 from 5% to 25% between April and October.

Until the pandemic, Cork & Fork held popular weekly in-store master classes led by wine educators, winemakers, importers, distributors, and certified staff; they have since transitioned to online classes held five times monthly, which are booked through April 2021. In October, they introduced a new format that included the delivery of three-course meals made by Michelin-starred local restaurants to attendees before the tasting. "Our patrons are well traveled and understand the importance of food and wine pairings," says Antoinette.

In short, even during a pandemic, Antoinette believes the rewards of owning Cork & Fork still outweigh the challenges. "The most important priority for us is always to maintain good relationships with each and every single person we meet," she says. "[We have] the great opportunity to contribute culturally to the Washington, D.C., Logan Circle corridor and beyond by providing a large selection of quality wine, ongoing wine education, wine advice, and food-pairing assistance." 

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When Cravings Mean Savings

START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT WITH THESE BUDGET-FRIENDLY CHEESES

Even in normal times, New Year's resolutions don't tend to have staying power. Many of us resolve to diet more and spend less in January, but who needs that kind of deprivation right now? What if you could spend less and eat better?

These five cheeses are all overachievers, delivering way more quality and pleasure than their price would suggest. I have no clue why they don't cost more given that they outshine more expensive competitors. What I do know is that you will sacrifice nothing whatsoever in budget-balancing with these beauties.

Los Cameros (*mixed milk, Spain*): Blending three milks helps producers keep costs down; cow's milk balances the higher cost of sheep's and goat's milk. It also helps a cheesemaker manage seasonal fluctuations in supply. This 6-pound wheel from a family-run creamery in the Rioja region is largely cow's milk (at least 60%), with sheep's milk in second place by volume. Matured for six months, it develops a rustic natural rind and aromas of brown butter, warm cream, and roasted nuts. The flavor starts off sweet but ends with tang—a contribution from the goat's milk, perhaps.


Extra Aged Cheddar by Face Rock Creamery (*cow's milk, Oregon*): This relatively new creamery on the Oregon coast specializes in cheddar, and its two-year-old block cheddar overdelivers for the price. It's fruity, buttery, creamy, nutty—great for snacking, for melting, or for pairing with a favorite IPA.

Mezzo Secco by Vella Cheese Company (*cow's milk, California*): From the same creamery that makes Dry Jack, a Golden State classic, Mezzo Secco ("half dry") is a younger wheel made with raw milk. Compared to Dry Jack—another great value, relying instead on pasteurized milk—the four-month-old Mezzo Secco is moister and smoother, with a melting texture and an aroma of nuts, hay, and stable. The flavors are mild, milky, and expertly balanced between sweetness, saltiness, and acidity. You might struggle to find a wine that this snackable cheese *doesn't* work with.

Piave Vecchio (*cow's milk, Italy*): One of my favorite partners for sparkling wine, Piave is a mountain cheese

made by a cooperative in the Veneto region. The wheels labeled *vecchio* have been matured at least ten months and have a firm texture reminiscent of a young Parmigiano-Reggiano, with the toasted-walnut fragrance of Comté and the butterscotch notes of aged Gouda. Pair it with Oloroso Sherry or Rainwater Madeira on an end-of-meal cheese tray.



Fourme d'Ambert (*cow's milk, France*): Made in the Auvergne region, this luscious, buttery, mellow blue wins over even blue-cheese skeptics. Robert Courtine, an eminent French food writer of the mid-20th century, called Fourme d'Ambert "cheese poetry." It is creamier than Stilton, less peppery than Roquefort. Pass the walnut bread. 



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A Fitting *Tribute*

CHRIS BENZIGER REFLECTS ON
HIS NEW LINE AND 40 YEARS OF
FAMILY WINEMAKING

by Nell Jerome

Chris Benziger of Benziger Family Winery, which has released a new line, Tribute, in honor of its 40th anniversary.



There are legions of wine brands,

but only a few lucky ones have an authentic story to tell, and fewer still have a true legacy to carry on. Benziger Family Winery has both, and when you meet Chris Benziger, you soon discover just how seriously he takes his dedication to his family's business. While the winery itself has been spared—twice—from wildfire damage, Benziger's home was destroyed in a 2017 fire; after evacuating in the middle of the night, he made sure his family and pets—including a tarantula—were safe before returning to rescue about 30 bottles of family wine by throwing them in the pool. (He has the burns on his legs to prove it.)

The youngest of four brothers, Chris grew up working on Wegener Ranch in the Sonoma Valley village of Glen Ellen. After his brother, Mike, fell in love with the property and moved there in 1980, he convinced their father to join him, and the rest of the family followed from New York. "My brothers purchased it from a doctor who had vineyards on the property," Benziger explains, "but the doctor was more focused on his cannabis plants, which he liked to call 'Cannabis Sauvignon.'" The Benzigers originally renamed it Glen Ellen Winery, and by 1988, their first wine had reached a production of 2.6 million cases. Five years later, they sold the Glen Ellen Proprietor's Reserve line of wines to Heublein Inc. so that they could focus on terroir-driven and Biodynamic wines.

At a time when wine consumers were largely unfamiliar with organic,




Biodynamic, and sustainable wine-growing practices, Benziger Family Winery set out to establish some of the highest standards in California with its environmental efforts under the belief that it was simply the right thing to do. Under Benziger's stewardship, the ranch is now covered with rows of vineyards planted strategically on a mix of soils from basalt to lava rock—in his words, a "geological lasagna." Sheep and two shaggy cows named Flower and Daisy wander the property, which also includes an insectary and a water retention pond. The flora and the fauna play important roles, from removing overgrown crops and fertilizing the grounds to pest control. As Benziger notes, "When you buy a ranch of vineyards, it doesn't come with a book—so we wrote one."

And the rest is, well, history. Ever since the first varietal they harvested in 1980—a Sauvignon Blanc fermented in dairy trucks—won Best of Show at the



Sonoma County Fair, Benziger Family Winery has been crafting its legacy through its wines. Last year was no exception: Though 2020 was filled with challenges, it also marked the winery's 40th anniversary, a milestone that the Benzigers celebrated with a new line.

Fittingly called Tribute, it includes a Cabernet, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and Pinot Noir, all of which are packaged in an elegant bottle with an eye-catching cartouche. The wines, each a modernized yet classic expression of their respective grape, overdeliver far beyond their suggested retail price point of \$15. The single-vineyard Chardonnay is creamy but not obviously oaky, while the single-vineyard Sauvignon Blanc expresses the crisp citrus characteristics that have helped the varietal become one of the fastest-growing last year in terms of sales, according to Nielsen data. The Pinot Noir blends the best fruit from the estate vineyards in the Monterey and the Paicines AVAs—imparting a flavor profile that's both earthy and fruity. Finally, Tribute's Cabernet Sauvignon is a bold and complex version of the winery's signature varietal as well as a fabulous value. Benziger, it should be noted, is quick to thank The Wine Group for the success of the new label: "We couldn't have done it without [them]," he says of the Livermore-based company, which purchased Benziger Family Winery and Imagery Winery (also founded by the Benziger family) in 2015. "This wine honors them as well."

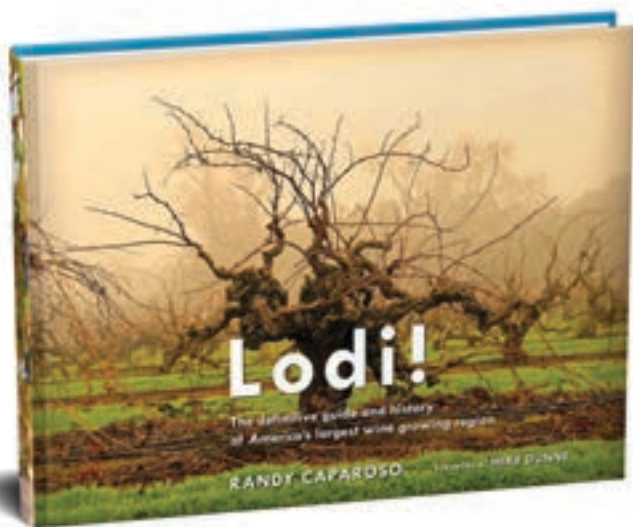
Tribute wines are available at select retail and restaurant accounts nationwide. For more information, visit tributewine.com. 



A New Look at Lodi

WINE VETERAN AND TASTING
PANEL CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
RANDY CAPAROSO IS SET TO
PUBLISH A BOOK ON THE REGION

by Bruce Neyers




I've known Randy Caparoso for over three

decades now. I've sold wine to him and I've bought wine from him. I've sought his advice on everything from grape sourcing to restaurants. He's one of the most fascinating information resources to pass my way in my career, and he has finally distilled much of his knowledge into a book that's billed as "The Definitive Guide and History of America's Largest Wine Growing Region," due for release this spring.

Randy has made his home in Lodi for the past ten years, after moving from Hawaii to the mainland U.S. to oversee the wine lists for Roy Yamaguchi's restaurant group. Since then, he's worked as a writer, a consultant, and, perhaps most important, a communications director for the Lodi Winegrape Commission. Over much of this same period, we at Neyers Vineyards have increased our use of Lodi-grown grapes, and we have witnessed many of our friends and neighbors do the same.

A book like this is especially important now, with the wine industry going through a period of substantial change. Randy both captures the history of Lodi and explores the technical elements that have made this grape-growing region so vital to California.

For more information, view the Kickstarter campaign that Randy launched to see the project to fruition at kck.st/2E7HKmu. 

Bruce Neyers is the owner/grower of Neyers Vineyards and former national sales director for Kermit Lynch Wine Imports.



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new releases

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**SUPER-PREMIUM TEQUILA
MIJENTA AIMS TO RAISE
THE STANDARD FOR
MODERN SPIRITS BRANDS**

The Blanco expression of new super-premium tequila brand Mijenta is showcased in the Bonito cocktail with génepy and jalapeño-lemongrass-cucumber syrup at Kahlo Modern Mexican Cuisine in New York, NY.



story by Courtney Schiessl
photos by Doug Young

Kahlo's Granizo cocktail features
Mijenta Tequila Blanco, lime, and
spiced tamarind puree.



"If you had a clean sheet of paper and were given total freedom to create a brand, what would you create?" asks Mike Dolan.

"That's how I approached

Mijenta." When he left his role as CEO of Bacardi in October 2017, he took some time to travel to Mexico, visiting not only Mexico City but spots more off the beaten path like Guadalajara and Oaxaca. Though Dolan was already a fan of tequila, the trip allowed him to see the country and its signature spirit through a new lens—and it sparked an idea for a brand that would serve as an "entry point into [Mexican] culture," in his words. "What I like about tequila is the opportunity to tell stories," he says. "Tequila is the keyhole into the world of real Mexico."

Through a mutual friend, he met maestra tequilera Ana Maria Romero, and the two teamed up to craft an outstanding tequila founded on the pillars of community, quality, and sustainability that could serve as a true ambassador of its homeland. Now Mijenta has launched in the U.S. with two expressions, a Blanco and a Reposado, but that's just the beginning for this up-and-coming producer of artisanal, super-premium spirits.

Building a Brand from the Ground Up

To make Mijenta a reality, Romero and Dolan traveled through the region of Jalisco to gain insight into the terroir. You can tell just by looking how distinct the highlands (*los altos*) are from the lowlands (*el valle*): In the latter, the soil is deep black, while in the former, it's a rich, iron-y red.

This difference is reflected not only in the agave but in the resulting tequilas. In the highlands, the agave receives more sunlight, developing more natural sugar that in turn increases richness and mouthfeel in the finished spirit; the red clay soil, meanwhile, imparts fruit and floral tones. "They have very different taste profiles," says Dolan. "The



Mijenta founder Mike Dolan's travels through Mexico inspired the brand, which he created in collaboration with maestra tequilera Ana Maria Romero.

more you get into tequila, the more you realize the importance of terroir.” After choosing to focus on the highlands, Romero further narrowed her selection to individual rows of plants, pinpointing the best as the source for Mijenta.

This exacting mentality carried over into the distilling process, and because of Romero’s friendship with the distiller, Casa Tequilera de Arandas’ Miriam Lopez Montaño, the Mijenta team was allowed to be intimately involved throughout—a rare advantage in the category. “Normally the distilleries don’t like the master blender to come into their distillery,” says Dolan. “The relationship between the two of them allowed Ana unfettered access . . . throughout the process, so that was a great plus to us.”

Overall, Dolan and Romero opt for traditional production methods such as slow cooking and long fermentations to coax out rich flavors like vanilla, caramel, and honey. The tequilas are also unfiltered, which “lets you taste the real agave,” according to Dolan. The Blanco rests in stainless-steel vats for 45 days before bottling and the Reposado ages for six months in a blend of American white oak, French oak, and French acacia casks. “It began with great tequila,” says Dolan. “Everyone we talk to says the same thing: We love the taste. That is what is universal.”

A New Standard for Sustainability

From the beginning, the Mijenta team was also determined to integrate both environmental and social sustainability into as many aspects of the brand as possible, from sourcing to product packaging to the tequila itself, which is additive-free. All agave plants used for Mijenta, for example, are farmed without the use of pesticides, which is just as important to the health of the land as it is to that of the plants themselves.

As for the packaging, the bottle glass is locally sourced and the caps are enclosed in biodegradable plastic. Both the labels and boxes are made from agave waste at a local paper mill, and each label is affixed by hand rather than by a machine. While this means that the packaging may occasionally reflect tiny imperfections, Dolan prefers it this way. “That 5% of the time where the label might be slightly askew shows that this bottle was touched by a human being,” he says.



Kahlo manager Martha Alonso with Mijenta’s Irina Manoliu, Mike Dolan, and Elisa Lopez.

“Oftentimes, [they’re] people—usually women—who wouldn’t otherwise have a job, and this brings in incremental income for them.”

Even if such practices are more expensive for the company to implement, Mijenta is determined to be a sustainability leader, raising the bar in hopes of driving a seismic shift among major players in the spirits industry. “A lot of the choices we made were ones that cost more,” says Dolan. “But if we can afford it, why can’t big companies? We have aggressively and consciously staked out a position on sustainability in order to set the standard that we hope others will follow.”

“Por La Gente”

It was important for both Dolan and Romero to make the birthplace of Mijenta—which draws its name from the phrase *mi gente*, or “my people”—intrinsic to its brand identity. “I didn’t want to simply produce an alcohol brand but something that was really reflective of the culture, the people, the arts of Mexico,” says Dolan. Take the strikingly modern label, which depicts the Jalisco highland landscape, its pale pink hue a nod to the cotton candy-like color of the sky against the red soil; Dolan hopes it creates conversations about the place from which it comes and the people who make it.

Mijenta also has initiatives in the works to share elements of that culture with consumers in the U.S.; for instance, it's sponsoring a young graffiti artist from Guadalajara to create art in both her hometown and Los Angeles. "It's about giving North Americans access to better understand Mexico," says Dolan, "and about giving access to North America to artists in Mexico who wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity."

The brand also works to support and give back to the community of the people who make Mijenta, particularly the jimadores who painstakingly harvest the agave. Dolan is adamant that

all members of the Mijenta team are referred to by name, not just title, on the website and in marketing materials, and the company has also created a 501(c)(3) called the Mijenta Community Foundation; while its specific goals are still in the works—"We want to make sure the community is part of the process," says Dolan—the foundation will likely focus on providing access to health care and other resources.

The idea to incorporate a philanthropic aspect into Mijenta was cemented when Dolan visited a small family-run distillery during one of his early trips to Mexico. When he asked via a translator what might be helpful


for the local community, they didn't know how to respond. "No one has ever asked us that question before," he recalls them saying. "They only want to know the cheapest price." Though such actions may seem unrelated to "having a great product or great branding," Dolan acknowledges, "it's an important part of the whole project. We're trying to do something that does well by all the people involved—not just the people who are investors or owners."

Launching Into a Prime Market

After launching its Blanco expression last September and the Reposado in December, Mijenta shows no signs of slowing down. An Añejo tequila is already aging in casks in Guadalajara, and a Cristalino is planned for release in late 2021 or early 2022; three mezcals made from three different agave species are also in the works.

Though the impact of COVID-19 on the on-premise sector changed the brand's launch plan, Dolan has opted to see the necessary pivot as a positive. Rather than doing a traditional launch in a few states, Mijenta focused on e-commerce availability in as many states and countries as possible, with rollouts across Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean scheduled for the first quarter of 2021.

All signs point to this being an excellent time to launch high-quality, super-premium agave-based spirits in the U.S. market as well. Premium tequila in particular experienced breakout growth throughout 2020; in a November report, the IWSR forecasted strong growth for both tequila and mezcal through 2024, particularly in e-commerce channels.

"There is a growing appreciation for better, more refined tequilas," says Dolan. "As people are becoming more sophisticated about tequila, their standards are rising." He likens the phenomenon to the evolution of the whiskey category that began roughly a decade ago, when more consumers made the move from blended expressions to single malts that speak to their place of origin. "Now consumers are looking for the [tequila] equivalent of the single malt," adds Dolan. "They want to know exactly where it came from, what the story is, and what makes it unique. That's what we are benefiting from right now." 



Navigating Through the “COVID Crazies”

THE VIEW FROM ON-PREMISE

Restaurant management involves many challenges, but nothing has compared to working through this pandemic.

After our immediate closure last March, the Los Angeles-area restaurant where I serve as general manager reopened its patio in June. The first guests would reach for a hug and quickly pull back, remembering there was no contact allowed. They would cry and say, “Thank you for being open—I have not seen a single person in three months. I’m scared. I feel so alone. It is so nice to see a familiar face.” It was touching (though not literally).

But while most people were thrilled and grateful to be dining out again, it quickly became evident that some had been infected with what I call the “COVID Crazies.” They displayed strange and unusual behaviors, seeming to forget that we were in the middle of a worldwide crisis.

Symptoms ranged widely. One guest argued with me about menu prices to the point that he became upset, threatening to harm me along with my 17-year-old hostess if they weren’t lower upon his next visit. He was supposedly joking, but the owner of our establishment soon called him to tell him not to worry about the expense, as he was not welcome to return. A party of women who didn’t understand the concept of a corkage fee decided to open their wine themselves, assuming it meant they would not have to pay the charge. When I told them otherwise, they chose to leave—and to complain to other tables on the way out about our unreasonable decisions. These are just two examples, of course; there were so many others.



PHOTO: AXXEL6 VIA ADOBE STOCK

The eagerness shown by guests who have not seen one another in too long speaks volumes. The happiness on their faces because they’ve enjoyed a meal outside their home means a lot.

I’d like to give these guests the benefit of the doubt and assume that their behavior is due to the current circumstances—that the Crazies will be cured when the virus is. We work hard to put people at ease and feel safe about going out to restaurants. The eagerness shown by guests who have not seen one another in too long speaks volumes. The happiness on their faces because they’ve enjoyed a meal outside their home means a lot. There is an exhilaration in having a cocktail on a patio that was freshly made by a professional bartender versus a drink you’ve botched at home.

On top of that, our team has become united, supporting each other fully. We

do the best we can. We show up.

My life’s purpose is to feed and nourish people—to provide a light in the dark, help create memories, and build a rapport with repeat customers who become friends. I am reminded of the following quote by motivational speaker Jana Stanfield: “I cannot do all the good that the world needs, but the world needs all the good that I can do.” And that is good enough for me. **LE**

Questions or comments about your own industry experiences? Send Roberts an email at 100proofemma@gmail.com or reach out to her through her YouTube channel, 100 Proof Emma, or Instagram @100proofemma.

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SHINING A NEW LIGHT

OLE SMOKY MOONSHINE ADDS FOUR READY-TO-DRINK
COCKTAILS TO ITS BRIMMING PORTFOLIO

STORY BY ERIC MARSH / PHOTOS BY SHAWN POYNTER

Ole Smoky president of
wholesale Michael Bender
and co-founder/president
of consumer experience and
operations Cory Cottongim
at The Holler distillery in
Gatlinburg, TN.





Michael Bender at The Holler.

MOONSHINE:

To the unenlightened, it might simply be viewed as an illegal, fiery remnant of the rural South. Those of us with a beverage background, however, may know that it's an unaged, typically corn-based spirit—essentially a white whiskey—with a fascinating history. During the Whiskey Rebellion, moonshiners were revered by some as heroes for standing up to the nascent U.S. government as it tried to impose new taxes on alcohol; by the Prohibition era, they had established a widespread crime syndicate that allowed them to ramp up production with demand. The bootleggers who ran their product took to souping up their car engines to increase their chances of outrunning police—and then to racing one another on their days off, eventually forming an organization that evolved to become NASCAR.

Though demand for moonshine died down after the 21st Amendment was

ratified, it continued to be a tradition in southern Appalachia. Part of that tradition was sharing Mason jars full of the incendiary liquid among family and friends; perhaps a lesser-known part of it involved flavoring the contents of those jars in creative ways, since moonshine's value lay in its potency rather than its taste profile.

Shortly after Ole Smoky Moonshine became the first brand in Tennessee to legally distill and sell moonshine in 2010, it began developing variations on the theme, and innovation hasn't ceased since. While its Original and White Lightnin' expressions are exactly what you'd expect moonshine to be—clear, 100-proof spirits—the brand now offers a compendium of moonshines and whiskeys in flavors ranging from the straightforward, like Blackberry and Apple Pie, to the more adventurous, such as Sour Watermelon Moonshine and Mango Habanero Whiskey; its Peanut Butter Whiskey, which was released just a

year ago, has already won ten international spirit awards.

Given what CEO Robert Hall calls its “history of crafting great-tasting spirits in a range of eyebrow-raising flavors,” then, it seems only natural that the brand has responded to the explosive popularity of ready-to-drink cocktails in recent years by creating a line of its own. Last July, Ole Smoky released four canned moonshine cocktails formulated after the most popular libations served at its distillery, bar, and event space in Nashville, 6th & Peabody: Apple Pie Ginger, Blackberry Lemonade, Mountain 'Rita, and Mountain Mule. Clocking in at 9% ABV, the 12-ounce cans are sold in liquor stores at prices around \$13 per four-pack.

Ole Smoky's flagship distillery, The Holler, in Gatlinburg, Tennessee—which welcomed over 2 million visitors in 2019—is the most-visited distillery in the world. Gatlinburg, meanwhile, is one of the state's most-visited towns,

as it's positioned at the entrance of Great Smoky Mountains National Park (the mountain range that the brand is named for). Tourists who visit the distillery learn about moonshine and southern Appalachian culture, and as an added bonus, they often get to taste products in development. The distillery acts as a sort of test kitchen in this way, and the team takes into consideration the feedback they've received from guests when determining which new flavors will be most successful in the market. This approach to R&D seems to be working, if the fact that Ole Smoky

now operates a total of four distilleries in Tennessee that were visited by over 4.5 million people in 2019 alone is at all telling—it evidently knows what the public wants.

It goes without saying that the coronavirus pandemic has put a damper on visitor traffic. But Ole Smoky “is an authentic brand that brings fun, great taste, quality, and a good time to consumers” on all occasions, says Hall—even “in the tough and challenging environment we have all been living in for the past several months.” In fact, he asserts, business has thrived;

reflecting the increase in retail liquor sales nationwide since the pandemic began, “many consumers [new to the brand] have started buying Ole Smoky products, and our existing fans have been buying more. So sales of Ole Smoky have increased very considerably during the pandemic.”

In a June 2020 story on canned cocktails, *Forbes* noted that while Nielsen had reported 80% growth in RTD beverages from April 2019 to April 2020, the pandemic was only accelerating that growth. And according to Fact MR, the RTD beverage sector that is currently worth \$25 billion is predicted to surpass \$150 billion by 2030. So the time to establish your brand in the RTD market is . . . yesterday?

In fact, Ole Smoky began developing its line in 2019, once it was apparent that RTD cocktails were not an ephemeral trend but rather a new category with a skyward trajectory. The team was confident that the company “was strong enough to compete in the category against some of the biggest brands in the spirits industry, even though [it] was less than ten years old,” according to Hall, who adds that it gives loyal customers yet another way to enjoy Ole Smoky, “deliver[ing] the great taste consumers are looking for in a convenient, portable format that they can enjoy whenever and wherever they choose.”

Vice president of marketing Will Ensign says that while “taste is the most important factor in a good RTD, consumers are looking for authenticity as well. This is one of the reasons why we felt it was important to craft our Ole Smoky Moonshine Canned Cocktails with real Tennessee moonshine, the same as you can enjoy in our broad line of products sold in Mason jars.” Ole Smoky has sold its moonshine in this retro, rustic packaging—which stands out on backbars and retail shelves—since its inception, and in that spirit, the RTD cocktail cans mimic their design: The graphics depict a Mason jar containing the cocktail inside, along with garnishes, and near the top of the container is the image of a glass screw thread.

The brand came out of the gate strong with its statewide summer launch; president of wholesale Michael Bender says that after it appeared in Tennessee “liquor stores, local marinas,



Moonshine pours straight from the still into a jar at The Holler.




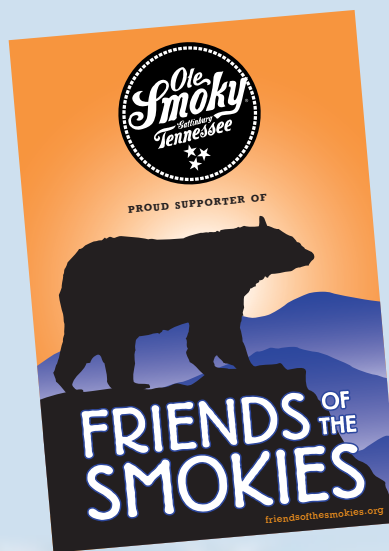


A colorful display of moonshine in The Holler's gift shop.

and select restaurants and bars [to] overwhelmingly positive customer response, we decided to expand to our southern neighbors in Georgia." Their response has been equally favorable.

Ole Smoky moonshines and whiskeys are available in all 50 states, and the team plans to expand distribution of its RTDs in early 2021; as Ensign explains, "We are making sure we have the production capacity to satisfy the very high demand for the products before we commit to other markets." The continuing aluminum-can shortage, caused by overwhelming demand for canned beverages during the pandemic, will also factor into their plans.

Bender adds that "as we continue to build distribution, I believe these ready-to-drink cocktails present a great opportunity to introduce the Ole Smoky brand to a new group of consumers who might not have tried our moonshine or whiskey"—not to mention expose them to the rich history of one of America's oldest spirit traditions. 



A PARTNERSHIP IN PRESERVATION

Ole Smoky partners with the nonprofit organization Friends of the Smokies to raise funds for the preservation and protection of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which encompasses over 800 square miles in the southern section of the Appalachian Mountains. A portion of the sales from Ole Smoky's Friends of the Smokies Blackberry Moonshine—sold in limited-edition commemorative jars exclusively at the brand's distilleries—benefits the organization.



PHOTO COURTESY OF OLE SMOKY

BLIND

TASTING

Time-Favored Flavors

THE DUEL FOR
THE BEST-TASTING
HARD SELTZER

photos by Devin Berko

Last year, the **Tasting Panel staff** hand-delivered cans of hard seltzer in brown paper bags to unsuspecting beverage buyers as they attended various events we hosted around Los Angeles and asked them to take part in a tasting of about seven different brands. The willing participants put their cocktail or wine glasses aside to sip through little plastic cups filled with an assortment of low-ABV, fruit-flavored hard seltzers. After a month of these surprise tastings, we tallied the scores to find that we had a unanimous victor: High Noon.

A year later, the plethora of new hard-seltzer brands on the market convinced us that another blind-tasting challenge was necessary. With no events to host in the midst of a pandemic, however, we decided to bring the judges to us. Safely seating all six of them in separate rooms of our office, we prepared three rounds of six flavors from nine different competitors.

For the second time in two years, it was a shootout: High Noon once again stood tall against its challengers as the best-tasting hard-seltzer brand.



Taking the top slot in six flavor categories, High Noon made a splash for the second year in a row by earning the title of the best-tasting hard-seltzer brand.

The Judges

Meridith May

Publisher/editor-in-chief, *The Tasting Panel* and *The SOMM Journal*



Eric Marsh

Deputy editor, *The Tasting Panel* and *The SOMM Journal*



Ray Brych

Category manager, Gelson's Supermarkets, Southern California



"Boom! When I found out the results, I wasn't surprised. High Noon's flavors were the most balanced, crisp, and refreshing in the mix."

Jessie "JABS" Birschbach

Senior wine & beer editor, *The Tasting Panel* and *The SOMM Journal*



Jake Cheung

Marketing director, Gelson's Supermarkets, Southern California



"We find that High Noon has the most authentic-tasting fruit."

Edwin Linares

Beverage specialist, Vendome Wine & Spirits, California



"Now that I know High Noon scored highest in all flavor categories, I can see why we are always sold out of the brand in our store. They pack a lot of flavor into each expression."

THE BRANDS

(listed alphabetically)

Bon Viv
Bud Light
Corona
High Noon
Mighty Swell
Smirnoff
Truly
Vizzy
White Claw

THE RESULTS

Grapefruit

First Place: High Noon
Second Place: Truly

Lemon Lime/Lime

First Place: High Noon
Second Place: Bud Light

Cherry/Cherry Lime/Black Cherry

First Place: High Noon
Second Place: Mighty Swell
Third Place: Bud Light

Peach

First Place: High Noon
Second Place: Mighty Swell

Pineapple/Pineapple Mango

First Place: High Noon
Second Place: Truly

Watermelon/Watermelon Mint

First Place: High Noon
Second Place: Mighty Swell

For the second year in a row, our blind tasting was unanimous: The best-tasting hard-seltzer brand was **HIGH NOON.**

Anthony Dias

BLUE *REVIEWS*

Presented by  **BLUE LIFESTYLE**

In each issue, senior editor Anthony Dias Blue selects a wide range of the best wines and spirits from among the more than 500 he samples over the course of a month. The reviews are subjective editorial evaluations, made without regard to advertising, and products are scored on a 100-point scale:

88-89: VERY GOOD

90-94: OUTSTANDING

95-100: CLASSIC

Once products are selected for publication, producers and importers will be offered the option of having their review accompanied by an image (bottle photo or label art) for a nominal fee. There is no obligation to add an image, nor does the decision affect the review or score in any way.

 The “twisty” icon indicates wines sealed with a screwcap closure.

For additional Blue Reviews, go to bluelifestyle.com.

Prices are for 750-mL bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC

93 Pike Road 2018 Shea Vineyard Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$50) Medium ruby color with a bright cherry nose; fresh and silky, with notes of fresh fruit. A graceful and stylish example of what this famous vineyard can produce in competent hands. 

94 Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Clay Court Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$60) Deep ruby color and a velvety texture. Lush and tangy, with notes of black cherry and spice and hints of toasted oak and vanilla; balanced and long.

95 Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Mount Richmond Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$60) Rich ruby color and luscious aromas and flavors of juicy black cherry. Plush and deep yet lifted and elegant; tangy with good length.

93 Etrusca 2018 Velia Red Blend, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$49) Opaque garnet hue and an aromatic berry nose; rich and juicy, with lush notes of generous blackberry. Smooth and deep, with good acid structure; long and delicious. Zinfandel leads the blend.



94 Gamba Vineyards and Winery 2018 Family Ranches Zinfandel, Russian River Valley (\$47) Dark garnet color and a rich berry nose. Refined and dense with black raspberry and pomegranate; opulent and bright, with good acid structure.

95 Ridge Vineyards 2017 Klein Cabernet Sauvignon, Monte Bello Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$85) Spicy and rich on the nose and smooth on the palate. Juicy, dense notes of plum and deep, chewy style; lovely, long, and toasty.



96 Silverado Vineyards 2016 SOLO Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$125) Ripe plum nose; smooth, velvety, and dense, with elegant style. Balanced and complete, this gorgeous wine would be a great cellar addition.

94 Quilceda Creek 2017 CVR Red Wine, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$70) Lush color and a soft, warm, vanilla-inflected nose. Rich, luscious, and toasted, with notes of plum, raspberry, and cherry that go deep on the palate with sweet new oak. Good length and lovely balance.



97 Tierra Roja 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$165) Rich garnet color; creamy texture, and scents of ripe plum and vanilla that persist on the lush palate with flavors of oak, chocolate, mocha, and licorice. Another amazing wine from this underappreciated winery.

OBSSESSION WINE COMPANY

94 Hawkes Wine 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley (\$70) This pure, classic Cab features aromas of plum and spice; a silky texture; and flavors of plum, spice, and toasty oak. Smooth, balanced, and nicely structured; long and deep.

96 Bacigalupi Vineyards 2018 Renouveau Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$82) Hailing from a historic vineyard, this Chard exudes vanilla on both its buttery, toasty nose and its silky palate, where it joins deep flavors of pear and citrus. Lush without being heavy, it's a magnificent wine. Only 99 cases were made.

94 Dutton-Goldfield 2018 Devil's Gulch Vineyard Pinot Noir, Marin County (\$72) Medium ruby color and a silky texture, with sweet notes of cherry. Tangy and fresh yet rich; generous, long, and delightful.



95 Gary Farrell 2018 Russian River Selection Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$35) Golden color and an aromatic nose. Velvety, rich, and toasty yet crisp, fresh, and elegant, with gorgeous structure and depth.

THE VINCRAFT GROUP

92 E18hteen Vines 2019 Catie's Corner Vineyard Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$28) Golden color and a toasty vanilla nose; silky and fresh. This is a lovely, well-crafted wine, with tangy acidity and a toasted-oak complexity that you'd expect to find in much more expensive bottlings.



92 Morgan Winery 2018 Twelve Clones Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$35) Pale ruby color and a fresh cherry nose. Crisp and bright, with notes of cherry, strawberry, and rhubarb; silky and fresh, charming and long.

92 E18hteen Vines 2018 Brown Ranch Vineyard Pinot Noir, Carneros (\$58) Medium ruby color; smooth, aromatic, and floral, with bright and balanced flavors of juicy cherry, crisp acid structure, and a long finish.

97 Sullivan Rutherford Estate 2013 James O'Neil Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$270) Intense garnet color and a lush, toasty nose. Velvety plum and boysenberry are wrapped in fine acidity and notes of vanilla, toast, spice, licorice, chocolate, and mocha. This is a knockout wine that shows what a great vineyard can achieve.

BLUE REVIEWS



94 Ferrari-Carano 2015 Trésor, Sonoma County (\$55) A dark and aromatic blend of all five Bordeaux varieties. Smooth and ripe, with notes of plum, berries, and spice as well as a nice, complex hint of toasty oak. Long and rich, it's truly a treasure.



90 River Road Vineyards 2018 Mills Cuvée Chardonnay, Russian River Valley (\$30) Smooth, minerally nose and a lush, silky texture. Rich, dense, and balanced, with notes of vanilla; ripe, with good length.



92 River Road Vineyards 2018 Stephanie's Cuvée Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$30) Medium ruby color; scents and flavors of ripe cherry. Smooth and luscious, earthy and long.

95 Covert Wineworks Petit Manseng, Virginia (\$29) This Rhône variety is relatively obscure, but it makes a gorgeous wine: Covert's version, which won a double gold medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition, is crisp and fresh yet lush, juicy, smooth, and rounded, with excellent acid structure and a long finish.

94 VJB Cellars 2017 Estate Montepulciano, Sonoma Valley (\$52) The Belmonte family specializes in Italian varieties, some of which, like Montepulciano, are rarely planted in California. This smooth and mellow expression features nice acidity and a round and lush palate with notes of spice, ripe plum, and blackberry. The result is long, balanced, and lovely.

96 Hertelendy Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$135) The family behind this winery had a long history of winemaking in Hungary before relocating to Napa Valley. Medium garnet color; smooth and spicy, with elegance and finesse defining a floral palate enhanced by notes of blackberry and cassis. Racy and fresh, long and complex.

IMPORTED

92 Champagne Lanson Le Black Label Brut, France (\$42) Balanced and refined yet ripe, rich, and generous with sweet fruit, charm, and good length, this is a marvelous sparkler from an always reliable house.

LANSON INTERNATIONAL AMERICAS



94 Umani Ronchi 2016 Pelago Marche Rosso IGT, Italy (\$56) Deep garnet color; smooth, deep, and velvety, with lush, intense, and ripe flavors that exhibit length and complexity.

VINEYARD BRANDS



92 McKahn Family Cellars 2017 Morning Glass Red Blend, Amador County (\$28) A blend of 76% Grenache, 19% Petite Sirah, and 5% Mourvèdre with a spicy nose and a silky, fresh palate. Juicy and smooth, with hints of vanilla and oak; alluring and impressive.

90 Enrico Serafino 2016 Oudeis Brut, Alta Langa, Italy (\$28)

Golden color; dry yet lush, rich, and ripe with intense fruit as well as minerals and spice. Long and charming.

DALLA TERRA WINERY DIRECT

93 Palladino 2015 Ornato, Barolo, Italy (\$66)

Pale ruby color and a silky texture. Bright, fresh, and elegant, with classic style and a smooth, earthy palate. Complex and deep, with a lasting finish.

ENOTEC IMPORTS

92 Poggio del Moro 2014 Rasea IGT Toscana Sangiovese, Italy (\$50)

Deep garnet color; lush, bright, and juicy, with a base of lively acidity. Silky-smooth, with soft tannins and spice; long and fresh.

GRAPEJUICE GROUP

92 Poggio del Moro 2015 Chianti Colli Senesi Riserva, Italy (\$30)

Brick-red hue, spicy nose, and a creamy texture; juicy and tangy, with the lively plum characteristic of Sangiovese as well as berry notes and soft tannins. Spicy and fresh, it demands to be paired with good Italian food.

GRAPEJUICE GROUP

94 Quinta do Vallado 2018 Superior, Douro, Portugal (\$40)

A red blend with deep, dark color and an earthy nose; rich and smooth, with lush flavors of plum, blackberry, and cassis. Ripe, dense, and nicely structured, it's quite a stunning wine.

QUINTESSENTIAL WINES

96 Almaviva 2018 Puente Alto, Chile (\$145)

This label is a partnership between the Rothschild family and Concha y Toro. Softly aromatic nose, lush garnet color, and a velvety texture, with crisp acidity and a complex blend of flavors defined by plum, spice, and herbs. A splendid Bordeaux-style red blend—equal parts rich, deep, and delicious.

DIAGEO CHATEAU & ESTATE WINES

VALUE

88 7Cellars 2018 The Farm Collection Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$18)

Luscious with notes of juicy cherry; tangy, balanced, and long; a good value. ☺

91 Château Cassier 2019 Espirit Cassier Rosé, Côtes de Provence, France (\$23)

Robust salmon-pink hue; dry, crisp, and aromatic, with fresh, lively flavors of strawberry culminating in a long finish. Charming, balanced, and elegant.

WILSON DANIELS

89 Tussock Jumper 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$12)

The nose of grapefruit carries over to the fresh, citrus-dominant palate. Smooth and clean, tangy and balanced; a great value from a company that sources wine from all over the world. ☺

TRI-VIN IMPORTS

90 Tussock Jumper 2020 Chenin Blanc, South Africa (\$12)

Refreshing, bright, and juicy, with notes of ripe fruit and racy acidity. Lush and generous, it's a totally charming wine at a ridiculously accessible price. ☺

TRI-VIN IMPORTS



90 Angelini Treviso Prosecco DOC, Italy (\$15)

Crisp and virtually dry, this is a Prosecco for Champagne lovers, with a fruity nose, lively bubbles, and soft notes of pear. Smooth and bright; balanced, fresh, and very attractive, with length and elegance.

ANGELINI WINE LTD

91 Angelini 2019 Brachetto d'Acqui DOCG, Italy (\$15)

Pale pink color; foamy, spicy, and sweet, with bright berry notes; smooth, tangy, and long. At only 5.5% ABV, it's a lovable wine to drink in quantity.

ANGELINI WINE LTD



91 7Cellars 2018 The Farm Collection Chardonnay, Arroyo Seco (\$18)

Golden color and a smooth texture. Lush, creamy, and balanced, with notes of ripe pear; rich and dense, with a finish that lasts. ☺

89 Harken 2019 Barrel Fermented Chardonnay, California (\$15)

Golden hue; lush and creamy, with pronounced notes of vanilla and oak and a rich, toasted style. Deep and dense, smooth and layered, balanced and complex—and quite remarkable for the price.

90 Spinelli 2019 Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, Italy (\$9)

Most Americans aren't familiar with this charming variety. Here, it has yielded a fresh and juicy wine, with notes of spice and a smooth texture. It's delightful, with generous style—making for easy drinking on a weekday night. ☺

ENOTEC IMPORTS

92 Four Vines Winery 2018 The Biker Zinfandel, Paso Robles (\$18)

Rich color and a spicy nose; velvety and lush, ripe and dense yet balanced and long, with notes of vanilla, oak, and spice.

BLUE REVIEWS

90 Mermosa Mersecco, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$15)

A dry and golden-hued Oregon sparkler from a Black-owned winery with clean, crisp Chardonnay flavors. Smooth and brightly carbonated, with a long, mellow finish, it's a simple charmer and a good value.



94 Benziger Family Winery 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$15)

What a lovely wine! Fresh and smooth, with bright citrus, crisp acidity, and a long finish; tangy, ripe, and balanced. This earned a double gold medal at the San Francisco International Wine Competition. 🏆

SPIRITS

93 Castle & Key London Dry Gin, USA (\$28)

Elegant aromas of spice and vanilla; lush, sweet, and silky, with complex botanicals. Rich and super smooth, long and deep.

96 Larceny Barrel Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Batch C920, USA (\$141)

Dark amber color and a smooth, sweet nose of oak. Juicy and lush, with layers of flavor as well as good length and complexity.



BROWN-FORMAN

95 Tequila Herradura Legend Añejo Barril Acanalado, Mexico (\$125)

Raisin-like color; rich agave nose, and silky texture. Refined and complex, with a lovely blend of flavors that includes toasted oak and lush agave, culminating in a long and elegant finish.

92 E11EVEN Vodka, USA (\$30)

Mellow yet aromatic vanilla nose and a dry, floral, and smooth palate. Rich, deep, and balanced. 1 liter.

SOH SPIRITS

93 Kikori Whiskey, Japan (\$45)

A pale amber color and a gentle nose form the first impression of this mellow whiskey made from rice grown on the Japanese island of Kyushu. Elegant, delicate, and smooth, with vanilla and floral notes; lovely, balanced, and long.

96 The Dublin Liberties Copper Alley Single Malt Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$85)

Toasty, sweet, and complex, with smooth and irresistible flavors of vanilla and toasted oak joining treacle and toasted hazelnut. Creamy and rich, with stunning depth.

95 The Glendronach Port Wood Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$90)

Silky and refined, with precisely chiseled flavors of baked biscuits, brioche, and toasted almonds. Toasted, lush, and quite lovely; balanced and long.

95 Crystal Head Onyx Agave Vodka, USA (\$55)

Deep, rich nose and a smooth and sumptuous texture. The clean, intense palate displays an obvious note of agave. Elegant, seamless, and concentrated, it's clearly another triumph for this brand.

94 Mr Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur, Australia (\$30)

Pure notes of roasted coffee come through with smooth (though not cloying) sweetness and a sense of authenticity. Silky, rich, toasted, and long, it's great not only in cocktails but in your morning coffee.

92 Tanduay Double Rum, Philippines (\$54)

This well-aged Philippine rum is richly fragrant, with a deep nose of vanilla and a ripe, softly sweet palate of spice and toast and a gentle finish that lingers.

MIDWAY USA



93 Penelope Rosé Cask Finish Straight Limited Release Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$65)

Silky, complex, and aromatic, with a touch of sweetness and notes of dried flowers, spice, and toasted oak. Clean, smooth, and elegant; tangy, fresh, and precise. 🏆

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In each issue, Tasting Panel publisher/editor-in-chief Meridith May selects her favorite wines and spirits of the moment. Check here for the latest arrivals in our offices, the hottest new brands on the market, and an occasional revisited classic.

Publisher's PICKS

PHOTO: JEREMY BALL



WINES



Dark Horse 2019 Pinot Grigio, California (\$8) Pretty pear notes are infused with an essence of white flowers. A signature stony quality and bright acidity keep this white clean and refreshing from start to finish. **89**

E.& J. GALLO



Dark Horse 2019 Rosé, California (\$8) Scents of cranberry and red licorice usher in flavors of wild strawberry, black cherry, and red tea. High-toned acidity offers freshness. **89**

E.& J. GALLO



Fetzer 2019 Shaly Loam Gewürztraminer, Monterey (\$11) Aromas of lychee, peony, vanilla candle wax, and apricot nectar radiate out of the glass.

Vivacious acidity amplifies a pleasurable palate of peach pie and white flowers, thanks to a touch of Muscat. Streamlined notes of lanolin, orange creamsicle, and cashew hitch a ride on a wave of minerality to a long finish. Fermented in stainless steel with partial lees contact. **91**



10 Span Vineyards 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$12) With a 10-foot wingspan, the California condor is the largest bird in North America, and this aptly named blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, and Petite Sirah from Paso Robles and Monterey County is similarly powerful and expansive. The richness that shows through is elegant rather than overwhelming, with a most verdant nose that introduces sweet blueberries and heather. Expressive flavors of violets and jasmine ascend with white-peppered plums and dark chocolate. **91**



THE WINE GROUP



Clos de Nit 2016 Crianza, Montsant DO, Spain (\$13) This isolated DO south of Priorat has soils of loose red sand and limestone. A blend of 40% Garnacha, 40% Cariñena, and 20% Syrah, the wine spends six months in oak and clocks in at 13.5% ABV. Spiced cranberry and pomegranate join flavors and scents of balsamic and jasmine. A slight hint of black pepper marks the finish. **92**

WINESELLERS, LTD

Worthy of a smooch.

French-style double bizou.

Wildly infatuated.

Seriously smitten.

Head over heels in love.



Knotty Vines 2018 Chardonnay, California (\$15)

Lemon blossom and summer pear light up this fresh-tasting white that vibrates with tarragon, sage, and green apple as well as peach and brioche. It's packed with flavor and balanced with fine acidity. **91**

RODNEY STRONG VINEYARDS



Earl Stevens Selections Moscato, California (\$15)

Apricot and orange are both fruity and floral on the nose. This spritzy white lives up to the seductiveness of its variety through succulent notes of mandarin orange and cashew along with spot-on acidity. **90**



Firesteed 2019 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$16) Aromas of pineapple and wet stone lead to a flavor profile of honeysuckle and peach. Minerality creates a lean and crisp experience. **90**

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES



Ara 2020 Single Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$16) In the Maori language, *ara* means "pathway"; all the fruit for this label's wines comes from a single estate. The aromatics, acidity, and balance of citrus and green herbs make this not only an expression of an iconic style but a charismatic example of Marlborough terroir. Lime accents tropical notes of pineapple, banana, and kiwi on the steely and crisp palate with a rush of minerality. **91**

PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINE & SPIRITS



Mercer Bros 2019 Chardonnay, Horse Heaven Hills, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$17)

Dynamic aromas of pineapple, lemon curd, and white tea set the stage. The creamy mouthfeel expresses salted Asian pear, tapioca, and toasted oak on a gliding curve. Midway, sweeter notes of vanilla and toffee come into play, maintaining a sense of sumptuousness on the palate. **91**



Cline Cellars 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County/Contra Costa County (\$17)

Fruit from six vineyards (70% from Sonoma County and 30% from Contra Costa County) compose this American oak-aged red. Luscious aromas of licorice, leather, plum, and cinnamon toast entice the nose before black coffee and blackberry are coated in satin on a palate defined by supple yet structured tannins. Bittersweet dark chocolate carries more dark fruit to a balanced, long, and somewhat spicy finish. **92**



Rocca di Montemassi 2019 Calasole Vermentino, Maremma, Toscana DOC, Italy (\$19) This mineral-driven, earthy, and edgy expression with a flavor profile of Brazil nut and almond has exactly what you look for in a classic Vermentino. Its dry, floral character is heightened by tarragon and lemon zest, and a hint of salinity reminds you that the grapes were grown near the Tuscan coast. **92**



1821 FINE WINE & SPIRITS



Cline Cellars 2019 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$15) The Clines know Sonoma County well enough to produce one of the region's most outstanding Pinot Noirs under \$20. Following aromas of nutmeg and plum, the entry of sassafras and earth on the palate is just the beginning of the wine's expressive journey. After fermenting and settling in stainless steel, the wine is racked and aged for seven months in 40% new French oak with an addition of some American and Eastern European oak. Dark cherry, brush, and cinnamon enter midway on a deluxe mouthfeel and are accompanied by mocha and ginger on the finish. **93**

Publisher's PICKS



Cedar + Salmon 2019 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$19) Stone fruit and wet stone leap from the glass with purity and purpose. Brisk notes of salted pear and lime are set against a backdrop of tightrope acidity and an echo of honeysuckle. This wine exemplifies the elegance that Pinot Gris exhibits in the Willamette. **93**

3 BADGE ENOLOGY



100 Nails Ranch 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$19) Spicy plum and sweet tobacco merge to inspire an awakening on the palate, wrapping around a fruity middle of vanilla, cedar, and ripe notes of blueberry and cherry. The tannins are rustic, the mouthfeel is sturdy, and the high-toned acidity encourages pairing with a variety of cheeses and meats. Aged nine months in 95% French and 5% American oak. **91**

1821 FINE WINE & SPIRITS



Parducci 2018 Small Lot Petite Sirah, Mendocino County (\$18) From Mendocino's heritage vineyard sites, the 2018 vintage depicts the best of the qualities we've come to expect from this velvety, rich red, which aged in oak barrels and redwood tanks. Notes of briar and lavender play a key role on the juicy palate alongside bright acidity. It's more of a gentle giant than a harsh teeth-grabber. **90**

MENDOCINO WINE COMPANY



Formation 2018 Pinot Noir, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$19) Feminine and bright with great acidity, this estate Pinot Noir sings of raspberry and roses. Sweet red berries, including highlights of cherry and cranberry, are surrounded by a powdery chalkiness of dried red-tea leaves and floral notes. **91**

VINO DEL SOL



Pratsch 2019 Grüner Veltliner Rottenpöllen, Niederösterreich, Austria (\$20) Niederösterreich, also known as Lower Austria, comprises eight wine districts close to Vienna in the northeastern corner of the country, along the Lower Danube. Cold fermentation in steel tanks brings out the aromas of this stunning white, which is defined by minerals, white pepper, and a lean citrus character. Clay and peach atop a vanilla undercoat add more dimension. **91**

WINESELLERS, LTD



District 7 2018 Estate Grown Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$20) Scents of cherry, cinnamon, and cedar are pure pleasure. Within the round, voluptuous mouthfeel, cinnamon and hints of oregano and white pepper season a plethora of red berries: cranberry, raspberry, and pomegranate. Aged one year in (25% new) French oak. **92**

SCHEID FAMILY WINES



Château de Seguin 2015 Cuvée Carpe Diem, Bordeaux Supérieur, France (\$20) This 100% Merlot with a fine French profile is a great value: You can taste the earth through slate and dry, chalky tannins. Aromas and texture mingle through notes of plum and plum skin, underbrush, and dark roast coffee. **90**

PLUME RIDGE



Raeburn Winery 2019 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$20) While the 2018 vintage showed a distinct creaminess, the 2019 has a floral profile that's lit from within. Aromas of honeysuckle and baked yellow apple sync up with electric flavors of jasmine and lemon sorbet, while a toastier character accented by crème brûlée adds texture to the finish. **94**

PURPLE BRANDS



Oniros 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Uco Valley, Argentina (\$20) Black cherry and plum jam thread though the palate of this fleshy red. Notes of grilled meat and espresso are backed by a good acid structure whose brightness lingers on the finish. Aged 15 months in French oak. **90**

GRUPO PEÑAFLORES/IMPORTED BY DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS



Tamarack Cellars 2017 Firehouse Red, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$20) A blend of nine grapes: Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Cab Franc with some Mourvèdre, Grenache, Counoise, Sangiovese, and Petit Verdot. After a year in barrel (American, French, and some Hungarian), the individual lots were blended to create this labor-intensive red, which proves its worth through notes of espresso, dark chocolate, and plum skin as well as round, sturdy tannins. Its texture gets creamier as it opens up, leading to a generous, broad finish with touches of slate and black pepper. **91**

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES

**Imagery 2019 Pinot Noir,**

California (\$20) Scented by earth and wild strawberry, this red sees the addition of 5% Petit Verdot for color and body. The forest-floor effect is lightened up by fine acidity as savory notes of chestnut, nutmeg, and characteristic black cherry emerge. Aging four months in (20% new) French oak imparts outstanding texture and supple tannins. **92**

BENZIGER/THE WINE GROUP

**Don Olegario 2019 Albariño, Rías Baixas, Galicia, Spain (\$20)**

Aromas of the seashore combine with lime and fresh-cut grass. With clean notes of lemon drop and nettle, the palate feels salty yet purified—it's crisp, with a spark on the tongue. **90**

KOBAND

**J. Wilkes 2019 Pinot Blanc, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$20)**

Stainless steel-fermented and -aged, this exciting white is a welcome treasure: Pinot Blanc is not planted in high quantities in California, but the Santa Maria Valley is a perfect home for it. Succulent aromas of pear and honeysuckle add depth to a perfume of just-squeezed lime, and on entry, a startling thread of minerality and high-wire acidity keeps the palate dry and edgy. Notes of prickly pear and sage appear on the finish. **93**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Scheid Vineyards 2019 Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Monterey (\$22) An inviting and ethereal nose of salted citrus and sage gives way to a lean and energetic palate of grapefruit zest, kiwi, and white pepper. The finish is crisp with Asian pear and hints of tropical fruit. **92**

**Chalk Hill 2018 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$22)**

Barrel aging for ten months sur lie and 100% malolactic fermentation result in a pillow-like, creamy, voluptuous wine. Lemon curd, mandarin orange, and toasty char awaken the palate. Notes of buttered hazelnut may be unctuous, but this elegant white is certainly not flabby. Its fine acidity and underlying minerality are supported by aromas of crème brûlée and banana. **92**

FOLEY FAMILY WINES

**Concha y Toro Marques de Casa Concha 2018 Syrah, DO Buin, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$22)**

In the Quinta de Maipo Vineyard along the bank of the Maipo River, stony soils contribute to the constitution of this stand-up red: It's a textural beauty that certainly keeps the drinker engaged. Aged in French oak and 5,000-litre foudres for 16 months, it possesses an inky black-purple color and scents of plum skin, espresso, and iron. On the meaty and fleshy palate, boysenberry, white pepper, and roasted coffee combine with chewy tannins. **94**

FETZER VINEYARDS

**Paddy Borthwick 2018 Paper Road Pinot Noir, Wairarapa, New Zealand (\$23)**

Bright cranberry aromas are underscored by earth. The brightness continues on the palate, where it's sparked by cinnamon, white pepper, and underbrush. Fresh red berries and acidity have an invigorating effect. **91**

LEVECKE

**Hanna Winery 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$24)**

Aged in stainless steel on lees, this brisk white offers aromas of lime and nettle. Grapefruit zest, orange cream, and sage transition into a more floral tone midway, joining lemon blossom and a touch of salinity on the finish. **92**

TERLATO WINES

**Château La Nerthe 2019 Les Cassagnes de La Nerthe Côtes-du-Rhône Villages, Rhône Valley, France (\$25)**

This above-average blend of 60% Grenache Noir, 30% Syrah, and 10% Mourvèdre offers dimension, weight, and a silky mouthfeel, sending along scents of coffee and tobacco that also translate on the palate. Raspberry preserves and dark chocolate are buttoned up in a fine coat with good acid structure. Lavender lilt on the finish. **93**

KOBAND

**Cono Sur 2018 20 Barrels Limited Edition Pinot Noir, Valle de Casablanca, Chile (\$25)**

The majority of fruit comes from the winery's El Triángulo Estate in the Valle de Casablanca; the red clay and granitic soils as well as cooling coastal winds make this area perfect for Pinot Noir. Savory scents of dried heather, forest floor, and saffron are heightened by bright pomegranate, and the palate is juicy upon entry, with white-peppered cherries taking hold of supercharged acidity in an earthy core. Rhubarb and Italian herbs play a hand in making this red dynamic. **92**

FETZER VINEYARDS

**Carlos Serres 2012 Gran Reserva, Rioja, Spain (\$25)**

This producer is named for Rioja pioneer Carlos Serres, who established one of the region's first wineries in 1896. His namesake is now a family-owned estate whose vines in coveted Rioja Alta vineyards average 30-plus years of age. Each variety in this blend of 85% Tempranillo, 10% Graciano, and 5% Mazuelo aged separately for 36 months in American and French oak before spending an additional 36 months in bottle. It has a velvet-lined mouthfeel, and its aromas and flavors of chocolate, cherry, and plum are coated in licorice. Sandalwood gives way to savory spice on the finish. **93**

WINESELLERS, LTD

Publisher's PICKS



Mettler Family Vineyards 2018 Epicenter Old Vine Zinfandel, Lodi



(\$25) Deep, dark, and mysterious, this wine shows a shadowed elegance. Scents of grilled beef, blackberry, and black pepper are heady. Plush notes of plum surge on the palate with vanilla, cedar, a persistent thread of pepper, and bittersweet dark chocolate. **92**



Te Awanga 2017 Mister Syrah, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$27)

Meaty aromas accented by sage and plum lead to a garden of violets. White pepper is sprinkled throughout a palate of juicy and ripe red fruit that speaks of satiny texture and minerality, with red tea and nettle on the finish. **92**

LEVECKE



Pierinvaletta 2017 Arneis, Langhe DOC, Piedmont, Italy (\$29)

Limestone soils in high-elevation vineyards contribute the minerality and fresh fruit of this stunner. Aromas of lemon and vanilla move into a lean, high-toned palate dominated by tangerine and creamy notes of chamomile flowers, toffee, and cashew that coat the tongue. **91**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS LTD.



Pighin 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Friuli Grave DOC, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy (\$30)

The flatlands of Friuli Grave in northeast Italy are admired for their gravelly soils, and Pighin is known for producing fine wines such as this standout Sauvignon Blanc. Aromas of vanilla, chamomile, tangerine, and pineapple are well defined. Seasoned with dried herbs, lemon curd broadens the palate and adds color to fine acidity and minerality. **93**



KOBRAND



J. McClelland Cellars 2017 Chardonnay, Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley (\$35)

Vivacious aromas of honeysuckle, lemon oil, and Italian herbs appear before a clean entry with focused acidity. Classic flavors of crème brûlée mingle with fruity notes of pear, fig, and melon as chalky minerality and citrusy tones exude crispness. **93**

SCOTTO CELLARS



Esterházy 2016 Blaufränkisch, Leithaberg DAC, Burgenland, Austria (\$35)

Calcareous brown soils infuse a chalky tone into this bone-dry red. Fermentation with 18 days of skin contact and aging in French oak for 16 months balance out some of the austerity. Aromas of plum, slate, cranberry, and heather hint at what's to come: a distinct earthiness on the palate with tart cherry. Taut acidity ensures this wine is equal parts lean, fresh, and elegant. **92**

WEIN-BAUER



Terre de Princes 2019 Sancerre AOP, Loire Valley, France (\$38)

With subtle aromas of honeysuckle and ripe pear, this charming Sauvignon Blanc features a distinctly stony entry with an echo of honeyed stone fruit and white flowers. It's lively, lean, crisp, and clean, with flavors of lemon zest and dazzling acidity. **93**

SEAVIEW IMPORTS



Goretti 2015 Sagrantino di Montefalco DOCG, Umbria, Italy (\$39)

Venturing beyond the fleshy, meaty notes of fennel root and tilled soil, this wine evokes the tartness of just-ripe blackberry. Spice accents the finish of cedar and vanilla as fine acidity keeps things fresh. 100% Sagrantino. **91**



8VINI INC.



Yorkville Cellars 2018 Carménère, Rennie Vineyard, Yorkville Highlands, Mendocino County (\$40)

Blended with 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, this magnificent red exhibits aromas of lilac and plum. On the palate, jasmine and pomegranate are fragrant and flavorful. Lively acidity and dusty tannins ensure it stays vibrant. **93**



Smith-Madrone Vineyards & Winery 2017 Chardonnay, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$40)

The dry-farmed vines on the Smith family's Spring Mountain estate produced this wine of distinction, whose accents of chamomile and lemon verbena on the nose lead to a palate of beeswax and stony minerality. Peach nectar enters midway, unleashing a flow of honey within an angular frame. Aged ten months in (85% new) French oak. **93**



Concha y Toro 2016 Ter-runyo Malbec, Los Indios Vineyard, Paraje Altamira, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40) Tinged with black licorice and espresso, the nose captures a dark soul walking in the forest after a rainfall. Explosive notes of ripe black fruit integrate with creamy plum pudding, dark chocolate, and white pepper. Sandalwood carries the experience to an opulent finish. **93**



FETZER VINEYARDS



Firriato 2014 Ribeca Perricone, Sicily, Italy (\$42) Perricone, also referred to as Pignatello, was used for making Marsala Rubino but is now employed in Sicily for the production of dry reds. Its heady aromas, powerful tannins, and vertical line of acidity are among the first signs that this is a variety to watch. Scents of coffee, chocolate, cigar leaf, and a sweet note of blueberry are followed by flavors of tart cherry, dark chocolate, cedar, and dried violets that are anything but shy. **93**



CARDINAL WINE GROUP



J. McClelland Cellars 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50) This blend of 92.5% Cabernet Sauvignon with portions of Merlot and Cab Franc aged 30 months in French oak. The perfume of chocolate-covered cherry, orange peel, and rose petal is delightful. Round, luxurious tannins are complemented by an undernote of minerality and a drying quality defined by pencil shavings and briar. It becomes juicier toward the finish, with generous fruit and stand-up acidity. **93**



SCOTTO CELLARS



Lucienne 2018 Chardonnay, Smith Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$40) The fruit comes from Hahn Family Wines' first estate vineyard, which is its highest-elevation site at 590–1,280 feet above sea level. The seductive nose introduces a lineup of scents, including brioche, maple, banana, and oatmeal, and on the palate, almond croissant and apple tart are deliciously alluring. Stony minerality and high-toned acidity prove that this white, which aged 15 months in (45% new) French oak, is about pure balance. **94**

HAHN FAMILY WINES



Mount Veeder Winery 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$48) This powerful and dark yet youthful red is full-bodied and concentrated with black fruit, underbrush, and tobacco-laden cedar. Sturdy, dusty tannins are wound tightly around notes of pencil shavings and plum skin. **92**



CONSTELLATION BRANDS



Cherry Pie 2018 Pinot Noir, San Pablo Bay Block, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$50) This Pinot Noir has it all: fine acidity, a plump and pillowy texture, and tons of just-ripe red fruit. The round, willowy, ethereal nature of this charmer presents itself as cranberry and roses bloom in the glass. **93**

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES



Lucienne 2018 Chardonnay, Lone Oak Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$40) Cool breezes and morning fog flowing from Monterey Bay refresh this 146-acre certified-sustainable vineyard, which sits at the northern end of the SLH. Planted on east-facing slopes on well-drained, ancient alluvial soils, this truly stunning white offers unique aromas and flavors. Following scents of chamomile, cashew, and orange marmalade, the palate introduces seared pineapple, brioche, and lychee at first sip. Apparent minerality accompanies a glide of lemon oil and white flower petals on the finish. **95**



HAHN FAMILY WINES



Grieve Family Winery 2018 Double Eagle White, Napa Valley (\$48) In Napa's cool and secluded Lovall Valley, which is located north of Carneros and is accessible only through the city of Sonoma, the Grieve Family Winery estate crafted this brilliant Sauvignon Blanc graced with grapefruit and tarragon on the nose. The palate opens up with sliced-lime freshness, melon-tinged sweetness, and crisp minerality. Vanilla paints the finish with length and elegance. **93**



Dutton Estate Winery 2017 My Father's Vineyard Syrah, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$56) This vineyard, planted in 2002 and named for founder and president Tracy Dutton's father, has produced one of the most expressive Syrahs we've tasted. The heady perfume reveals slate, dark chocolate, and basil, and the juicy palate is decisively well constructed, with broad strokes of black fruit, white pepper, and maple as well as a wash of violets and velvety tannins. Roasted coffee, Worcestershire sauce, and fennel add to its sophistication. **95**



Publisher's PICKS



Château La Nerthe 2019 Châteauneuf-du-Pape Blanc, Rhône Valley, France (\$60)

Cashew butter and cake batter make for intriguing aromas in this blend of 40% Grenache Blanc, 30% Roussanne, 15% Clairette, and 15% Bourboulenc. A stony quality complements the creamy, nutty flavor profile as floral notes and barely ripened pear weave through lithe acidity. **95**



KOBRAND



El Pino Club 2018 Sea Floored Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$60) Aged 15 months in French oak, this wine is named for its source's proximity to the ocean and the soils that blanket ancient seabeds. Bright aromas of red rose petals, damp leaves, and cranberry cola precede notes of underbrush and dried blue flowers on the palate. The acidity is streamlined and the mouthfeel silky, with flavors of earth, slate, pomegranate, red tea, and cinnamon. **94**

FOLEY FAMILY WINES



Lismore Estate 2017 Reserve Chardonnay, Cape South Coast, Overberg, Greyton, South Africa (\$69) The cool Western Cape region of Overberg is perfect for Burgundian grape growing. This white, which fermented and aged for 11 months in 500-liter French oak foudres, features a toasty nose of vanilla wafer and lemon pound cake that captures attention. Balanced flavors of banana and pineapple tart are wrapped in a weighty and sumptuous body. Notes of dill and rosemary join tart lime on the finish. **93**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



Chalk Hill 2016 Estate Red, Chalk Hill, Sonoma County (\$70) The silky entry of this blend of 47% Cabernet Sauvignon, 37% Malbec, 9% Petit Verdot, and 7% Merlot glides into luscious black fruit and jasmine before minerality coated in dark chocolate, sandalwood, and licorice chimes in. **93**

FOLEY FAMILY WINES



Angove 2017 Warboys Vineyard Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$75) Aromas of plum-kissed violets are mirrored on the palate, where white pepper persists through vivid notes of black cherry, dark chocolate, and cinnamon. A flow of velvet-lined tannins creates a creamy mouthfeel. Aged ten months in French oak, this may be one of the most lithe, aromatic, and elegant vintages yet for this label. **96**

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



Brick Barn Wine Estate 2017 Cabernet Franc, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$85) Brick Barn's 35-acre estate vineyard is the westernmost site in the Santa Ynez Valley AVA. Made with fruit planted on rocky highlands with great sun exposure, this vibrant Cab Franc is refined, floral, and fruit-driven, with generous notes of plum. Fennel root and dark chocolate have a gliding effect across the palate. **95**



Chêne Bleu 2012 Abélard, AOC Ventoux, Rhône Valley, France (\$90)

Thirty- and 40-year-old vines grown on stony clay and limestone soil in the south of France produced this marvelous blend of 85% Grenache Noir and 15% Syrah, which spent 18 months in French oak and two years in bottle. A perfume of lilac and licorice exudes from the glass. The deep and dark palate is beautifully assembled, with velvet-lined tannins, dried heather, black cherry, and winsome notes of peppered plum. **95**

WILSON DANIELS



Shafer Vineyards 2017 Relentless, Napa Valley (\$95) We taste this proprietary blend of Syrah (86%) and Petite Sirah (14%) almost every vintage, and this time we admired the elevated elegance of its structure, with silkier tannins than we recall in former bottlings. Grown on a small ridgetop just south of the Stags Leap District, the grapes experienced a lengthy hang time, and the result is stunning: Chocolate, black plum, slate, black olive, and leather reveal themselves in the opaque, carmine-black-hued liquid, which aged 30 months in 100% new French oak and has an ABV of 15.8%. **98**



Round Pond Estate 2017 Louis Bovet Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$110)

Aged 20 months in 80% new French oak, this new release is a tribute to the "grand patriarch" of the family behind Round Pond, who made wine in his home during the 1920s. It's structured, robust, and opulent, with plenty of room to mature in the years to come. Concentrated notes of melted dark chocolate, blackberry, and sweet earth are luxurious and profound. Black coffee and black plum linger on the finish. **97**





Chappellet 2017 Pritchard Hill Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$250)

This year is a milestone for Chappellet: It's the 50th anniversary vintage from Pritchard Hill as well as the 20th vintage of Pritchard Hill Cabernet Sauvignon. This wine personifies the beauty of mountain fruit grown on steep, well-drained, rocky slopes; the low yields exhibit a remarkable concentration of fruit and, no doubt, the ability to age for years to come. With 10% Petit Verdot and 5% Malbec blended in, the wine aged 22 months in 100% new French oak. It performs a slow dance, its beauty, elegance, and structure evolving with each sip. The saturation of blue and black fruit and the presence of lilac, mulberry, dates, and spiced sandalwood are inspiring. Deep notes of coffee and chocolate wash over the finish. **98**



SPIRITS



West Cork Distillers IPA Cask Matured Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$33)

Made with 75% grain and 25% malted barley and triple distilled in copper pot stills, this 80-proof wheat-based spirit aged in first-fill bourbon casks for four years before resting an additional six months in casks that previously held Blacks of Kinsale IPA. Scents of sweet peach and orange peel fill the glass, and the unctuous palate glides with peach nectar, spiced oatmeal, and dandelion. Subtle hints of new leather and a generous showing of black pepper-dotted tangerine grace the finish. **93**



M.S. WALKER, INC

New Zealand's Whitecliff Wines Launch in the U.S.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WHITECLIFF WINES

Marlborough is the home of Whitecliff Wines.

DAVID AND MARK MASON have introduced Whitecliff Wines, one of New Zealand's leading family-owned wine companies, to the U.S. market. Whitecliff draws on the Masons' extensive vineyard holdings in Marlborough and Hawke's Bay—and it overdelivers in terms of quality for the price.

The label is named for the dramatic white cliffs along the river that borders the original vineyard site on the family estate. With more than 1,700 acres of vines in Marlborough and access to fruit from four of its subregions, the Masons have an invaluable source for top-quality grapes. Winemaker Kel Dixon notes that "diurnal variation is the key to Marlborough's unique fruit intensity and Whitecliff's varietal expression." He and the winery's viticultural team use their extensive knowledge of and experience with each of their vineyards to ensure consistent quality.

U.S. sales and marketing are handled by Palmateer Wine Group of San Rafael, California. For more information, contact info@palmateerwinegroup.com.



Whitecliff Wines 2020 Winemaker's Selection Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$16)

Aromas of jasmine and kiwi, unusual for the variety, are vibrant in this clean and focused wine. Set against bracing acidity, grapefruit notes are tart and sweet. A touch of honeydew melon adds slight fleshiness to the texture, and the finish is tinged with herbs, citrus, and minerals. **92**



Whitecliff Wines 2019 Winemaker's Selection Pinot Noir, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$20)

An earth mother from start to finish, with notes of mushroom, exotic Asian spice, forest floor, and balsamic. Ripe red cherry brings in a sweeter tone, and the mouthfeel is round and rich. **91**



Publisher's PICKS



Trinity Bay Artisanal Siberian Gin, Russia (\$22/1 liter) An 80-proof small-batch spirit with an Eastern European flair. Aromas of juniper and bergamot lead to peppered orange zest and spice before the finish of tobacco and licorice. **90**



Forager Gin, USA (\$36) Native herbs from the Appalachian wilderness serve as ingredients in this tremendously expressive 90-proof spirit. Scents of heather and wood sage are spicy and inviting, and licorice and juniper are delicately balanced up front, with notes of lemon oil, mandarin orange, lavender, and black pepper. **92**



MCCLINTOCK DISTILLING



Redwood Empire Lost Monarch Straight Whiskey Blend, USA (\$40) Produced in Sonoma County, this spirit is named for Northern California's giant redwood trees—specifically the Lost Monarch, which is 320 feet tall and 26 feet in diameter. The pleasant nose captures a succulent perfume of peach and maple. The warming palate is washed by creamy brown sugar and leather, and apricot, peach, and white pepper flow in to add even more body. Cinnamon toast and pumpkin fill out the complex finish. **95**



PURPLE BRANDS



Kuleana Rum Works Nanea, USA (\$40) Made in Hawaii, Nanea is a blend of molasses-based rums from Guatemala, Guadeloupe, and El Salvador that aged in bourbon barrels for an average age statement of two to four years. Its perfume is exotic and tropical, with scents of plumeria, mango, and cedar. Jasmine and gingersnap make a luscious impression on the sleek palate. Banana, papaya, and a hint of white pepper settle on the finish. **94**



Sweetheart of the Rodeo Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$44) Distilled from 75% corn, 21% rye, and 4% barley, this elegant spirit is slowly matured in Texas' extreme climate and exudes aromas of walnut, buttered caramel apple, and tobacco that hint at its complex nature. The pillow-soft entry is divine and voluptuous. Peaches and pekoe tea sidle up against a peppered finish sprinkled with hot sauce that wakes up the palate. **93**



KOOPER FAMILY WHISKEY CO.



Old Fitzgerald Bottled-in-Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$140) This new edition, the series' sixth national release, comprises barrels produced in fall 2005 that were just bottled in fall 2020—aging far longer than the bottled-in-bond requirement of four years minimum. At 100 proof, it's quite approachable, with a classic perfume of peach, leather, and buttered brown sugar. A touch of cedar on the nose and palate lingers as warm and spicy notes of maple and cookie batter converge within a nectar-like mouthfeel. Dried apricot, figs, and dates make for a charming finish. **96**



HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY



Mijenta Tequila Blanco, Mexico (\$50) Rose petals and acacia sweeten the aromas of clay, agave, and lime in this ethereal 80-proof spirit; almost weightless, it's the liquid version of a down comforter. Honeyed floral tones continue to take shape and wind around vanilla candle wax, pine nuts, and a pinch of white pepper before tobacco, cocoa-kissed agave, and grapefruit zest take over on the persistent finish. For more on the brand, see page 44. **97**

ALTOS PLANOS COLLECTIVE



RY3 Rum Cask Finish Whiskey, North America (\$56) A blend of three whisk(e)ys (American and Canadian rye), three mash bills, and three age statements adds up to RY3, a sumptuous and heavenly mouthful of honeycomb, peach nectar, and maple bran. White pepper punctuates an otherwise seamless coat of orange peel, vanilla musk, and cigar leaf. At 100 proof, it shines. **95** *W*



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THE
STORY
OF LUNA
NUDA

Bright Side *of the* Moon

by Allyson Reedy



PHOTOS: SARAH DIPPITY PHOTOS

Luna Nuda's promotional campaigns naturally revolve around celestial themes.



Castelfeder Winery winemaker Ivan Giovanetti with his sister, director of sales Ines Giovanetti.

The story

of Luna Nuda can't be told without talking about moon science, and we promise we'll get to that—given a brand name that translates as “Naked Moon,” it's pretty darn relevant. But the story also can't be told without talking about Alfons Giovanetti, so first you must meet him, or rather his spirit, and the tiny yet complicated region of Italy from which he and his grapes emerged.

Alfons was born in 1921 at the edge of the Austro-Hungarian empire, both chronologically and geographically: What's now the northern Italian region of Alto Adige had just been annexed by Italy following World War I. It was a troubled time for the region and continued to be so through World War II, which unceremoniously introduced him to another culture that would have a big impact on his life: He was taken as a prisoner of war by the United States and spent four years living in POW camps in Louisiana and California. While that may sound pretty bleak, Alfons' granddaughter,

Ines Giovanetti—the director of sales for Castelfeder Winery, which produces Luna Nuda—says that Alfons had positive memories of his time here, especially in San Diego. “He always said if he had the chance, he wanted to go back to America,” Ines recalls. “When we started [exporting to] America, he was so proud and he was so happy. It was very exciting for him.”

But success in the wine business came later. When Alfons returned home from the POW camps, Europe had been destroyed by the war, and tensions were still high in Alto Adige. It wasn't until the 1960s, when the area's fight for autonomy was settling down and things were becoming more peaceful, that Alfons decided to jump into the family business making wine, much like his own father and grandfather had. After attending the prestigious Istituto Agrario di San Michele all'Adige, Alfons founded Castelfeder Winery in 1969. And now we can get to what the family calls “moon science.”

It may sound a little woo-woo, but the belief that lunar phases impact



Many of Castelfeder's vineyards are farmed according to Biodynamic principles.

nature and specifically crop production has been widespread for millennia in agricultural communities around the world. Alfons, too, was a believer, and he applied those principles to his vineyard land while naming Luna Nuda after them upon its launch in 2007. They were “much more about what's actually happening with nature—not so much [about] the hours we have to work and all that but [about] work that



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLUE RIDGE SPIRITS & WINE MARKETING

At left: Harvesttime in Alto Adige. Above: Taking a sample of Luna Nuda Pinot Grigio from a tank.

follows the cycle of the moon,” Ines says. “[Alfons] always said as much as we need the sun, we need the moon in the same way.”

Basically, the idea is that plants are more receptive to certain processes during particular phases of the moon, so its advocates coordinate soil treatments such as compost and tonics, management techniques such as pruning, and harvesting with the lunar calendar. Even though Castelfeder Winery has grown substantially, from 16 acres to 140, since its establishment more than 50 years ago, the Giovanetts—including Ines’ winemaker-brother, Ivan, and their father, Günther, who oversees production and sales—still strive to employ its founder’s methods in the vineyards.

“[Alfons] was the one who really did things the old-style way,” Ines says. “He always followed the cycles. . . . Since then, we have grown quite a bit . . . [and] it’s not possible to apply these philosophies to everything, but we try as much as possible. My dad learned from him, and my brother and I also did.” For instance, Ines adds, they still prune in accordance with the moon’s phases. “That’s like cutting your nails or hair—there are certain cycles when they grow stronger. When you have a waning moon, everything is slowing down, and when you go toward the full

moon, everything is becoming more active.”

Besides impacting the vines throughout the growing season, moon cycles are also believed to affect the flavor of wine. There are even apps like When Wine Tastes Best that track the best days for wine drinking based on lunar phases. “My grandfather always said the wines taste best during a full moon,” Ines says (although she disagrees; as a self-described “moon sensitive,” she admits she has more difficulties during a full moon, which extend to wine tasting). That’s also when the team does their bottling.

All of this is obviously akin to Biodynamics, a more holistic approach to farming that is gentler on the earth. Tracking moon cycles is key to Biodynamic work, as are organic practices like the diversification of crops and elimination of herbicides. In many of the vineyards from which Luna Nuda is sourced, the Giovanetts plant a variety of legumes in the middle of rows to promote biodiversity and create healthier soil. Such regenerative farming practices not only are better for the environment but also produce what many believe to be better-tasting and more nutritious wine grapes.

Of course ideal terroir helps. Where Castelfeder Winery is located, the warm Mediterranean climate for which much of Italy is famous mingles with the colder weather north in the Alps. The result? One of the best places in

the world for Pinot Grigio. The fruit for Luna Nuda’s expression is estate grown, handpicked, and hand sorted for a wine that’s pure and luminous—much like the naked moon it’s named for.

Besides the Pinot Grigio, the Luna Nuda line also includes a rosé, red blend, and Prosecco. In addition to being gorgeous in the glass, the vivid-pink Luna Nuda Rosé is bright, fruity, and balanced. For the full-bodied Luna Nuda Red Blend, the grapes are sourced from Sicily and brought back to the Giovanetts’ winery for blending; the wine is then aged six months in new French oak barrels to achieve its robust character. Finally, the brilliant Luna Nuda Prosecco is crafted by Cantina Montelliana Winery in the Treviso area of northeast Italy, considered to be the birthplace of Prosecco.

What all the still wines have in common is a longer aging process than what’s typically seen at their price point. Ines says that this practice, like respecting the cycles of the moon, originated with Alfons. “From my grandfather, what I learned the most is respecting the time the wine needs to develop: not bottling and selling the wines too fast, but giving them the time to grow to their full potential,” she adds.

Alfons died in 2019 at the age of 98, but it’s clear from talking to Ines—not to mention from tasting the Luna Nuda wines—that his legacy of respect for moon science and the role it plays in the art of winemaking lives on . . . even if it sounds a little woo-woo. **LE**

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on air

Drummer Matt Sorum
was a guest on
"Rock on the Rocks."

PHOTO: JONAS ÅKERLUND

ROCK 'N' ROLL



FANTASY

ON HIS NEW PODCAST, JACK DANIEL'S U.S. BRAND AMBASSADOR
ERIC "ET" TECOSKY INVITES MUSIC LEGENDS TO RAMBLE ON, SING
THEIR SONG, AND SHARE THEIR STORIES

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

When asked for the inspiration behind his new video podcast

"Rock on the Rocks," Eric "ET" Tecosky jokes that "it's an attempt to get Robert Plant to talk to me." Though the bar expert makes no secret of being heavily influenced by musical idols from The Beatles and Bowie to Sinatra and The Stones, he says, "All roads lead to Led Zeppelin."

The latest project of the first Jack Daniel's brand ambassador—which he finally found time to launch after the pandemic upended his busy travel and events schedule—sits squarely at the intersection of music, pop culture, and booze. He just started dropping episodes on YouTube (for details on how to access, follow Tecosky on Instagram @superhynellc), during which he interviews not only musicians but also rock photographers, producers, and a rotating cast of bartenders—who provide the drinks, naturally. But don't expect softball questions or canned responses. "We all hear the same ten stories: 'Paul is dead' [or] 'If you play "Stairway to Heaven" backward, you hear satanic messages,'" he quips. "There's so much more from the people who lived it."

To put it in musical terms, Tecosky is looking for the rare B-sides rather than the smash hits—those surprising details often organically unearthed during a casual chat between mutual music lovers over a few fingers of whiskey. For the first few episodes, he talked with Alec Byrne, whose lens captured everyone from Jagger to Hendrix; Terry Reid, the English rock vocalist and guitarist with what Tecosky dubs "the greatest voice you've never heard"; and Matt Sorum, a former drummer for Guns N' Roses, The Cult, and Velvet Revolver who was also a regular at an L.A. bar Tecosky managed. Sorum, it turns out, used to play the Marriott at LAX prior to his days behind the kit with GNR. Who knew? (To continue the metaphor, maybe only hardcore GNR fans—the kind who can tell you that the flip side of "Welcome to the Jungle" is "Mr. Brownstone.")

"Rock on the Rocks" is a passion project for Tecosky, technically unrelated to his role at Jack Daniel's. But the whiskey brand is and will always be intrinsically linked with music. Jack Daniel himself was a big fan of music who sponsored a local act, The Silver Coronet Band. Fast-forwarding a few decades, Frank Sinatra was introduced

to Jack Daniel's in the early 1950s by Humphrey Bogart. (Tecosky recalls growing up on Sinatra, and the brand's limited-release Sinatra Select, aged in barrels with deep grooves to render a bold yet smooth spirit, is an homage to Ol' Blue Eyes.) In the post-Rat Pack era, photographer Neal Preston captured Jimmy Page backstage taking a long swig from the iconic bottle—a bottle that went on to become as much a part of Slash's persona as his silver belt buckle—adorned top hat; meanwhile,

than 200 album covers, including The Doors' iconic *Morrison Hotel*. Tecosky happens to know him pretty well.

Because of COVID-19, guests on the podcast so far have all been remote—but if all goes well, he'd like to start shooting it at an L.A. bar or on the road. In his downtime, he's started playing the guitar and has already amassed a collection that includes a 1958 Gibson Les Paul Goldtop Reissue and a lightweight, travel-friendly Yamaha Silent Guitar.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEC BYRNE

Photographer Alec Byrne signs an image he captured of David Bowie.

country star Eric Church sings that Old No. 7's "black label's like black powder for my soul." As Tecosky puts it, "Music is authentic to the brand."

And "Rock on the Rocks" is a way for Tecosky to pay tribute to that connection. As time marches on, he points out, "We are losing so many people we love—bands, producers, managers, musicians. Why not tap into bartenders I know, have them make a cocktail, sit back, relax, and hear stories from people like Henry Diltz?" The legendary official photographer of Woodstock as well as an accomplished folk performer, Diltz lived in Laurel Canyon during its heyday in the 1960s and 1970s and shot more

Tecosky muses that if he had a time machine to transport him to any concert in history, he'd return to Led Zeppelin's 1973 tour: "Everything was firing on all cylinders. . . . It was Zeppelin in all their glory. They even had a private jet." Alas, time travel doesn't exist, but Tecosky and his listeners can continue to live vicariously through his interviewees on "Rock on the Rocks." To add to the illustrious guests he's already interviewed, his bucket list includes people like Neil Diamond and Dolly Parton—whom he calls "an American treasure"—and, of course, anyone connected to Led Zep.

Mr. Plant: It's your move. **LT**



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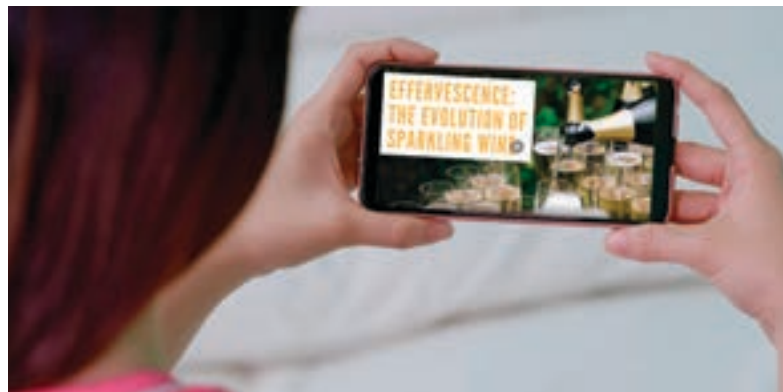
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Brand of Brothers

WITH THE **7 GUYS COLLECTIVE**,
A GROUP OF CHICAGO LIQUOR
STORES HAS AN EDGE IN THE
LOCAL MARKET

by Paris Vasser

Town & Country Liquors on Chicago's South Side has been a neon-lit beacon for spirits lovers since its founding in 1963. Owner George Patras' family took over the store in 1979; after getting his start at another family establishment, Hilltop Liquor, he made the move to Town & Country, working his way up from stock boy to proprietor. Over the course of 30 years, Patras' dedication to the business instilled in him a desire to curate an exclusive selection of liquors that he has now fulfilled with the creation of the 7 Guys Collective. Founded two years ago on the bonds of a brotherhood spanning 40 years, the Collective is made up of seven friends and fellow owners of local, independent liquor stores that sell select single-barrel spirits from top brands.

The Collective came about when Patras was approached by his distributor about the prospect of purchasing a barrel of Blanton's Bourbon. He realized the opportunity to expand the concept into an ongoing barrel-selection program. Now the group chooses five to six barrels of bourbon and tequila each year to receive the 7 Guys Select stamp for exclusive distribution throughout the seven stores, the others being Prestige Countryside Liquors (owned by Chris Fotopoulos), Prestige Wine & Spirits Westmont (Jim Sakkos), Bridgeview Liquors Bridgeview (Dimitris Gatsinos), Mainstreet Wines & Spirits Countryside (John Walano), 200 Cut Rate Liquors Chicago (Steve Michelis), and Liquorama Chicago (Peter Douvlis). Patras says the Collective is an extension of the serious curation each member had already been doing individually, but working together has allowed them to further their goals. Making buying decisions and working with distributors as a unit, he explains, has given them "an opportunity to do more barrel picks across a wider variety of products, allowing each store to play to their strengths and limit our cost of inventory at each location."

The group's friendship has also enhanced their ability to evaluate liquors from high-end brands like Eagle Rare, Patrón, Maker's Mark, and more, according to Patras. "For nearly 40 years, the bond between us, offering support and advice, has made us stronger," he says. "We are always looking for something unique that provides value. I think the overriding quality in all our picks . . . is balance. We always strive to have a well-rounded, balanced product."

That criterion may soon extend beyond bourbon and tequila to rum, Scotch, and other small-batch spirits, according to Patras. In fact, they recently collaborated with local brewery Buckledown on a stout aged in a 7 Guys Select bourbon barrel for sale at all seven stores.

In short, says Patras, the 7 Guys Collective is en route to becoming a brand of its own—one that loyal customers ask for by name, standing "as a symbol of quality not only in [the Chicago] market but [among] spirit lovers everywhere." **T**



George Patras of Town & Country Liquors in Chicago, IL.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TOWN & COUNTRY LIQUORS

New Year, New You, New Booze

INNOVATION IS ON THE SHELF IN 2021

After the year we've had, we could all be forgiven for foregoing Dry January in favor of something a little, well, wetter. No wonder the better-for-you beverage category is booming. But it's just one of several emerging industry trends that seem poised to explode in the months to come. In this report, we survey a number of brands that are leading the way in everything from CBD infusion to AR marketing. (Meanwhile, for those of you who actually are determined to detox, we salute you—and we've got you covered too.)



BEE WISE:

Naturalis Wines Are Set for a More Sustainable Future

Already the largest producers of organic wine in Australia, the Angove family has now expanded their offerings with Naturalis, which is launching at the beginning of 2021. Organic wines speak not only to sustainability in the vineyard but growth in the market: On-premise sales, according to a Nielsen Insights report last spring, are up 16% in the past four years and will reach a forecasted global volume of 87 million cases by 2022.



The labels of Naturalis Wines—created by the Angove family, who've been farming in Australia for five generations—depict a honeybee inside a flower.



Bottling their wines in lightweight glass and using recycled paper and cardboard for labels and shippers to minimize their carbon footprint, the Angoves also top off these vegan, gluten-free, and non-GMO wines with recyclable screwcaps.

Naturalis 2020 Sauvignon Blanc, South Australia (\$12)

The nose is scented with lime, grapefruit, and a hint of white flowers. Jasmine sings on the palate with lightly lilting notes of apple and white melon. A balanced ABV of 12.5% makes for easy drinking. **90** —*Meridith May*

Naturalis 2020 Chardonnay, South Australia (\$12)

Juicy and vibrant, with notes of white tea flowers, lemon verbena, and summer peach. This wine's lean profile speaks to an inner brightness, while the gentle mouthfeel leaves a touch of salinity on the tongue. Delicious and keen for food pairing. **90** —*M.M.*

Naturalis 2019 Cabernet Sauvignon, South Australia (\$12)

Aromas of blackberry preserves and fudge cake give way to streamlined natural acidity. The wine shows a focused brightness and fresh fruit flavors that linger; roasted coffee and cocoa enhance its supple tannins. **90** —*M.M.*

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES

THE TOTAL PACKAGE:

Mind & Body Wines

Mind & Body's low-calorie, low-alcohol wines were created for the best reason of all: They're what people want to drink. "It was important for us to create these wellness-driven wines with fewer calories and less alcohol because consumers were asking for it," says Brie Wohld, the brand's vice president of marketing. "They're crafted for today's mindful consumers."

Mind & Body's California Pinot Grigio, Rosé, and Cabernet Sauvignon are all gluten-free and non-GMO with just 90 calories per glass. To get them down to 8.5–9% ABV, the winemaking team combines traditional production methods with the use of a spinning-cone column that removes alcohol from a portion of the wine. (Don't worry—its delicate aromas and flavors are left intact.) Then they blend the regular and dealcoholized wines to create premium yet lighter products that people feel good about drinking. "On its journey from our vineyards to the glass, Mind & Body is transformed into a robust, flavorful wine that helps our fans meet their wellness goals," Wohld says. —*Allyson Reedy*

Mind & Body 2019 Rosé, California

Scents of pink rose petals and pink grapefruit paint a delightful picture for this 90-calorie, low-sugar rosé, and the palate does not disappoint; in fact, it overdelivers. Strawberry and watermelon are subtle, like a watercolor, with a dry, stony quality and great acidity marking a sensational finish. Only 8.5% ABV. **90** —*M.M.*

Mind & Body 2018 Cabernet

Sauvignon, California This red truly succeeds in the premium low-calorie category. Juicy, mouth-filling notes of blackberry and plum are fresh and lighthearted yet defined. Blueberry and violets can be found on the finish. **90** —*M.M.*

Mind & Body 2019 Pinot Grigio, California At 8.5% ABV, this refreshing white—which is also vegan, with no additional sugar—offers notes of white pear, melon, and honeysuckle. Key lime adds a sweet-tart kick on the finish. **89** —*M.M.*

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



A ONE-TWO PUNCH OF INNOVATION:

1924 Wines

From the apothecaries who prescribed bourbon as medicine to the bootleggers who ran moonshine to the smugglers who moved Scotch through the Caribbean on speedboats, 1924 Wines celebrates the rule breakers of the Prohibition era. Nearly 100 years hence, the brand keeps the spirit of these rebels alive by breaking a few rules of its own: Its trendsetting approach to aging in ex-spirit casks results in wines that consumers are crazy about.

"Spirit barrel-aged wines are growing extremely fast," says 1924 marketing director Andrew Blok, who notes that the hot subcategory is up 50% from 2019. "The consumer is not tied to convention; they are excited that this category presents a new and really flavorful approach to wine, and it has just caught fire."

In fact, 1924 is the fastest-growing premium wine brand in the United States, according to Blok. That's thanks not only to the wildly popular Bourbon Barrel Cabernet Sauvignon it launched last year but also to its latest release, a first-of-its-kind Chardonnay aged in Scotch barrels for a fresh and complex take on the classic white varietal. The brand will continue to roll out innovative labels in 2021, starting with a Pinot Noir aged in used Port barrels, which Blok calls chocolatey, velvety, and luxurious. —*Rachel Burkons*



A SCORE IN THE WINE CAPSULE GAME: EASYPEEL

As the dinner rush commences, you return from the wine cellar to a table of thirsty guests and begin the elegantly choreographed steps of traditional wine service. You present the label to the person ordering while reiterating the vintage, producer's name, and varietal. Once they've made their decision, you place the blade of your wine key against the capsule and begin to cut.

Some capsules are thicker than others, as the materials they're made from differ; sometimes you want to just

yank the whole thing right off. But that goes against decorum—so, alas, you must cut.

But now what's happened? This process of cutting a clean, horizontal line around the bottle has gone horribly awry! Was the knife dull, the capsule cheaply made, or the ring around the bottle too rounded to properly follow the groove? Whatever the reason, from a quick assessment you discern that

the knife slipped and tore the foil, but you have no time to investigate further: The guests are shooting daggers at you—and meanwhile, your other tables are waiting with increasing impatience.

Such issues have plagued many a sommelier and server for years, as cutting through a capsule with precision “depends on various factors

[such as] the person's dexterity, the time given to open the bottle, [and] the knife used,” says Amcor marketing executive Sophie-Gabrielle Martin. “The result

is often random and imprecise.” Thankfully, Amcor has come up with a solution: EASYPEEL. This customizable aluminum capsule features a discreet notch that's intended for the insertion of a wine key knife. Once the edge of the knife is positioned inside, you simply pull up and back, and the top comes off like a magic trick, leaving a clean line and eliminating the risk of cutting either the capsule



or yourself. What's more, this seamless system preserves the steps of traditional wine service, but with guaranteed consistency.

And not only does EASYPEEL protect the people who use it, it safeguards the overall aesthetic of the bottle, thereby protecting the integrity of the wine and its producer. The capsules fit on the bottle as snugly as premium tin sleeves and are of equal quality, but they're made from 100% aluminum, which makes them not only a less expensive option but a recyclable one. Martin says that EASYPEEL provides “a simple and effective way to magnify the art of tasting while enhancing the user experience”—not least by protecting the fingers of the people who open countless bottles of wine a night. For more information, contact info.capsules@amcor.com. —Eric Marsh



FORECAST FOR THE NEW YEAR:

Sunny with a Chance of Flowers

Scheid Family Wines executive vice president Heidi Scheid didn't merely want to see her glass as half full: She wanted it to be half full of happiness-inducing, health-promoting wine. So, she created one—or rather, she created three. Scheid's Sunny with a Chance of Flowers line launched last June, with Positively Sauvignon Blanc, Positively Chardonnay, and Positively Pinot Noir all ringing in at 9% ABV and 85 calories a glass.

"For me, wine is a part of everyday living," Scheid says. "But I also like to get up early and exercise, and sometimes having a few glasses of wine in the evening isn't conducive to waking up at the crack of dawn the next day. It's challenging to find a wine that fits into an active and healthy lifestyle." After determining that there was a market for a lower-alcohol, lower-calorie, zero-sugar wine, Scheid's next step was to work with the vineyard and winemaking teams to figure out how to make it without compromising on quality—this is a woman, after all, who knows and loves her wine. As she puts it, "We need to make it taste great. Because ultimately, if it doesn't taste great—if it doesn't taste like wine—then why bother?"

To achieve the ideal Sunny profile, Scheid's team allows the grapes to hang on the vine until they reach optimal ripeness and flavor development before fermenting the fruit to dryness with zero residual sugar. Next, to lower the alcohol level, they use an innovative proprietary process featuring a two-stage filter that gently and gradually pulls alcohol from the wine to create the lower-ABV and better-for-you—but still delicious—finished product. "To be able to produce a wine that delivers on flavor while also substantially lowering alcohol and calories is what we strived for," Scheid says. "Sunny with a Chance of Flowers allows people who love wine to have their cake and eat it too." —Allyson Reedy



Scheid Family Wines executive vice president and "Chief Sunny Officer" Heidi Scheid.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SCHEID FAMILY WINES

Sunny with a Chance of Flowers 2019 Positively Chardonnay, Monterey (\$17)

This charmer had us at its gentle, glistening, and glorious aromas of toasted coconut and buttered toffee. Just about weightless on the palate, it offers flavors of baked apple and dried herbs with a streak of lively lemon and tangerine. **92** —M.M.



Sunny with a Chance of Flowers 2019 Positively Pinot Noir, Monterey (\$17)

Aromas of cherry and cinnamon speak the language of Pinot Noir. The round, voluptuous mouthfeel and the juicy, mouthwatering notes of pomegranate and cranberry hardly convinced us that this wine contains zero sugar and only 9% alcohol, but the spark of white pepper and a toasty cedar finish opened our minds and senses and made us believers. **92** —M.M.





IN DEEP:

Hallstein Artesian Water Is Immersed in the Ideal of Purity

Unfiltered and untreated, Hallstein Artesian Water hails from a limestone aquifer in the Dachstein Mountains of the Austrian Alps. With its natural high pH; low sodium, high dissolved oxygen, low nitrate, and low total organic carbon levels; and balanced calcium-to-magnesium ratio, among other factors, it fulfills the stringent parameters set forth by its founders, the Muhr family.

After acquiring the 57 permits they needed for bottling, they constructed a state-of-the-art facility at the source with a precision-welded stainless-steel piping system to ensure pristine quality. The 100% recycled 750-milliliter glass bottles sell for \$88 per two six-packs as part of the company's monthly minimum subscription program (a 5-gallon container per month is also available for \$100). Among the locales Hallstein is poured are the Baccarat Hotel, Wallsé, and Gabriel Kreuther in New York; Petit Ermitage in West Hollywood; 67 Pall Mall in London; and Vienna's Steirereck, Salzburg's Steinterrasse and SENNS.Restaurant, and VIVAMAYR medical spas in Austria.

The silk palate and über-clean sensation of the liquid is undeniable. There is no sensation of minerals on the palate or aftertaste, and it's not overly dry, leaving a remarkable finish.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HALLSTEIN WATER

"At its core . . . a good drinking water should boost your immune system, aid in avoiding inflammation, and assist optimal hydration," says Hallstein Artesian Water co-founder Elisabeth Muhr.

DAIRY DOMINATION:

Creamy Creation's Hard Shakes

Founded in Rijkevoort, the Netherlands, in 1979, Creamy Creation hasn't just cornered the global market on B2B cream liqueurs—it practically *is* the market. Innovation (along with, well, dairy) is the lifeblood of the product developer and manufacturer—which now also has facilities in Batavia, New York—and it's proving as much yet again with the November launch of its latest invention: Hard Shakes.

Responding to multiple consumer trends at once, this line of low-ABV, nitrogenated, ready-to-drink canned beverages also captures the zeitgeist by



providing a much-needed dose of nostalgia. Just as meatloaf, BLTs, and other roadside diner-era classics are back on menus to comfort the quarantining hordes, so creamy, frothy Hard Shakes give them a taste of the soda fountains of yesteryear (albeit with a lot less sugar than your average strawberry malt or root beer float).

Six concept flavors are currently being shown to potential brand owners: Dalgona Espresso Martini, Dutch Silk, Chai Latte, Chocolate Milk, Pineapple Ginger, and Passionfruit. But they're just the beginning. After all, customization is the cherry on top of all of the company's offerings: Clients can choose the booze they want to use, tweak the formulation for a lighter or richer mouthfeel, or even request a completely new flavor—making Hard Shakes an easy sell for any beverage brand.



MILLENNIAL MAGIC:

El Adivino

Augments the Reality of Wine

The digital world is the millennials' natural habitat. They live and breathe augmented reality (AR), whereby the physical environment is enhanced by computer-generated information to create a seamless perceptual experience. As it happens, even pleasures as visceral as wine can be augmented.

Introducing El Adivino, Spain's first AR-centric wine brand. El Adivino ("The Fortune Teller" in Spanish) is the creation of Félix Solís Avantis. Having been on the leading edge of viticulture and enology in Spain since 1952, the world's eighth-largest wine company is boldly venturing further into the digital age with a daring brand that implements technology to engage the contemporary consumer like no other. After six months in development and a successful rollout in the U.K. and Northern Europe, El Adivino is set to launch in the U.S. in March.

The brainchild of export director Félix Solís Ramos, El Adivino ushers consumers into a dimension of magic and mystery from the moment they download its app. Once opened, pointing a smartphone at the label on the bottle conjures a virtual fortune teller to present wine lovers with fortune cards. "We wanted to create something incredibly positive," says Pedro García, the company's managing director for the U.S. and Canada. "All of the fortunes are upbeat and relevant to today's millennial consumer."

The brand further engages that consumer with a mysterious backstory involving not

only the fortune teller but also a crazed watchmaker and a Hungarian princess, which can be viewed in storybook form via the app. "The strategy behind El Adivino is not only to offer a fantastic example of the [varietal] blend category," says Ramos, "but also to use the right communication tools aimed at the younger audience. We think AR is the perfect tool for this."

Marketing magic aside, the wine-making behind the brand is very real. With vineyards and production facilities in every major region in Spain, including the historic Valdepeñas DO, Félix Solís Avantis can afford to source fruit from across the country; grape varieties are selected for their typicity and sense of place to make El Adivino a true "wine of Spain," according to García, that will serve to bolster the perception of the Spanish premium segment stateside. El Adivino Premium Red incorporates Tempranillo from the northern part of the country with



Tempranillo and Syrah from the south-central region, all hand-harvested and traditionally vinified; renowned wine critic James Suckling awarded the wine an impressive score of 90 points. A companion blend, El Adivino Premium White, is crafted from Verdejo, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay.

With an SRP of just \$11, El Adivino joins other Félix Solís Avantis labels oriented toward a younger demographic, including FYI and Mucho Más. Says García, "We are very optimistic with our strategy for the U.S. market and our continued efforts to grow the Spanish category in the U.S. by way of modern, fresh wines from Spain." For more information, visit eladivinowine.com. —David Gadd





Made with grapes sourced from the Castilla-La Mancha region of Spain, Pasmosa's Sangrias weigh in at a healthy 12% ABV.

A CLASS OF ITS OWN:

Pasmosa Premium Sangria

To those who insist they're "not a Sangria person," we say: Perhaps it's not that simple. Since restaurants and bars often make Sangria as a way to salvage expiring wine, it's quite possible that they just haven't had a positive experience yet. The beverage is based on an ancient Greek and Roman drink called *hippocras*, the Spanish incarnation of which is said to date back some 3,000 years. If it's stayed relevant all this time, there's obviously something exceptional about it—when it's made well.

While the standard recipe calls for dry red wine, triple sec, brandy, tart fruit, a dash of sugar, and a splash of soda, variations abound, which means that the drink you receive when you order Sangria can be something of a mystery. "In ten years of being in this market, I have seen everything you can imagine poured and tossed into a bowl and called Sangria," says Pasmosa Sangria founder and CEO Eamon McDonald. At worst, the results can be cloying or, conversely, watered down and flavorless. "Early on, Pasmosa identified a need in the bar and restaurant industry for a consistent, high-quality, ready-to-pour Sangria," he explains, noting

that he had restaurant chains top of mind after noticing differences in the beverage from outlet to outlet within the same chain.

He recounts a meeting with the VP of beverage for a major U.S. restaurant chain, who complained that the house Sangria was too fruit-forward as well as inconsistent and that statistics showed customers were ordering only one glass per visit. He wanted a Sangria that would inspire repeat purchases; after tasting Pasmosa, he was confident that it was the product he was looking for.



While the brand does have a few competitors, McDonald notes that most RTD Sangrias are made with inexpensive wine, yielding watery, low-ABV products. Pasmosa crafts all three of its expressions, which clock in at 12% ABV, with what he calls "the highest-quality varietals from Castilla-La Mancha, Spain": The

Blanco is based on Airén, the Rosado on Garnacha, and the Tinto on a blend of Garnacha and Tempranillo.

In short, says McDonald, "Gone are the days of investing valuable employee time and resources [into] making inconsistent homemade Sangria"—and there's no shortage of packaging options to choose from either. "Pasmosa can be served from a box, a tap handle or bar gun, a bottle, or a 250-milliliter can in seconds," boasts McDonald. Shelf life makes a big difference too, he points out, adding that unopened bottles, cans, and bag-in-boxes have a 12-month shelf life—and the latter stay fresh for up to six weeks in the refrigerator after opening.

So convenience, consistency, and quality are the takeaways here. And they just might ensure that even Sangria-averse customers become Sangria aficionados.

Pasmosa Tinto Premium Sangria, Spain Its name translates as "astonishing"—and this bright, juicy red Sangria is just that. A splashy, delicious mouthful of cherry and juicy pomegranate is spiced with sage, jasmine, and a hint of basil. Rich and vibrant. **91** —M.M.

NEW YEAR, NEW CHOICES:

Giesen 0%

New Zealand winery Giesen Estate has an offering tailor-made for those aspiring to celebrate Dry January without sacrificing their requisite nightly glass of wine: Giesen 0% Sauvignon Blanc, the family-owned producer's first foray into the popular nonalcoholic category and the first alcohol-removed Sauvignon Blanc to hail from the Marlborough region.

Made with grapes sourced from the Wairau and Awatere valleys, Giesen Estate's original premium Sauvignon Blanc serves as the base for this new addition to the portfolio, joining the Giesen Pure Light Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc—which, at 9.5% ABV, is itself 25% lower in alcohol than the Giesen Sauvignon Blanc. Giesen 0%, by contrast, features no more than 0.5% ABV, but it's no less lively and invigorating than its full-strength fellow.

"The Giesen family are pioneers of Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc, celebrating their 40th harvest this year," says Mark Giordano, president of Giesen's importer, Pacific Highway Wines. "It is only fitting that they take a leadership position and produce estate-grown Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc without alcohol. This is a very deliberate project, with the goal of producing a no-alcohol wine of integrity with the very characteristics that have made the New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc category an undeniable success over the decades." Among those characteristics are the aromatic nose expected of the varietal—with fresh lime, red currant, and lemon shortbread emerging as the most distinctive scents—and a citrus-forward palate that culminates in a dry finish.

As for how the wine is produced, here are the basics: Spinning-cone technology separates the aroma and alcohol from the base wine via an advanced form of distillation, maintaining both its flavors and texture; the nose is then readded to the alcohol-free wine before Giesen chief winemaker Duncan Shouler and his team engage in extensive taste testing to fine-tune the finished product.



Among Giesen 0%'s other resolution-friendly attributes is the fact that it has less than 20 calories per 5-ounce serving, making it an enticing addition not only to the alcohol-free tier but to the wellness category as well. "Giesen 0% perfectly fits in the fast-growing better-for-you category of beverages. We are excited to launch the project with Whole Foods Market and expect that the opening sale of 8,000 cases is just the beginning," Giordano says.

For more information on Giesen, scan the QR code in the image above, email info@pacific-hwy.com, or call 336-279-7130.

"THIS IS A VERY DELIBERATE PROJECT, WITH THE GOAL OF PRODUCING A NO-ALCOHOL WINE OF INTEGRITY WITH THE VERY CHARACTERISTICS THAT HAVE MADE THE NEW ZEALAND SAUVIGNON BLANC CATEGORY AN UNDENIABLE SUCCESS OVER THE DECADES." —PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINES PRESIDENT MARK GIORDANO

**MEETING THE
GOLD STANDARD:**

7 Deadly

PHOTO: CLARA RICE

**7 Deadly winemaker
Scot Dahlstrom.**



PHOTO COURTESY OF 7 DEADLY



7 Deadly Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Red Blend may be indulgent, but the growing practices behind them are anything but. The brand's entire portfolio of vegan, gluten-free wines is certified via Lodi Rules, a program that strives to uphold standards for sustainable winegrowing that are higher than those of similar regulatory agencies. After all, what's better for the earth is better for everyone on it.

"We're just trying to be good stewards of the land," says Scot Dahlstrom, winemaker for 7 Deadly. "Farmers throughout California . . . have been the most environmentally conscious people, because if they can't keep growing things, then they're out of a job. Lodi Rules wanted to take a look at things and make sure they're doing a little bit better than everyone else as far as sustainability. It comes down to farming techniques and what we're doing for the planet and the land itself."

Nabbing that coveted sustainability certification takes effort and a commitment to innovation, as it involves conserving water, maintaining biodiversity in the vineyard for optimal soil health, and attracting helpful bugs and predators in natural ways. In fact, to become certified by Lodi Rules, a producer must meet 100 separate standards that promote farming in a way that maintains the viability of the land for years to come. And the continually evolving program only gets stricter as time passes, as new inputs based on the research and experience of farmers, scientists, and environmentalists are added. Given such lofty requirements, it's perhaps no surprise that 7 Deadly Zins is one of the only leading producers of old-vine Zinfandel that meets this gold standard of sustainability.

According to Dahlstrom, transitioning 7 Deadly's vines from flood to drip irrigation has been one of the winery's most effective efforts in terms of nurturing the land while being mindful of limited water resources. "We monitor all of our water use as much as possible and only irrigate when we need to based on how much water the vine actually needs, rather than flooding during the growing season. We have monitors in the ground that monitor the soil moisture and let us know when we need to irrigate or not," he explains.

Other key initiatives involve minimizing the use of chemicals and pesticides, instead relying on natural solutions to not only bolster soil health but combat the bugs and pests that feed on the vines' roots. The winery also uses ground cover plants to attract beneficial bugs and natural predators, creating a welcoming environment for these animal allies.

Of course, consumers probably aren't thinking about reduced irrigation, pesticide alternatives, and friendly bugs when they drink a glass of these big, bold reds, which is more than fine by Dahlstrom: He only wants you to enjoy what's in the bottle. But it doesn't hurt to know that how it gets there is something you can feel good about, too. —Allyson Reedy

Taking the Waters

CBD-ENHANCED SPARKLING WATERS FOLLOW FLAVOR CUES FROM SPA WATER AND TRENDING SPIRITS

Among the host of functional beverages marketed toward the wellness-minded consumer, none are so closely associated with relaxation as spa water. Some believe that the word “spa” is an acronym for “*salude per aqua*,” a phrase meaning “health or healing through water” that was found on the marble walls of Roman baths known as *thermae* (though it’s unlikely that the Romans flavored their drinking water with slices of cucumber and citrus or fresh herbs like mint or lavender, as modern-day spas are known to do).

Thanks to those increasingly looking for ways to incorporate healthy choices into their lifestyle, sparkling water is one of the fastest-growing segments of the beverage market, and functionality continues to be a major trend within it. Sparkling waters containing water-soluble, broad-spectrum cannabidiol (CBD) represent the newest sector of a category that encompasses everything from sports and energy drinks to ready-to-drink teas, plant milks, and neurotrophic “smart” drinks.

As companies experiment with new ways to improve water’s hydrating ability while incorporating additional health benefits, they’ve embraced the use of CBD derived from hemp. Its biphasic properties are similar to those of alcohol in that low doses are uplifting while higher doses suppress mood and energy. Water-soluble CBD has significant advantages over oils and extracts, as it ensures more accurate dosing.

Of the three CBD-enhanced functional waters I evaluated for flavor,

all of which source their water-soluble CBD emulsions from Seattle, Washington-based manufacturer SörSE Technology, Aprch Mint + Cucumber with 30 milligrams of broad-spectrum hemp extract (10 milligrams of active CBD) could well be the standard for functional spa water. It’s lightly sparkling, with a refreshing and pronounced cucumber flavor that’s subtly laced with mint. With zero calories and zero sugar, it also includes L-theanine (amino acid), vitamin C, and organic natural flavors. A four-pack of 12-ounce cans sells for \$13.

Flavorists at SörSE have succeeded in using botanicals to mask CBD’s trademark bitterness in the current generation of functional beverages containing broad-spectrum CBD. “Our approach has been to mirror the active ingredients in broad-spectrum CBD with botanical flavors that work,” says expert flavorist Donna Wamsley, SörSE’s director of research and analytics.

Kleer Water, a Woodinville, Washington-based manufacturer, has a botanical gin-inspired Cucumber Lime sparkling water with 25 milligrams of SörSE broad-spectrum CBD, 15 calories, and no sugar. Brimming with floral, terpenic aromas of fresh herbs like tarragon and cilantro, it offers a

veritable farmers market of flavor and a slight bitterness on the finish. Kleer also sells Passion Orange Guava and Berry Blast flavors at \$55 for a dozen 12-ounce cans.

Finally, Santa Monica, California-based beverage company Mad Tasty is the maker of Unicorn Tears, a sparkling water with zero sugar and 5 calories per 12-ounce serving; its ingredient list consists of purified water, 20 milligrams of CBD (labeled as hemp extract), natural flavors



PHOTO: DEBORAH PARKER WONG

of passion fruit and citrus, and citric acid. “We consider the flavor profile of Unicorn Tears to be the baseline for what consumers like,” says Wamsley, noting its Sauvignon Blanc-like profile and almost IPA-like finish. In addition to Unicorn Tears, Mad Tasty also makes Grapefruit and Watermelon Kiwi expressions for \$60 per six-pack.

SörSE’s success in developing emulsions and flavor profiles that make it convenient for manufacturers to incorporate broad-spectrum CBD is paving the way for more functional products across a variety of categories. Specifically, says Michelle Sundquist, the company’s director of product management and development, “We see more opportunity in nonalcoholic beverages, confectionery, oral care, and the health and beauty categories.” —Deborah Parker Wong 



March 2-4, 2021 | Meetings Held Virtually

Discover Products Your Customers Will Love[♥]

The On & Off Premises Adult Beverage Program featuring one-on-one appointments with suppliers like these!



Firehouse Can Co. - Winner of ECRM's 2018 "Most Innovative Product" award, MANCAN Wine is back! After working with many attendees for the last year MANCAN Wine's founders, Fisk & Graham, are excited to meet new retailers and show them the best product, at the best price.

Plata Wine Partners – Plata Wine Partners vineyards are 100% sustainably farmed and non-GMO. Alison Crowe, award-winning winemaker, produces wines that are vegan and naturally gluten free. Creating, producing and developing fine wine own brands (private/control labels) is Plata Wine Partners' expertise.

Riboli Family Wine Estates - Stella Rosa continues to be the #1 Italian wine in the U.S. with new innovations and sizes coming out. Riboli Family award winning Napa Valley, Paso Robles, Monterey domestic wine and American Winery of the Year 2018 from Wine Enthusiast.

Ritual Beverage Company – The taste of gin, whiskey and tequila without the alcohol or calories. So you can celebrate tonight and still crush tomorrow.

Spirit Group Inc. - Spirit Group, Inc. is a private label company founded in 2010 successfully operating with American retailers and distributors. Providing the highest quality beverage from Europe, Ukraine and Russia choosing the best suppliers who are recognized worldwide.

Wild Ohio Brewing - Wild Ohio Brewing used the Blue Ocean strategy to create an unique product that nobody makes in the USA and protected it with a patent pending. Green and Black Tea are fermented with fruit juice to make a naturally gluten free beer that tastes delicious.

Winterland Beverages LTD - Winterland Beverages is a fully licensed distillery and winery located in the heart of British Columbia's beautiful Okanagan Valley. Their goals are to support and facilitate the manufacturing and sales of alcoholic beverages.



Attention Buyers:

Register Now for the ECRM & Tasting Panel, Virtual Speed Tasting Events, March 22nd and 30th

Contact Sarah Davidson, SVP Food & Beverage at
440-542-3033 or SDavidson@ECRM.MarketGate.com

When It Rains, **WE POUR**

THE PANDEMIC IS
TEACHING US NEW
WAYS TO DRINK IN 2021

by Richard Carleton Hacker

Mount Gay Rum's Moments x Cocktail Courier Collection is a series of limited-edition cocktail kits such as In the Kitchen, which comes with a cutting board and apron modeled here by chef Rôze Traore.



Though we all anxiously awaited the moment that we could finally kick 2020 into the gutter where it belongs, the arrival of 2021 hasn't changed the threat of COVID-19, which still lurks as an uninvited, decidedly unwelcome guest in our homes, disrupting our lives and livelihoods. We must continue to negotiate the new normal until we get this pandemic under control.

As of now, indoor dining is verboten in many cities, while on-premise



PHOTO COURTESY OF WALLY'S WINE & SPIRITS

Wally's Wine & Spirits in Beverly Hills and Santa Monica, CA, uses an online ordering platform for pickup or delivery of a wide array of products, including bottled cocktails.

occupancy levels in many others have been reduced so drastically that it may as well have been banned. Even outdoor dining has been largely curtailed, with devastating results. That leaves takeout and delivery, which are serving as the last lifeboats for sinking restaurants and bars across the country—even as constantly changing rules and regulations are creating swells that cause them to capsize in this sea of uncertainty.

It is difficult—if not impossible—to predict what the future holds for countless chefs, servers, sommeliers, bartenders, and other hospitality workers so long as the coronavirus still rages. But if the U.S. industry survives, it will be because it has learned

PHOTO: CHANDLER BONDURANT

to adapt in creative ways, whether by conducting virtual wine tastings and cooking classes via Zoom, establishing “ghost kitchens” that are strictly tailored to takeout orders, or, where possible, serving meals on sidewalks and in former parking lots that have been transformed into pseudo-dining rooms via AstroTurf and candlelit tables. Here are my thoughts on the most promising solutions for businesses both on-premise and off.

First, the demand for home deliver-

photo of the well-known director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. According to *Washingtonian* magazine, Capo has managed to sell more than 300 Fauci Pouchys on a single Saturday night.

Second, reflecting the boom in retail, home bartending will grow in popularity as people continue to sequester. More companies, such as the aptly named Lockdown Cocktail Co. (lockdowncocktail.com), will continue to pop up, offering products such as

sold two holiday-themed packages for pickup in New York City, Denver, and Los Angeles. The Vintage Egg Nog package featured Old Grand-Dad 114 Bourbon, Smith & Cross Traditional Jamaican Rum, Pierre Ferrand Ambre Cognac, Madeira, egg, and cream accompanied by Grandpa’s Drunken Cookies flavored with chocolate, banana, and rum. The Hibernial Toddy kit, meanwhile, contained Suntory Toki Whisky, Calvados, cinnamon, honey, and Angostura bitters as well



PHOTO COURTESY OF WEST FORK WHISKEY

Lockdown Cocktail Co. sells craft mixers for cocktails such as the Old Fashioned and Smash Shake Up.



Death & Co’s Hibernial Toddy holiday kit came with pie; each of its three locations in New York City, Denver, and Los Angeles offered a different flavor. Cookies came with its Vintage Egg Nog package.



PHOTOS: JAKOB LAMMANS

ies will continue to increase, which means that off- and on-premise establishments must find ways to ensure they’re as convenient as possible for staff and customers alike; Wally’s Wine & Spirits, for instance, is offering free delivery within a 10-mile radius of its Santa Monica and Beverly Hills locations. Restaurants and bars, for their part, must work to streamline service for their to-go cocktails, making them easier and quicker to prepare and package so as to increase volume and reduce costs. A bit of marketing flair could also put you ahead of the competition. In Washington, D.C., for instance, Capo Italian Deli beverage director Rohit Malhotra created the Fauci Pouchy, sealing his various cocktails in a plastic bag featuring a

craft mixers for online purchases. Spirit brands are doing the same: Coconut Cartel is currently marketing its On the Run Drink Kit, including everything consumers need to mix six premium Old Fashioneds (minus its Coconut Cartel Special Guatemalan rum, which must be purchased separately). And Mount Gay Rum has released the Moments x Cocktail Courier Collection, a series of limited-edition kits such as In the Kitchen, which even includes an apron and cutting board.

Restaurants and bars already taking advantage of this trend can capitalize on it by offering bartending kits with instructions and ingredients geared to the seasons, upcoming holidays, or localized events. For example, last year famed cocktail lounge Death & Co

as a cinnamon-apple pie, butternut-custard tart, or lemon tart, depending on the location.

Not that kits have to be elaborate. The increased interest in cocktails that are easy to make at home, such as Negronis and Martinis, is already spurring sales for bottle purchases; suggesting and offering add-on ingredients such as sodas, bitters, and garnishes like olives and cocktail onions can increase the bottom line.

These are just some examples of what the near future may entail for our industry. As for the long term, we have proven numerous times in the past—through Prohibition, world wars, and, indeed, pandemics—that we literally and figuratively have the spirit to not only survive but prevail. **LT**



Giving Gold to Aluminum

RESULTS OF THE SECOND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CANNED WINE COMPETITION

The 2020 International Canned Wine Competition was safely held last July at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds in Boonville, California. All canned beverages that contain grape wine as a component were eligible; categories included red, white, rosé, and sparkling wines as well as wine coolers and wine spritzers.

For more information, contact:
International Canned Wine Competition
 PO Box 345, Philo, California 95466 USA
 707-338-1800
info@cannedwinecompetition.com
cannedwinecompetition.com

Gold Medal Winners

Archer McRae Beverages Ltd.

Joiy Wine Savvy Society Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough
 Joiy Wine Wine Spritzer with Pineapple, Marlborough
 Joiy Wine 2019 Pinot Gris, Marlborough
 Joiy Wine 2018 The Gryphon Pinot Noir, Central Otago

Archer Roose

Archer Roose Bubbly, Veneto
 Archer Roose 2019 Malbec, Mendoza
 Archer Roose 2018 Rosé, Côtes du Luberon

Backpack Wine

Backpack Wine Bubbly Rosé, Columbia Valley

Barnard Griffin Winery

C'est Le Vin Chardonnay, Columbia Valley

Batch & Co.

Bondi Spritz Rosé, Coonawarra, Australia

Besa Mi Vino

2019 All Day Rosé, Paso Robles

Bev

Sauvignon Blanc, Central Coast
 California Rosé, Central Coast

Boutinot USA, Inc.

Te Merio 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough

Bridge Lane Wine

Bubbles, New York

Canned Wine Company Ltd.

2019 Grüner, Burgenland
 2019 Grenache Rosé, France
 2016 Old Vine Garnacha, Aragon

The Copper Crew

2019 Chenin Blanc, Western Cape

Crafters Union

Rosé, California
 Pinot Grigio, California

DistillRuptive Ltd.

Arya Wines 2020 Tinto, Sierra Gaúcha, Brazil
 Arya Wines 2020 Prosecco Brut, Sierra Gaúcha, Brazil
 Arya Wines 2020 Branco, Sierra Gaúcha, Brazil

Erosion Wine Co.

The Floor Is Lava!, Napa Valley
 How Big?, Napa Valley
 You're So Pretty!, Napa Valley
 Secret Handshakes, Napa Valley
 Afraid of Clowns, Napa Valley

Fourth Wave Wine

Take It to the Grave 2018 Shiraz, Langhorne Creek

Goose Ridge Winery

Cascadian Outfitters White Sparkling Wine, Columbia Valley

Half Full Wines

Ocean Dry White Wine, AOC Muscadet

Hall Wines

BACA Wines 2019 Ring Around the Rosé, California

HUN Wines Ltd.

2019 Rosé, Stellenbosch, South Africa

Ironstone Vineyards

Obsession Wines 2018 Symphony, California
 Obsession Wines 2017 Red Blend, California

Karl Lawrence Cellars

2019 Allison Avenue Rosé, Calistoga, Napa Valley

Kiepersol

Fizzy Vit, Texas

Kiss of Wine

Feisty Red Wine, Piemonte
Zesty Riesling, Rheingau

Leelanau Cellars

Summer Sunset Rosé Bubbly, USA
Great Lakes Red Bubbly, USA

Mad Wine

Mad Bubbles Semi-Sweet, Hungary

Maison Le Star

Rosé, Pays d'Oc IGP

Maker Wine Company

2019 Viognier, Mendocino

Mancan Wine LLC

Graham & Fisk's Wine-in-a-Can Rosé Wine with Bubbles,
Central Coast
Graham & Fisk's Wine-in-a-Can Red Wine, Central Coast
Mancan Wine Fizz Wine, Central Coast

McBride Sisters Collection

She Can Wines 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough,
New Zealand
She Can Wines Island Citrus Spritzer, California

Nomadica

2018 Sparkling Rosé, Edition V North Coast Collection,
Monterey

Off-Piste Wines

Pinot Pinot Pinot Grigio Fizz, Hungary

O'Neill Vintners & Distillers

Buttercup Chardonnay, California
Creamery Chardonnay, California

Odell Brewing Company/OBC Wine Project

Rosé with Bubbles, Oregon
Red Blend, Washington

Point of the Bluff Vineyards

Hangar 17 Curtiss White, Finger Lakes

Precept Wine

Browne Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia
Valley
Day Drinking Watermelon Rosé Wine Spritzer, USA
House Wine Paloma Wine Cocktail, USA
Pampelonne La Peche, France
Ste. Chapelle Wild Huckleberry Spritz, USA

Priest Ranch Wines

2019 Rosé, Napa Valley

Quady North

2019 Rosé GSM, Rogue Valley

Revolution Wines

Revel Red, California

The Rosé Spritz

Pineapple Rosé Spritz, Napa County

Sans Wine Co.

2019 Carignan (Carbonic), Mendocino
2019 Rosé Bubbles, Mendocino
2018 Riesling, Rutherford, Napa Valley

Schmidt Family Vineyards

Lucky Day Chardonnay, Applegate Valley

Sheep Black Wine US Inc.

Stel + Mar Premium Red, Lodi

Sofi Spritz

Lemon & Elderflower, New South Wales

Ste. Michelle Wine Estates

14 Hands Bubbles, Columbia Valley
14 Hands Pinot Grigio, Washington
14 Hands Unicorn Rosé Bubbly, Columbia Valley
14 Hands Hot to Trot Red Blend, Columbia Valley
Chateau Ste. Michelle Bubbly White Wine, Columbia
Valley
Chateau Ste. Michelle Rosé Wine, Columbia Valley
Merf Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley

Stolen Figs LLC

Ah-So Wines Red, Navarra DO

Stoller Family Estate

Canned Oregon Pinot Noir, Oregon

Treasury Wine Estates – Australia

T'Gallant Spritzed Prosecco, Southeast Australia
T'Gallant Spritzed Moscato, Southeast Australia

Trinchero Family Estates

Del Mar Watermelon Wine Seltzer, California

Tuck Beckstoffer Estate

Hogwash Sparkling Rosé, California

The Uncommon

2019 Bubbly White, England
2019 Bubbly Rosé Wine, England
2019 English Rosé Wine Spritzer, England
2019 English White Wine Spritzer, England

Via Pacifica Selections

#WineMode 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Aconcagua
#WineMode 2018 Rosé, Aconcagua

Wise Villa Winery

2018 Pinot Noir, Sierra Foothills
2018 Chardonnay, Sierra Foothills

Wrath

AL 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Monterey

ZX Ventures

Babe Wine Rosé, Adelaida District
Babe Wine Red, Adelaida District



Gold Medals for Package Design, Individual Cans

Bonterra Vineyards Young Red
Browne Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon
Day Owl Rosé
Kiss of Wine Zesty Riesling
Maison Le Star Red Wine
Maker Wine Company 2019 Viognier
Nomadica Wines Red Wine Blend
Obsession Wines Symphony
Opici Wines La Maison de Rose Rosé
Stel + Mar Premium Red Wine



Gold Medals for Package Design, Series of Cans

Backpack Wine
Canned Wine Company Ltd.
Dear Mom Wine Co.
Erosion Wine Co.
Odell Brewing Company/OBC Wine Project
The Uncommon
Vivant Wines
#WineMode

The 2021 International Canned Wine Competition will be held July 20-22, 2021, at the Mendocino County Fairgrounds in Boonville, California. Registration and entries are done through Enofile at: <https://enofileonline.com/landing.aspx?competitionID=2775>. Registration opens January 12 and closes July 10, 2021. All canned beverages that contain grape wine as a component are eligible. The products must be commercially available somewhere in the world on July 20, 2021.

Gold medal stickers will be awarded in all categories; there will also be three Best of Show awards.

Judging panels will consist of selected consumers, wholesale wine buyers, and other wine professionals.

All beverages will be automatically entered into the accompanying package design competition. Awards will be made for individual cans as well as for series of cans (three or more).

Entry fee is \$40 per product before June 20 and \$50 after June 20, 2021.

Shipping information for outside the United States:

To facilitate customs for international entries, please email competitions@parkstreet.com. The International Canned Wine Competition will cover their fees. The deadline to contact Park Street is June 1, 2021.

Companies not using a U.S. importer must contact Park Street Imports to avoid shipping delays. Park Street will assist companies in obtaining all necessary import documentation and provide them with detailed instructions for properly preparing and labeling shipments. Do not ship any wines until receiving import documents and instructions from Park Street.

Please send two cans of each entry to:
International Canned Wine Competition
c/o Mendocino County Fair
14400 Highway 128, Boonville, CA 95415
707-338-1800

Entries must arrive between May 10 and July 10, 2021.



Down the AISLE

In Down the Aisle, the editors at *The Tasting Panel* rate retail beverages based on a combination of elements that can affect off-premise potential, including packaging, branding/credibility, value, and user friendliness.

“Talkies” are the little cards appended to retail shelves that educate the consumer through tasting notes and, sometimes, ratings. They are an invaluable tool when there isn’t a knowledgeable employee available and/or the customer is too intimidated to ask for help. For this reason, we are supplementing the traditional rating system with our “Talkie” rating system to assess retail wines/spirits/beers based on the aforementioned factors—and, of course, taste!

1 TALKIE

Clear, legible label; solid branding. Good overall for retail.

2 TALKIES

Eye-catching label and memorable branding. Very good for retail.

3 TALKIES

Creatively inspiring in both packaging and branding. Great for retail.

4 TALKIES

A near work of art and meaningful branding. Excellent for retail.

5 TALKIES

A masterpiece in packaging and a new benchmark in branding. A must-have for retail.



Fetzer 2019 Sundial Chardonnay, California (\$10)

Fresh and perky, this lively vintage is the benchmark for balance in California Chardonnay. Tangerine, melon, and honey perfume the glass, and an array of citrus has staying power on the palate. **90**

FETZER VINEYARDS



10 Span Vineyards 2018 Pinot Noir, Central Coast (\$12)

Ripe cherry and red tea soar on the nose while more cherry, now sprinkled with white pepper, accents the earthy palate. Savory notes of cinnamon and tomato leaf add complexity to spiced rhubarb and rose petal. Blended with 6% Petite Sirah and 6% Petit Verdot, the wine underwent 100% malolactic fermentation and aged in stainless steel and French oak. **90**

THE WINE GROUP



Ballard Lane 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Central Coast (\$13)

With a dash of Petite Sirah and Merlot blended in, this full-bodied Cab, aged 12 months in American and French oak, offers a pillow-like texture. A perfume of raspberry, plum, and white pepper arises before the almost-weightless and slightly dusty palate reveals silky tannins and sun-kissed cherries. **91**



Farmhouse 2019 Red Wine, California (\$11)

Winemaker Charlie Tsegeletos is a master of blending and utilizes six varieties (Zinfandel, Mourvèdre, Carignan, Syrah, Petite Sirah, and Grenache) to perfect this sustainably farmed red. Succulent aromas of red cherries see a dusting of cocoa and a dot of white pepper on the juicy and ripe palate. Red plum and apple define the finish. **89**

CLINE FAMILY CELLARS



Weed Cellars 2018 Sparkling Rosé, Italy (\$13)

Raspberries and pink roses scent the glass of this Italian sparkler; a lighthearted blend of 80% Glera and 20% Pinot Noir. Baby bubbles refresh with notes of melon, red raspberry, and tart citrus before the stony finish. **89**





Bonterra Organic Vineyards 2019 Chardonnay, California (\$14)

While almost half of the grapes for this outstanding and vivacious white were sourced from Bonterra's vineyards in Mendocino, organic vineyards from other cool- and warm-climate regions of California were also carefully chosen. Seventy percent of the wine fermented in a combination of French and American oak and the remainder in stainless steel; it then aged for six months, again in a mix of stainless steel and oak. A dollop of Viognier, Muscat, and Sauvignon Blanc adds floral and sweet citrus notes, and aromas of honeyed sage, Golden Delicious apple, and lemon blossom are plentiful. White-peppered pear zings on a palate that gets its creaminess from maple-kissed pineapple and brioche. Thanks to good acid structure and a touch of stoniness, it holds up well to light and even slightly spicy fare. **90**

FETZER VINEYARDS



Thousand Lives 2020 Pinot Noir, Mendoza, Argentina (\$7)

Jammy cherries and boysenberry make this a lively style of Pinot Noir that's bright and confident. Ripe notes of watermelon and red raspberry chime in, wrapping a layer of sweetness around a steadying core of earth and spiced cocoa. Like the elephant on the label, you won't forget this one! **90**

GRUPO PEÑAFLORES



Castello del Poggio 2019 Pinot Grigio, Delle Venezie, Italy (\$13) Ethereal, light, and crisp. Honeysuckle and delicate pear notes linger atop a steely mineral base. **90**

1821 FINE WINE & SPIRITS



Girasole Vineyards 2019 Pinot Blanc, Mendocino County (\$14)

Founded in 2001 by the late Charlie Barra, Girasole Vineyards takes its name from the Italian word for sunflower; they grow throughout the winery's estate and are depicted on its labels. This splendid white is delicately aromatic and trippingly light on the tongue, with glimmering notes of tangerine and minerality kissed by honeyed pear. Graceful white floral tones are encased in a steely frame. **93**



Butternut 2018 Pinot Noir, California (\$15)

New to the Miller Family Wine Company portfolio, Butternut is a well-known brand that sources grapes throughout California to produce wines that overdeliver in quality and price. This expression features savory aromas of tobacco and baking spices that thread through a perfume of ripe black cherry; on the palate, deep, shadowed notes of earth and cedar are lifted by fine acidity. The fleshy weightiness of the wine's texture complements its serious, complex nature. Cocoa and sandalwood round out the finish. **91**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Butternut 2019 Rosé, Paso Robles (\$15) Strawberry aromas are ripe and clean, while red-berry flavors are bright, sassy, and dotted with salinity. Floral notes of acacia and rose petals are delicate on the crisp, dry finish. **90**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Knotty Vines 2018 Pinot Noir, California (\$15)

Food-friendly with a high acid profile, this punchy Pinot is packed with white pepper, dark cherry, and saffron. Vanilla and oak round out the palate before the big, blue-fruited finish. **90**

RODNEY STRONG VINEYARDS



Butternut 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$15)

Following meaty aromas of cedar, cinnamon, black fruit, and fennel root, silky notes of melted dark chocolate and boysenberry brush across the palate, armed with broad-shouldered tannins. Distinguished and velvety. **92**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY





Contour 2018 Pinot Noir, California (\$15) Aromas of rhubarb and sweet tobacco have character and depth. Wild strawberry and vivid acidity combine for a cheerful start as additional notes of red berries and cocoa mingle within a juicy, refined mouthfeel. **90**

M.S. WALKER, INC.



Dos Almas 2016 Gran Reserva Carménère, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$19) Seventy percent of this rich, ripe, and earthy wine aged in French oak for ten months followed by three months in bottle. Plum, blackberry, and cigar leaf play off of deep, savory flavors of soy sauce. Juicy and a tad smoky, it finishes with an emphatic note of dark chocolate and strawberry. **91**



1821 FINE WINE & SPIRITS



Firesteed 2019 Pinot Noir, Oregon (\$17) This is an easy-drinking, lovely red that nods to the classic Burgundian profile: earthy and mineral-driven. Luscious red berries take shape amid savory notes of tobacco and roasted coffee and spot-on acidity. **91**

VINTAGE WINE ESTATES



Montinore Estate 2019 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$20) Established in 1982, Montinore is known as the largest U.S. producer of certified estate wines made with Biodynamic grapes, including this crisp and bright Pinot Gris grown on Laurelwood/Cornelius soils and fermented in stainless steel. Uplifted acidity shines a spotlight on lemon blossom, yellow apple, and dried herbs. **92**



Imagery 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, California (\$20) Extroverted scents of lemon blossom and melon jump from the glass. Florals such as honeysuckle, white tea, grapefruit, and wet stone coexist remarkably as orange cream and Asian pear come in with a hint of nettle on the finish. The addition of 5% Dry Muscat is apparent on the mouthfeel and honeyed palate. **92**



BENZIGER/THE WINE GROUP



Guinigi Prosecco DOC Spumante Brut, Treviso, Veneto, Italy (\$17) Considered one of the most prestigious regions for Prosecco, Treviso upholds its high-quality reputation with this sparkler. Glera grapes sourced from the Conegliano hills down to the foot of the Valdobbiadene hills fully ripen to produce a tremendously expressive wine whose bubbles burst with a fragrance of lavender and lilac. Notes of mandarin orange, pineapple, and white peach are heavenly. **92**



3 BADGE ENOLOGY



District 7 2018 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon, Monterey (\$20) Prominently depicted on the label, District 7 refers to the official California regional designation for Monterey. Delectable aromas of spiced boysenberry and cocoa immediately grab you. A generous, mouth-filling dollop of blue fruit adds plushness to the juicy and earthy palate, which is well balanced with structure, good acidity, and a toasty-oak finish. **91**



SCHEID FAMILY WINES



Sketchbook 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Mendocino County (\$18) The nose of this perfumed, stainless steel-aged white (95% Sauv Blanc with 4% Pinot Gris and 1% Muscat Canelli) captures aromas of pineapple, kiwi, and gardenia. Lean and crisp with vivid acidity, it's very expressive, showing flavors of grapefruit zest, lemon blossom, tarragon, and white pepper. **91**

MENDOCINO WINE COMPANY



Firriato 2019 Jasmin, Sicily, Italy (\$22) The Zibibbo variety (aka Muscat of Alexandria) is the star of this fragrant, jasmine-scented beauty, which aged three months sur lie in stainless steel. Flavors of lanolin, beeswax, and orange marmalade mate with honeyed apricot to create a sensual texture and a sweet flavor profile. **92**



CARDINAL WINE GROUP



Concha y Toro 2019 Marques de Casa Concha Rosé, DO Itata, Itata Valley, Chile (\$22) From one of Chile's oldest grape-growing regions, this blend of 90% Cinsault and 10% Garnacha benefited from the area's mineral-rich soils. The nose exudes aromas of wet stone and cranberry sorbet and the minerality on the palate is clear-cut, edgy, and dry. Magnolia blooms in tandem with notes of nettle and persimmon. **92**



FETZER VINEYARDS



Tenshen 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$25) The top assets of this concentrated and velvety French oak-aged red are ripe plum and dark chocolate, which are complemented by notes of dried violets and plum skin-textured tannins. White pepper spices up blackberry on the finish. **91**



GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS



Medici Ermete 2019 Daphne Frizzante Secco Malvasia, Colli di Scandiano e di Canossa DOC, Emilia-Romagna, Italy (\$25) Made with 100% Malvasia di Candia, which traces its origins to Crete, this semi-sparkler is a hedonistic adventure of honeyed pineapple and bubbles. Buzzing with minerality and taut acidity, it's lively and so pretty. **91**



KOBRAND



Dutton Estate Winery 2019 Kylie's Cuvée Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$27) The Musqué clone offers aromas and flavors of a spring flower garden spotted with dill and lively grapefruit. Brilliant acidity makes this floral beauty shine. On the finish, dried Italian herbs season key lime and stony mineral notes. **92**



Ottella 2018 Le Creete, Lugana DOC, Veneto, Italy (\$31) Made with 100% Turbiano, this wine has a lusciously nutty yet clean and crisp flavor profile. Mineral-driven citrus joins tropical fruit on an edgy, textured journey. **92**

KYSELA PERE ET FILS, LTD.



El Pino Club 2018 Funky Jory, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$70) This club curates Pinot Noir from the "coastal corners of the world." The red hue of the label represents the color of the famed Jory soils of the Dundee Hills. Aging for 15 months in (25% new) French oak adds depth and texture to this red, whose black-cherry tannins create a dry, dusty entry. Asian spice, dried heather, and red tea come in mid-palate before damp earth and ripe strawberry lend character to the juicy finish. **93**



FOLEY FAMILY WINES



J. Wilkes 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles Highlands District, Paso Robles (\$30) Rustic, chalky tannins grip the teeth, only to be washed by juicy blackberry, chocolate, and espresso on the mid-palate. Underbrush and licorice add another layer of texture to this brawny red. **90**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Sombra Mezcal Joven, Oaxaca, Mexico (\$35) This 90-proof mezcal made with 100% Maguey Espadín shows aromas of smoky vanilla, bergamot, and clay. The peppered notes on entry dive into lime and earth, and tobacco leaf is deeply embedded in chocolate and sandalwood. The new glass packaging—which resembles a *vaso veladora*, a traditional Mexican cup that holds prayer candles—is a deep shade of smoky gray, which represents the name Sombra, Spanish for "shadow." Its reduced weight makes it more eco-friendly. **95**



DAVOS BRANDS

FROM NEAR AND FAR

A SAMPLING OF
MEMORABLE WINES FROM
OUR **GEOGRAPHICAL**
DIGEST WEBINAR SERIES

In partnership with *National Geographic* and *The New Sotheby's Wine Encyclopedia*, our sister publication, *The SOMM Journal*, has created the Geographical Digest webinar series to introduce our readers to producers from across the globe—all with their own distinct stories to tell. Read on for a selection of wines from a few recent installments.



Wente Vineyards 2018 Wetmore Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Livermore Valley Notes of violets and chocolate lick the palate of this statuesque beauty with a round, velvety mouthfeel and sturdy, slightly dusty tannins. It's elegant from start to finish, with earthy undertones and ripe blackberry. Acidity keeps it bright. **93**



Mullan Road Cellars 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington (\$45) This blend of 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Merlot, and 10% Cabernet Franc sends up vivid soprano notes of lilac and blueberry with base scents of chocolate and balsamic. Floral tones persist on the palate with abundant violets. Cigar leaf comes in midway before the saturation of blue fruit takes over and washes through the oak-kissed finish. **93**



Résonance Wines 2017 Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$65) Dry, chalky tannins reverberate with lean acidity. Earth and Asian spices follow a winding thread of dried rose petals, oregano, and sage. **95**

KOBRAND

Résonance Wines 2018 Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$34)

Jasmine and rose petals align with cinnamon tart on the nose. A heavenly earthiness abounds on the palate with sweet tobacco, dusty cocoa, and wild strawberry. **93**

KOBRAND

Merry Edwards 2018 Meredith Estate Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$68) A combination of scents—raspberry jam, tilled earth, and nutmeg—immediately captivates. The liquid floats across the palate with cinnamon-charmed cherries and dusty, supple tannins. This is an eye-opening red, with lively white-peppered cedar defining a luxe finish. **94**

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES

Merry Edwards 2018 Warrens' Hill Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$68) A tribute to Merry Edwards' son Warren, who passed in 2006, as well as Warren Dutton, who established this site. Cherries plunge into savory cigar leaf, beetroot, and sage. These flavors lift and repeat within a bright acid structure while seeing the addition of apricot, plum, and dried violets. **94**

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES

Merry Edwards 2018 Flax Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$68) Made with the Pomard clone planted on gravelly loam in the warmer northern end of the Russian River Valley, this Pinot Noir exhibits chalky tannins and flavors of bright cherry, sweet beets, pomegranate, and orange peel. It's energetic and spiced, with an exciting mouthfeel. **94**

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES

Angove 2017 Warboys Vineyard Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$75)

Aromas of plum-kissed violets are mirrored on the palate. White pepper persists through vivid notes of black cherry, dark chocolate, and cinnamon as a flow of velvet-lined tannins creates a creamy mouthfeel. Aged ten months in French oak, the 2017 vintage may be one of the most lithe, aromatic, and elegant yet for this label. **96**

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES



Schloss Johannisberg 2018 Riesling Trocken, Silberlack, VDP Grosses Gewächs, Rheingau, Germany (\$85)

On the brink of austerity, this trocken (dry) white from the first Riesling estate winery in the world shows a purity on the nose, with restrained fruit throughout. It opens up with aromas of poached pears, rosemary, basil, and a hint of beeswax; crisp, taut acidity gives a good bite on the palate, aligning with orange cream, dill, and barely ripe apricot. Lean and poised, with a finish of bright citrus and white peach. **95**

FREIXENET MIONETTO USA



Schloss Johannisberg 2016 Riesling Spätlese, Grünlack, Deutscher Prädikatswein, Rheingau, Germany (\$50)

This mouth-filling wine's mild sweetness dresses the palate in notes of apricot nectar and orange cream. A great balance of acidity and sweet fruit, with a hint of minerality and blooming white flowers. **95**

FREIXENET MIONETTO USA



Black Stallion Estate Winery 2017 Limited Release Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60)

The fruit for this broad-shouldered red comes from all over Napa Valley—the high elevations of Atlas Peak and Diamond Mountain as well as prestigious valley-floor vineyards in the Oak Knoll and Stags Leap districts. Aged 21 months in (64% new) French oak, it possesses a sense of grace and elegance that emerges with each sip. Velvet-lined tannins and notes of dark chocolate and licorice make for a creamy texture. Blackberry, cinnamon, and cedar are generously swathed across the palate. **95**

TRANSCENDENT WINES



Ramos Pinto 2018 Duas Quintas Reserva, Douro DOC (\$30)

This stunning, memorable white is made from 73% Rabigato, 11% Viosinho, 10% Cô-dega, 4% Arinto, and 2% Gouveio. Aromatics come in waves, with cashew, toffee, and yellow apple emerging as the most arresting. The palate is creamy yet marked by striking acidity and a mineral base. Lemon ice and a garden of white flowers are high notes, with dried pear and tangerine winding up on the finish. **95**

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES



Bouvet Ladubay Signature Brut, Loire Valley, France (\$16)

A stunning blend of 90% Chenin Blanc and 10% Chardonnay produced in the traditional method. Aromas of croissant, lemon blossom, and vanilla wafer. Soft yet lively bubbles, with notes of salted pear and lime zest. Brioche and yellow apples are pleasant on the finish. **92**

KOBRAND



Bouvet Ladubay Excellence Brut Rosé, Loire Valley, France (\$17) Cherry skins and figs scent this 100% Cabernet Franc rosé. An energetic effervescence releases sweet cherry and tart cranberry. Minerality plays a key role on the long finish. **92**

KOBRAND



Agricola Punica 2016 Barroa, Isola dei Nuraghi IGT, Sardinia, Italy (\$55)

Lush, opulent notes of violets, roasted coffee, and black plum are surrounded by black cherry-skin tannins. Exotic cardamom, bay leaf, and five spice season the palate. The blend of 85% Carignan, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Merlot leaves a glistening note of licorice and slate on the finish. **94**



KOBRAND

Agricola Punica 2018 Samas White Wine, Isola dei Nuraghi, Sardinia, Italy (\$20)

Crackling with energy, high-toned acidity marks this blend of 80% Vermentino and 20% Chardonnay. The wine stays on the lees for about 40 days before resting in small concrete vats for three months. Highly aromatic notes of lemon cake and sage are followed by just-squeezed tangerine and a vanilla-cashew creaminess. **92**



KOBRAND

VIK 2016 Milla Cala, Millahue Valley, Chile (\$50)

Led by sturdy tannins, a determined structure and a rich, earthy sweetness define this blend of 68% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot, 9% Carménère, 5% Syrah, and 3% Cab Franc, boosting notes of blackberry and bittersweet dark chocolate. Dark and deep flavors of truffle and creamy fennel come in mid-palate. A spicy, minty ripeness on the finish leaves you wanting more. **94**

GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS



Talbot Vineyards 2017 Estate-Grown Chardonnay, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$45)

Expressive notes of toasty oak, apple tart, and lemon verbena emerge from this richly textured, mouth-filling white. Mango and banana drenched in Italian herbs make an appearance midway alongside focused acidity. **94**

E. & J. GALLO



Talbot Vineyards 2018 Estate-Grown Pinot Noir, Sleepy Hollow Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$50)

A stark, bright nose of violets and plum leads to an earthy palate of sweet tobacco, cocoa, and red beets. Floral tones lavish the firm acid structure. White pepper dotted on bountiful red cherry rounds out the finish. **94**



E. & J. GALLO

Sequoia Grove Winery 2018 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$28)

Barrel fermented with no malolactic, this sumptuous white features notes of just-squeezed lemon, oatmeal, and salted taffy. The mouthfeel continues to glide along to a toasty finish of coconut and cashew. **94**

KOBRAND



Sequoia Grove 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)

Cocoa and cedar are saturated in notes of plum skin, black pepper, anise, and cocoa. There's a well of depth marked by black cherry; firm tannins; and a velvet-coated, elegant mouthfeel. **94**

KOBRAND



YEARBOOK 2020

THE CLASS OF 2020 TAKES A BOW

If there's one thing the vast majority of us can agree on when it comes to 2020, it's that it's been a year to forget. That said, we found solace in continuing our annual Yearbook tradition, celebrating the best products that have crossed our desks—or, to be literal, our kitchen and coffee tables at home—and garnered scores of 93 points or above over the past 12 months. Amid the seemingly endless Zoom calls, vigorous handwashing sessions, takeout runs, and days devoted entirely to binge-watching, they grounded us by giving us something to savor, something to cut through the noise and uncertainty. Bad times won't last, but good wine and spirits are forever. So cheers to better times—and hopefully toasting in close confines with family and friends—in the new year.

WINES

- 94** 00 Wines 2017 VGW Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$75)
96 00 Wines 2017 EGW Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$95)
96 00 Wines 2017 Shea Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton AVA, Oregon (\$95)
95 00 Wines 2017 VGW Chardonnay, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$75)
93 2016 Yatir Creek, Judean Hills, Israel (\$48) ROYAL WINE CO.
96 2016 Yatir Forest, Judean Hills, Israel (\$81) ROYAL WINE CO.
93 50 Harvests 2015 Meritage Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$60)
95 Ackerman Family Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$95)
94 Acumen PEAK 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Atlas Peak, Napa Valley (\$75)
97 Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
95 Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2015 Lithology Beckstoffer To Kalon Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
98 Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
98 Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate 2016 Lithology Beckstoffer To Kalon Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
94 Alexana 2016 Signature Pinot Noir, Revana Vineyard, Dundee Hills, Oregon (\$75) REVANA FAMILY VINEYARDS
95 Alloro 2017 Riservata Estate Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$50)

STILL SHINING AFTER
ALL THESE YEARS:

SILVERADO VINEYARDS

In January, Silverado Vineyards celebrates its 40th anniversary as one of Napa Valley's most iconic wine brands. In 1981, Ron and Diane Miller and her mother, Lillian Disney, established Silverado to make wines from historic sites within the family estate, and the couple's children and grandchildren proudly carry their family's legacy forward as the winery's owners.



Silverado Vineyards 2015 SOLO Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$125)

Silverado's flagship wine is deep, structured, and breathtaking. The gorgeous nose features dark plum, dried violets, vanilla, and oak. Teeth-gripping tannins temper a wave of chalky dark fruit while espresso and tar are seasoned with white pepper and a touch of mint. **97** —Meridith May



Silverado Vineyards 2017 GEO Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$75) For review, see the January/February 2021 issue of *The SOMM Journal*. **96**



Silverado Vineyards 2018 Estate Grown Chardonnay, Carneros (\$35)

Fermented in stainless steel (12%) and a mix of French and Hungarian oak (88%), this wine ages seven months in barrel. Tropical aromas of pineapple and gardenia continue on the palate, along with vanilla, jasmine, and salty cashew brittle. Creamy, with vivacious acidity and a finish of lemon drop and cinnamon. **93** —M.M.



Silverado Vineyards 2017 Estate Merlot, Mt. George Vineyard, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$40)

This youthful, exuberant red boasts a vivid palate of spiced plum, mulberry, and underbrush. Black cherry-skin tannins line the mouth while red tea, white pepper, and cigar leaf add depth. Ripe red berries are generous, sweetening the finish. **94** —M.M.



PHOTO: ALEXANDER RUBIN PHOTOGRAPHY

95 Almaviva 2017 Bordeaux Blend, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$140) DIAGEO CHATEAU & ESTATES

95 Alta Colina 2016 Old 900 Syrah, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$58)

93 Altos de Luzón, DO Jumilla, Spain (\$19) AVIVA VINO

93 Amayna 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Leyda Valley, San Antonio, Chile (\$25) VINE CONNECTIONS

93 Anaba 2018 Turbine White, Sonoma Valley (\$32)

93 Ancient Peaks 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$28)

93 Ancient Peaks 2018 Chardonnay, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$19)

93 Andis Wines 2017 Cabernet Franc, Sierra Foothills (\$40)

93 Andis Wines 2018 Barbera d'Amador, Sierra Foothills (\$30)

94 Andis Wines 2018 ENOR, Sierra Foothills (\$45)

96 Angove 2017 Warboys Vineyard Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$75) TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES

94 Angove 2017 Warboys Vineyard Shiraz/Grenache, McLaren Vale, Australia TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES

93 Aniello 2016 Trousseau, Rio Negro, Patagonia, Argentina (\$40) GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS

94 Anvil by Forgeron Cellars 2018 Chardonnay, French Creek Vineyard, Yakima Valley, WA (\$48)

94 Apaltagua Grial 2017 Carménère, Apalta Valley, Colchagua, Chile (\$75) GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTERS

95 Argento 2017 Single Block Malbec, Paraje Altamira, Valle de Uco, Mendoza, Argentina (\$55)

94 Argento Single Vineyard 2018 Cabernet Franc, Finca Agrelo, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40) PACIFIC WINE & SPIRITS

95 Avery Rosé Vineyards 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Six Acre Vineyard, Oakville, Napa (\$110)

94 Axios 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$140)

94 B.R. Cohn 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$60)

93 Babylonstoren 2018 Nebukadnesar, Simonsberg-Paarl, Western Cape, South Africa (\$40)

95 Badia a Coltibuono 2007 Occhio di Pernice Vin Santo del Chianti Classico DOCG, Italy (\$70)

93 Balletto 2018 Pinot Noir, Sexton Hills Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$46)

93 Balverne 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Chalk Hill, Sonoma County (\$27)

94 Beekeeper Cellars 2017 Zinfandel, Montecillo Vineyard, Sonoma (\$65)

93 Benziger Family Winery 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$20) WINE GROUP

93 Benziger Family Winery 2017 Chardonnay, Sonoma County (\$16) WINE GROUP

94 Benziger Family Winery 2017 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma Valley (\$55) THE WINE GROUP

93 Bien Nacido Estate 2018 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$45) MILLER FAMILY

98 Bien Nacido Estate 2018 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) MILLER FAMILY

95 Bien Nacido Estate 2018 Syrah, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) MILLER FAMILY

93 Black Kite 2017 Chardonnay, Soberanes Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$48)

93 Black Kite 2017 Pinot Noir, Stony Terrace Block, Anderson Valley, CA (\$62)

94 Black Kite Cellars 2017 Pinot Noir, Gap's Crown Vineyard, Sonoma Coast (\$62)

93 Black Kite Cellars 2017 Pinot Noir, River Turn Block, Anderson Valley (\$62)

93 Blagden Wines 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Monte Rosso Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$65)

95 Blue Farm 2017 Chardonnay, Laceroni Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$70)

94 Blue Farm 2017 Pinot Noir, Anne Katherina Vineyard, Sonoma Valley (\$95)

94 Bodega Norton 2016 Gernot Langes, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$105) KOBRA

94 Bodega Volcánes de Chile 2017 Parinacota Limited Edition Syrah-Carignan, DO Maule Valley, Chile (\$25) VIAS IMPORTS

93 Bodegas Muriel 2010 Viñas Viejas Gran Reserva, Rioja, Spain (\$30) QUINTESSENTIAL LLC

95 Bonterra 2016 The Butler, Mendocino County (\$50) FETZER VINEYARDS

94 Bravium 2017 Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley, Mendocino County (\$34) TRINCHERO WINE ESTATES

94 Calera 2016 Pinot Noir, Mills Vineyard, Mount Harlan AVA, Central Coast (\$75) DUCKHORN WINE CO

95 Calera 2016 Pinot Noir, Selleck Vineyard, Mt. Harlan AVA, Central Coast (\$95) DUCKHORN WINE CO

95 Calla Lily 2015 Audax, Napa Valley (\$120)

93 Calla Lily 2016 Ultimate Red, Napa Valley (\$65)

RISEING STAR:

KYSELA PÈRE ET FILS' CHAKANA

Taking a name given to the Southern Cross constellation by indigenous people of the Andes, family-owned Argentine winery Chakana organically and biodynamically farms nearly 300 acres of vineyards across the Mendoza region. A member of the Kysela Père et Fils portfolio, it pursues a minimal-intervention approach to winemaking that's on full display in its Estate Selection Malbec—a pure expression of the Uco Valley's high elevation and rocky calcareous soils thanks in part to the use of native yeasts for fermentation; minimal sulfites; and the gentle touch of winemaker Gabriel Bloise.

Chakana 2018 Estate Selection Malbec, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$31) Sourced from elevations over 5,000 feet, this wonderfully expressive, impressive red is aged in new and used French oak (70%) and concrete vats (30%) for 12 months. Black cherry and bloody grilled meat meet high acidity that highlights a thread of graphite and subtly integrated black pepper. A powerhouse with excellent drinkability. **93** —*M.M.*



SUAVEST SPANIARD:

BODEGAS MURIEL

José, Julián, and Javier Murúa: Their names alone have a ring of romance, and so do their wines. The family affair began in 1926, when José established a winery in the Spanish village of Elciego in Rioja Alavesa—the same year that Rioja was itself established as a DO. Exactly 60 years later, Julián picked up where José left off, renovating his father's cellar and founding Bodegas Muriel. Today he and his son Javier run the estate, producing classic expressions of Tempranillo that are imported by Quintessential Wines. Made only in the best vintages, the Muriel Gran Reserva comes from 35- to 40-year-old vines grown on the region's notably poor (yet limestone-rich) clay soils; the 2010 was aged in a mix of French and American oak for two years before spending three years in bottle. The result is pure Rioja.

Bodegas Muriel 2010 Muriel Viñas Viejas Gran Reserva, Rioja, Spain (\$30) Smooth and mature, with berry notes that present toasty, nicely aged flavors. It's a rich and balanced demonstration of how nicely Tempranillo responds to a little aging. **93** —*Anthony Dias Blue*



MASTER BLENDEERS:

SCOTTO CELLARS

Paul Scotto channels five generations of viticultural history into his role as winemaker for not only Scotto Cellars but also J. McClelland Cellars, where he joins award-winning fellow winemaker Mitch Cosentino to craft a luxury portfolio of limited-production wines from Napa Valley and Lodi. Sourcing from prestigious sites across these regions, they work closely with growers to ensure the quality of the meticulously selected fruit behind their acclaimed wines.



Scotto Family Cellars 2017 Reserve Zinfandel, Mohr Fry Ranch, Lodi (\$20) Smooth, lush, and tangy, with lively acidity and juicy style; bright and long, with balance and finesse. **93** —A.D.B.

50 Harvests 2015 Meritage Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$60) Dark garnet color and a luscious, earthy nose; ripe, rich, and spicy, with sweet plum and berries. A balanced, long, and seamless blend with no hard edges. **93** —A.D.B.

J. McClelland Cellars 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50) This blend of 92.5% Cabernet Sauvignon with portions of Merlot and Cab Franc aged 30 months in French oak. The perfume of chocolate-covered cherry, orange peel, and rose petal is delightful. Round, luxurious tannins are complemented by an undertone of minerality and a drying quality defined by pencil shavings

and briar. It becomes juicier toward the finish, with generous fruit and stand-up acidity. **93** —M.M.

J. McClelland Cellars 2017 Chardonnay, Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley (\$35) Vivacious aromas of honeysuckle, lemon oil, and Italian herbs appear before a clean entry with focused acidity. Classic flavors of crème brûlée mingle with fruity notes of pear, fig, and melon as chalky minerality and citrusy tones exude crispness. **93** —M.M.



- 95 Campillo 2009 Rioja Gran Reserva, Spain (\$50)** PACIFIC HIGHWAY
- 97 Cardinale 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$325)**
- 95 Carmel Winery 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Admon Vineyard, Galilee, Israel (\$40)** ROYAL WINE CORP.
- 94 Casa Silva 2018 S38 Cabernet Sauvignon, Los Lingues Single Block, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$30)** VINE CONNECTIONS
- 93 Casarena 2017 Lauren's Vineyard Cabernet Franc, Agrelo, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$30)** VINE CONNECTIONS
- 95 Casarena 2017 Naoki's Vineyard Malbec, Agrelo, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$30)** VINE CONNECTIONS
- 93 Cascina Castlet 2016 Litina, Barbera d'Asti Superiore DCG, Piedmont, Italy (\$40)** ROMANO BRANDS
- 93 Cascina Castlet 2016 Policalpo, Monferrato Rosso DCG, Piedmont, Italy (\$48)** ROMANO BRANDS
- 94 Cenit 2011, DO Tierra del Vino de Zamora, Spain (\$45)** AVIVA VINO
- 93 Chakana Estate 2018 Malbec, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$31)**
- 95 Champagne Henriot NV Champagne Blanc de Blancs, France (\$60)** MAISONS & DOMAINES HENRIOT AMERICA
- 93 Champagne Palmer & Co NV Blanc de Blancs Champagne, France (\$90)**
- 93 Champagne Palmer & Co NV Brut Champagne Reserve, France (\$60)**
- 93 Château Belugue 2015 Fronsac, Bordeaux (\$28)** JP-BOURGEOIS; LEFGROUP LLC
- 94 Château Climens 2018 Asphodèle, Bordeaux, France (\$42)** VINEYARD BRANDS
- 94 CHEV 2018 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$80)**
- 94 CHEV 2018 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$80)**
- 94 Cliff Lede 2017 Dancing Heart Rock Block Series Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$110)**
- 94 Cliff Lede 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$28)**
- 93 Cline Cellars 2019 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$15)**
- 93 Clos Pegase 2018 Chardonnay, Mitsuko's Vineyard, Carneros, Napa Valley (\$30)** VINTAGE WINE ESTATES
- 94 Concha y Toro 2018 Gran Reserva Serie Riberas Syrah, DO San Javier, Chile (\$17)** FETZER VINEYARDS
- 94 Concha y Toro 2018 Gran Reserva Serie Riberas Chardonnay, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$17)** FETZER VINEYARDS
- 94 Concha y Toro 2018 Gran Reserva Serie Riberas Syrah, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$17)** FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93 Cono Sur 2018 20 Barrels Chardonnay, El Centinela Estate, Casablanca Valley, Chile (\$26)** FETZER
- 97 Corison 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$100)**
- 94 Cornerstone Cellars 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$120)**
- 94 Cornerstone Cellars 2016 Red Blend, Oakville Station Vineyard, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$120)**
- 94 Cortonesi 2015 La Mannella, Brunello di Montalcino, Italy (\$75)** QUINTESSENTIAL WINES
- 93 Craggy Range Vineyards 2016 Le Sol, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$103)** KOBRAND
- 93 Craggy Range Vineyards 2015 Aroha Pinot Noir, Te Muna Road, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$150)** KOBRAND
- 95 Craggy Range Vineyards 2015 Le Sol Syrah, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$105)** KOBRAND
- 96 Crown Point Vineyards 2014 Estate Selection, Happy Canyon, Santa Barbara County (\$150)**
- 95 Crown Point Vineyards 2015 Estate Selection, Happy Canyon, Santa Barbara County (\$150)**
- 97 Crown Point Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Happy Canyon, Santa Barbara County (\$150)**
- 95 Cuvaion 2017 Swan Pinot Noir, Los Carneros, Napa Valley (\$65)** FREDERICK WILDMAN
- 96 Daniele Conterno 2013 Bussia, Barolo, Italy (\$100)** GRAPE JUICE GROUP
- 94 Daniele Conterno 2015 Panerole, Barolo, Italy (\$62)** GRAPE JUICE GROUP
- 93 Dashe Cellars 2018 Vineyard Select Zinfandel, California (\$24)**
- 95 Denner Vineyards 2017 Dirt Worshipper, Paso Robles (\$72)**
- 94 Denner Vineyards 2017 Grenache, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (\$70)**
- 94 Denner Vineyards 2017 Mother of Exiles, Paso Robles (\$80)**
- 93 Denner Vineyards 2017 Viognier, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (\$50)**
- 93 Domaine Alain Gras 2017 Blanc, Saint Romain, France (\$46)** VINEYARD BRANDS
- 94 Domaine Delaporte 2017 Sancerre Les Monts Damnés, France (\$54)** VINEYARD BRANDS
- 96 Domaine du Castel 2017 Estate Bottled Grand Vin, Judean Hills, Israel (\$78)** ROYAL WINE CO.

BEST LEGACY:

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY

The Miller family can trace their Central Coast roots back to 1871, when their British ancestors settled in Ventura County to grow lemons and avocados. But it was the fourth generation who first planted grapes, expanding their land holdings to Santa Barbara County and Paso Robles in 1973. By the late 2000s, the family had successfully channeled their agricultural legacy into winemaking with the inaugural 2007 vintage of Bien Nacido & Solomon Hills Estates, the labels representing their boutique properties.

Today, almost 150 years later, the company's holdings have expanded to encompass Ballard Lane, Smashberry, Barrel Burner, J. Wilkes, and, just this year, BNA Wine Group's portfolio of brands, which notably includes Butternut Wines. And with renowned industry vet Jonathan Nagy leading the winemaking team while winemaker Anthony Avila oversees Bien Nacido, the Millers have set themselves up to become the Central Coast's premier producer.

Nicholas Miller, Miller Family Wine Company VP of sales and marketing; Stephen Miller, Thornhill Companies CEO; and Marshall Miller, Miller Family Wine Company VP of operations.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



**Bien Nacido Estate
2018 Chardonnay,
Santa Maria Valley,
Santa Barbara**

County (\$45) The steely, high-toned citrus entry of this whole cluster-pressed Chardonnay, aged sur lie for 16 months in (20% new) French oak, is exciting. White flowers shine—lemon blossom, chamomile, jasmine—in combination with notes of Asian pear and lemon oil. With precision and searing acidity, it will hold up to spicy, pungent dishes. **93** —M.M.



**Bien Nacido Estate
2018 Pinot Noir,
Santa Maria Valley,
Santa Barbara**

County (\$60) Grace, fluidity, and texture take this Pinot Noir, aged 16 months in (30% new) French oak, to great heights. Fragrances of earth and dried leaves, red plum, ginger, and roasted coffee emanate from the glass. White-peppered rose petals and cherries seasoned with thyme and oregano head into a juicy whirlpool with Old World acidity. Spiced oak joins balsamic and tobacco leaf on the finish. **98** —M.M.

Bien Nacido Estate 2018 Syrah, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) With a dollop of 1% Viognier, this superb vintage aged 16 months in (24% new) French oak. Pungent, earthy aromas of grilled meat and blackberry abound. Layers of dark chocolate, espresso, and dried violets show on a palate whose minerality holds its juiciness in check. Ripe plum and brown sugar are luscious with cedar and spice on the finish. **95** —M.M.



**J. Wilkes 2018
Chardonnay, Santa
Maria Valley (\$25)
Winemaker Wes**

Hagen has the Midas touch when it comes to showing why Santa Maria is a stellar home for this golden variety. Aromas of wispy lime chiffon and flan are light and lovely. The palate offers salty notes of chamomile and honeysuckle joined by apple tart midway; fermentation in 100% stainless steel makes it clean and focused, with balanced acidity and tremendous grace. **93** —M.M.

Solomon Hills Estate 2018 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$45) From 21-year-old vines, this edgy, extroverted white shows a spark of jasmine and ginger. Fresh-squeezed lemon is made even more vivid by a through-line of salinity, while just-ripe pineapple, grapefruit zest, and cinnamon are kindred souls on the palate. **94** —M.M.

Solomon Hills Estate 2018 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) From the westernmost—and coolest—site in the Santa Maria Valley AVA comes this complex Pinot, aged in (30% new) French oak for 16 months. Alluring aromas of bright cherry, green tea, and sweet earth come to life; on the palate, jasmine and roses lead with bright, freshening acidity, followed by heather, spiced nutmeg, new leather, and cranberry. **96** —M.M.

MOST DYNAMIC DUO:

DR. LOOSEN AND J. CHRISTOPHER WINES

Germany and Oregon may be separated by more than 5,000 miles, but their respective wine cultures represent one big viticultural playground for Ernst “Erni” Loosen, the owner of both the 200-year-old Dr. Loosen winery in the Mosel Valley—one of the country’s most renowned estates—and J. Christopher Wines in the Willamette Valley, which has already gained international acclaim despite its relative youth.

It must have something to do with the Loosen touch. Considering that he was a student of archeology before taking over his family’s estate, it’s no surprise that the winemaker has a passion for digging his hands in the soil of both the Old World and the New; his own style, however, is decidedly rooted in the former realm. Above all, he and the fellow winemakers with whom he collaborates aim to make their wines a true embodiment of their terroir, prioritizing sense of place through a traditional approach without eschewing the use of modern techniques.

Speaking of soils, the J. Christopher Wines 2017 Volcanique Pinot Noir and the Dr. Loosen 2018 Riesling Spätlese that we reviewed last year grew in red volcanic clay and red slate/red volcanic sandstone, respectively. The former is a blend of Pommard and Wädenswil clones from La Colina Vineyard in the Dundee Hills AVA, while the latter hails from a sustainably farmed property named Ürziger Würzgarten that’s known for yielding distinctive wines whose bright acidity is balanced by their rich mouthfeel and ripe fruit character.

J. Christopher Wines 2017 Volcanique Pinot Noir, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$40) Softly perfumed nose. Crisp and bright with tangy cherry and raspberry flavors; silky and generous, balanced and fresh, long and bracing. **93** —A.D.B.

Dr. Loosen 2018 Riesling Spätlese, Ürziger Würzgarten, Mosel, Germany (\$32) Smooth, rich, and creamy, with ripe, sweet notes of peach and apple; elegant and long. **93** —A.D.B.



Dr. Loosen and J. Christopher Wines owner Ernst “Erni” Loosen.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. LOOSEN



- 95** Domaine du Cellier aux Moines 2017 Givry Premier Cru, Burgundy (\$65)
- 94** Domaine J.A. Ferret 2017 Pouilly-Fuissé Tête de Cru Le Clos, France (\$56) KOBRAND
- 95** Domus Aurea 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Upper Maipo Valley, Chile (\$70) GLOBAL VINEYARD IMPORTS
- 97** Don Melchor 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Puente Alto Vineyard, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$120) INDEPENDENT
- 94** Dona Maria 2014 Grande Reserva, Alentejo DOC, Portugal (\$44) MS WALKER
- 93** Dr. Loosen 2018 Riesling Spätlese, Ürziger Würzgarten, Mosel, Germany (\$32) LOOSEN BROS. USA
- 93** Dutton Estate Winery 2017 Karmen Isabella Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$46)
- 93** Dutton-Goldfield 2018 Pinot Noir, Dutton Ranch, Russian River Valley (\$40)
- 93** E18hteen Vines 2018 Pinot Noir, Seppa Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma (\$45)
- 93** Eberle Winery 2019 Côtes-du-Rhône, Paso Robles (\$34)
- 93** Eden Rift 2018 Estate Chardonnay, Cienega Valley, Central Coast (\$42)
- 93** Ehlers Estate 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$65)
- 95** Ehlers Estate 2017 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 1886, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$125)
- 94** Ehret Family Winery 2015 Hillside Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Bavarian Lion Vineyard, Knights Valley, Sonoma (\$98)
- 93** El Coto 2014 Real, Rioja, Spain (\$50) OPICI
- 94** Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Five Mountain Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Oregon (\$60)
- 94** Emeritus Vineyards 2018 Estate Grown Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$35)
- 93** Estela Perinetti 2016 Grand Vin, Tupungato, Mendoza, Argentina (\$55) SEAVIEW IMPORTS/PALM BAY
- 95** Faustino I 2006 Gran Reserva, Rioja, Spain (\$40) PACIFIC HIGHWAY
- 93** Fel Wines 2018 Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley, California (\$38)
- 95** Ferraton Père & Fils 2018 Les Mandouls, Condrieu, France (\$64) SERA IMPORTS
- 93** Flora Springs 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 93** Flora Springs 2017 Trilogy Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$85)
- 93** Flora Springs 2019 Soliloquy White Wine, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 93** Fog & Wind 2018 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$50)
- 94** Folded Hills Winery 2017 August Red, Santa Ynez Valley (\$43)
- 94** Folded Hills Winery Estate White, Santa Ynez Valley (\$65)
- 93** Folly of the Beast 2018 Pinot Noir, Central Coast (\$19) WINEC
- 94** Forgeron Cellars 2017 Anvil Syrah, Boushey Vineyard, Birdhouse Block, Yakima Valley, Washington (\$65)
- 94** Foxen Vineyard 2017 Pinot Noir, Block 8, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$65)
- 94** Foxen Vineyard 2017 Syrah, Tinaquic Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$50)
- 94** Fringe Collective Seafall 2018 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$50) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93** Gamble Family Vineyards 2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 95** Gamble Family Vineyards 2016 Paramount, Napa Valley (\$90)
- 93** Gehricke 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Knights Valley, Sonoma Valley (\$35) 3 BADGE ENOLOGY
- 93** Gehricke 2017 Petite Sirah, Sonoma Valley (\$30) 3 BADGE ENOLOGY
- 93** Gehricke 2017 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast 3 BADGE ENOLOGY
- 96** Gelson's 2017 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley
- 94** Gelson's 2018 Fair Play Rosé, Sierra Foothills
- 95** Gelson's 2018 Malbec, Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley
- 96** Gianni Gabliardo 2016 Del Comune di La Morra, Barolo, Italy (\$78) ENOTEC IMPORTS
- 96** Goldeneye 2017 Split Rail Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley (\$86)
- 99** Guarachi 2016 Atlas Peak Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$95)
- 96** Hahn 2016 SLH Orchestrale Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey (\$90)
- 95** Hahn 2017 SLH Grenache, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey (\$25)
- 93** Hahn 2018 SLH Estate Grown Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey (\$25)
- 94** Halleck Vineyard 2019 Gewürztraminer, Calendrelli Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$45)
- 93** Halleck Vineyard 2019 Little Sister Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley (\$39)

93 Hawk & Horse 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Hills AVA, Lake County (\$84)

93 Hawk & Horse 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Hills AVA, Lake County

94 Hawk & Horse 2016 Block Three Cabernet Sauvignon, Red Hills AVA, Lake County (\$50)

94 Hawk and Horse Vineyards 2016 Petite Sirah, Lake County (\$65)

95 Hearst Ranch Winery 2017 Proprietor's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$100)

96 Helios 2017 Cabernet Franc, Sunbasket Vineyard, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$100)

94 Hestan Vineyards 2015 Stephanie Malbec, Napa Valley (\$55)

95 il Poggio 2015 Brunello di Montalcino, Italy (\$70) ENOTEC IMPORTS

94 J. Bucher 2017 Opa's Block Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$75)

93 J. Bucher 2017 Three Sixty Pinot Noir, Bucher Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$65)

93 J. Christopher 2017 Lumière Special Selection Pinot Noir, Eola-Amity Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$52)

93 J. Christopher 2017 Volcanique Pinot Noir, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$52)

93 J. de Villebois 2017 Pouilly-Fumé Les Marnes Kimmeridgiennes, France (\$53) VINEYARD BRANDS

94 J. de Villebois 2017 Sancerre Les Monts Damnés, France (\$66) VINEYARD BRANDS

95 J. Lohr 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Carol's Vineyard, St. Helena, Napa Valley (\$60)

94 J. Lohr 2016 Signature Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$100)

93 J. Lohr 2017 Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$35)

93 J. Lohr 2017 Tower Road Petite Sirah, Paso Robles (\$35)

93 J. Lohr 2018 Fog's Reach Pinot Noir, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$35)

94 J. Lohr 2018 Hilltop Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$35)

93 J. Lohr 2018 October Night Chardonnay, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County (\$25)

93 J. Lohr 2018 Pure Paso, Paso Robles (\$27)

94 J. Lohr 2019 Flume Crossing Sauvignon Blanc, Arroyo Seco, Monterey County

93 J. McClelland Cellars 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50) SCOTTO CELLARS

93 J. McClelland Cellars 2017 Chardonnay, Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley (\$35) SCOTTO CELLARS

93 J. Wilkes 2018 Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley (\$25) MILLER WINE COMPANY

94 Jean Fournier 2017 Marsannay, France (\$40) SHIVERICK

95 Jean-Claude Dagueneau 2018 Pouilly-Fumé Domaine des Berthiers, France (\$34) VINEYARD BRANDS

94 Jeremy Nickel Cellars 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Atlas Peak (\$75)

95 Jon Nathaniel 2018 Fabulist Blend, Komes Family Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$125)

93 Jon Nathaniel 2018 Pinot Noir, Lavender Hill, Napa Valley (\$65)

95 Jordan Winery 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$58)

93 Joto Sake NV Maboroshi Daiginjo The One With The Clocks, Hiroshima, Japan (\$45) KOBRAND

93 Justin 2018 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$58)

93 Justin Vineyards & Winery 2016 Isosceles, Paso Robles (\$76)

95 Justin Vineyards 2017 Savant, Paso Robles (\$50)

93 Kaiken 2017 Obertura Cabernet Franc, Luján de Cuyo, Argentina (\$45) GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS

93 Kalaris Family Vineyards 2015 Chardonnay, Oak Knoll, Napa Valley (\$55) AXIOS

94 Kalaris Family Vineyards 2016 Cabernet Franc, Napa Valley (\$55)

93 Kate Arnold 2017 Daffodil Hill Pinot Noir, Eola-Amity Hills, Oregon (\$45)

94 Keeler Estate 2017 Concrete Dolia Pinot Gris, Eola-Amity Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$24)

94 Kishor Vineyards 2016 Misgav Red, Galilee, Israel (\$37) ISRAELI WINE DIRECT, LLC

93 Kith & Kin 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$40) AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

96 Ladera 2015 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley (\$115)

96 Lancaster Estate 2016 Winemaker's Cuvée, Alexander Valley, Sonoma (\$100) FOLEY FAMILY WINES

GREATEST EVOLUTION: JORDAN WINERY

There are many reasons why the Alexander Valley-based Jordan Winery is the acclaimed producer it is today, but the events of the past year perhaps best reflect its willingness to evolve. In 2019, Rob Davis—the winemaker who produced Jordan's first vintage in 1976 under the guidance of the legendary André Tchelistcheff and every subsequent vintage since—passed the baton to associate winemaker Maggie Kruse. Although Kruse herself is a 14-year veteran of the winery, 2020 was her first vintage at the helm of both the winemaking and winegrowing operations—ushering in a new era for her and Jordan.

Jordan Winery 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$58) The 40th vintage of this wine boasts a nose of crushed violets, sweet earth, and graphite that evokes Margaux, while the well-mannered, silky entry, with supple tannins and a wash of espresso and slate, is cause for joy. Allspice and dark black cherry point back to the Alexander Valley, showing that inner sunshine on a plush mouthfeel. **95** —M.M.



PUREST PLEASURE: FLORA SPRINGS

This small family-owned winery can always be counted on for wines of substance and pleasure. Proprietary blends Trilogy and Soliloquy represent years of farming and winemaking in Napa Valley, showcasing Flora Springs' tradition of fine estate vineyards and winemaking excellence.

Flora Springs 2019 Soliloquy, Napa Valley (\$50) A smooth and aromatic wine crafted from an unusual blend of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and Malvasia. Rich, dense, and tangy, with creamy elements of juicy fruit and spice; lush and long. **93** —A.D.B.

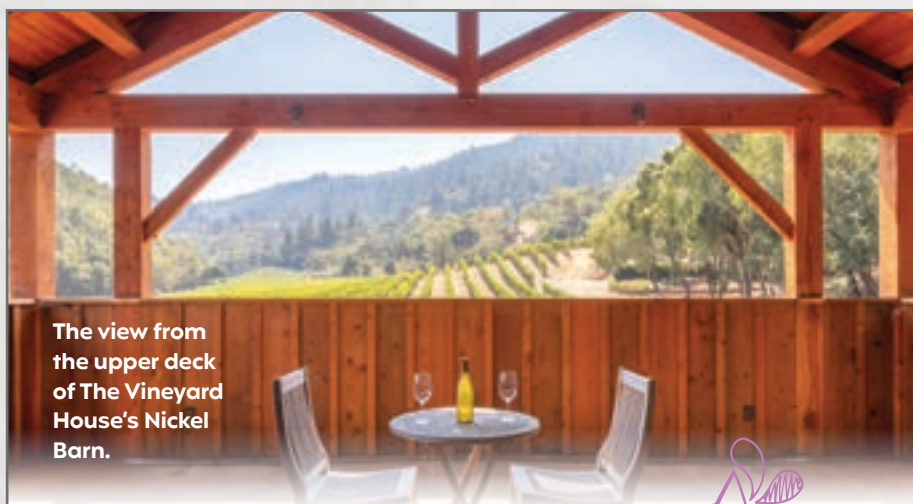
Flora Springs 2017 Trilogy, Napa Valley (\$85) Deep garnet color and a soft vanilla nose; silky smooth, with notes of soft plum, toast, vanilla, new oak, mocha, and chocolate. Elegant and lush, long and balanced. **93** —A.D.B.



PHOTO: JOANNA SALAZAR

YEARBOOK 2020

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE VINEYARD HOUSE



The view from the upper deck of The Vineyard House's Nickel Barn.

BEST TRIBUTE:

THE VINEYARD HOUSE

It's not uncommon for next-generation winemakers to show an appreciation for their parents' teachings as they craft their own bottlings, but Jeremy Nickel takes his gratitude to another level. He founded The Vineyard House in Oakville, California, as a token of his affection and admiration for his father, Gil, a Napa pioneer who put his stamp on more than one Oakville estate before his death in 2003. His legacy lives on through his son's magnificent Vineyard House expressions (made since 2019 by acclaimed winemakers Philippe Melka and Maayan Koschitzky).



The Vineyard House 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, H.W. Crabb's Hermosa Valley, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$225)

From an estate vineyard named for a Napa Valley wine pioneer who once owned a portion of the property, this Cab (with some Cab Franc and Petit Verdot) spent 24 months in (50% new) French oak followed by 14 months in bottle. Classic aromas of cedar, dark blue and black fruit, graphite, and violets are noteworthy, and the creamy and dense palate is packed with muscle. Structured but graceful, with a finish of forest floor. **97** —M.M.

The Vineyard House 2017 Chardonnay, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$75)

Spending 16 months in (60% new) French oak, this white wowed us with its gregarious aromas of salty pear, chamomile, butterscotch, and lychee. Supercharged by acidity, the

palate is opulent yet lifted and full of energy, with subtly creamy notes of honeyed lemon, tea leaves, and brioche. **95** —M.M.

Jeremy Nickel Cellars 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Atlas Peak (\$75) Deep garnet color; soft plum and spice nose. Smooth, rich, and dense with ripe plum and lovely structure; fresh, generous yet balanced, and long. **94** —A.D.B.



- 96** Le Chemin du Roi NV Brut Champagne, Reims, France (\$200) SIRE SPIRITS
- 96** Le Chemin du Roi NV Brut Rosé Champagne, Reims, France (\$325) SIRE SPIRITS
- 93** Le Grand Courtage NV Blanc de Blancs Brut, France (\$20) PACIFIC HIGHWAY
- 93** Le Grand Courtage NV Brut Rosé, France (\$20) PACIFIC HIGHWAY
- 93** Ledson Winery 2016 Malbec, Mountain Terraces Vineyard, Moon Mountain District, Sonoma (\$85)
- 93** Lenné 2018 Chardonnay, Yamhill-Carlton, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$45)
- 94** Lloyd by Robert Lloyd 2018 Chardonnay, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$40)
- 94** Lloyd Cellars by Robert Lloyd 2017 Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Ynez Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$50)
- 96** Lombardi 2018 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$44)
- 95** Lombardi 2018 Giusti Ranch Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$68)
- 93** Lorenzi Estate Vineyards 2016 Estate Petite Sirah, Temecula Valley, California (\$55)
- 93** Lorenzi Estate Vineyards 2017 Clone 474 Syrah, Temecula Valley, California (\$65)
- 94** Loring Wine Company 2018 Pinot Noir, Boekennoogen Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$54)
- 94** Loring Wine Company 2018 Pinot Noir, Cargasacchi Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$54)
- 94** Louis Pommery 2019 Chardonnay, Carneros (\$30) VRANKEN-POMMERY AMERICA
- 94** Luca 2018 Pinot Noir, Tupungato, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$35) VINE CONNECTIONS
- 93** Lucienne 2018 Pinot Noir, Hook Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$50)
- 93** Lucienne 2018 Pinot Noir, Lone Oak Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$50) HAHN FAMILY WINES
- 94** Lucienne 2018 Pinot Noir, Smith Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$50) HAHN FAMILY WINES
- 93** Lumeo Syrah 2017 IGT Costa Toscana Rosso, Italy (\$49)
- 95** MAAL NV Pacciencia Malbec X-XI-XII, Mendoza, Argentina (\$199) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 93** Maggy Hawk 2017 Afleet Pinot Noir, Anderson Valley (\$65)
- 95** Margerum Wine Company 2017 Barden Pinot Noir, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$68)
- 94** Marie-Pierre Manciat 2017 Pouilly-Fuissé Les Petites Bruyeres, France (\$29) SHIVERICK IMPORTS
- 93** Marqués de Cáceres 2015 Rioja Reserva, Spain (\$31) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 93** Marqués de Cáceres 2016 Generacion MC, Rioja DOC, Spain (\$38) VINEYARD BRANDS
- 99** Masi Boscaini 2007 Campolongo di Torbe Amaroni della Valpolicella Classico DCG, Veneto (\$145) SANTA MARGHERITA USA
- 97** Masi Boscaini 2006 Mazzano Amarone della Valpolicella Classico DCG, Veneto (\$150) SANTA MARGHERITA USA
- 95** Merry Edwards 2017 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast (\$48) MAISONS, MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 95** Merry Edwards 2018 Pinot Noir, Klopp Ranch, Russian River Valley (\$66) MAISONS, MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 96** Merry Edwards 2018 Pinot Noir, Olivet Lane, Russian River Valley (\$72) MAISONS, MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 95** Merry Edwards 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Russian River Valley (\$36) MAISONS, MARQUES & DOMAINES
- 93** Metz Road 2018 Chardonnay, Riverview Vineyard, Monterey County (\$30) SCHEID FAMILY WINES
- 93** Metz Road 2018 Pinot Noir, Riverview Vineyard, Monterey County (\$35) SCHEID FAMILY
- 93** Mi Sueño 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$55)
- 96** Michele Chiarlo 2016 Asili Barbaresco DCG, Piedmont, Italy (\$90) KOBRAND
- 93** Michele Chiarlo 2019 Nivole Moscato d'Asti, Piedmont, Italy (\$24) KOBRAND
- 93** Migration 2017 Pinot Noir, Running Creek Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$70) DUCKHORN WINE CO
- 98** Mod Sélection 2008 Brut Champagne Réserve, France (\$480)
- 98** Mod Sélection 2008 Brut Rosé Champagne, France (\$550)
- 97** Mod Sélection NV Blanc de Blancs Champagne, France (\$450)
- 97** Mod Sélection NV Champagne, France (\$450)
- 95** Montes 2017 Purple Angel, DO Valle de Colchagua, Chile (\$95) KOBRAND
- 93** Montinore Estate 2016 Pinot Noir Reserve, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$38)
- 94** Morgan Winery 2018 Boekennoogen Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$65)
- 93** Morgan Winery 2018 Double L Clone 777 Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$65)

94 Morgan Winery 2018 G17 Syrah, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$25)

95 Mount Veeder Winery 2017 Reserve Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$100) CONSTELLATION WINE U.S.

93 Mt. Beautiful 2017 Pinot Gris, North Canterbury, New Zealand (\$20)

95 Mt. Beautiful 2017 Pinot Noir, North Canterbury, New Zealand (\$28) MT. BEAUTIFUL USA

93 Mueller 2016 Old Vine Zinfandel, Russian River Valley (\$46)

96 Mythic Barrel 2016 Malbec, Perdriel y Agrelo, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) WINEBRIDGE

93 Neely 2017 Estate Pinot Noir, Hidden Block, Spring Ridge Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$48)

94 Neely 2017 Estate Pinot Noir, Upper Picnic Block, Spring Ridge Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$50)

93 Meyers 2017 Chardonnay, Carneros District, Sonoma County (\$35) TRINCHERO WINE ESTATES

96 Nickel & Nickel 2018 C.C. Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$125)

96 Nickel & Nickel 2018 Kenefick Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, Calistoga (\$125)

96 Nickel & Nickel 2018 Martin Stelling Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$185)

95 Nickel & Nickel 2018 State Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon, Yountville, Napa Valley (\$125)

93 Norton 2016 Privada Family Blend, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40) KOBRA

93 Obalo 2016 Rioja Crianza, Spain (\$20) AVIVA VINO

93 Oleandri 2018 Chardonnay, Sta. Rita Hills (\$45)

93 Ornellaia 2017 Bolgheri Rosso Le Serre Nuove, Tuscany, Italy (\$51)

95 Palazzo 2018 Master Blend Series Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$45)

95 Palladino 2013 Riserva S. Bernardo, Barolo, Piedmont, Italy (\$89) ENOTEC IMPORTS

94 Paraduxx 2016 Red Wine, Rector Creek Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$82) DUCKHORN

95 Patel 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$150)

96 Patel 2015 Malbec, Napa Valley (\$125)

94 Paula Kornell 2017 Blanc de Noir Méthode Champenoise, Napa Valley (\$50)

94 Peachy Canyon 2018 Para Siempre, Paso Robles (\$55)

94 Peachy Canyon 2018 Zinfandel, Bailey Vineyard, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$46)

95 Peju 2015 Cabernet Franc Reserve, Napa Valley (\$150)

94 Peju 2016 Cabernet Franc, Napa Valley (\$70)

93 Philotimo 2015 Xinomavro/Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley and Nemea, Greece (\$59) AXIOS

93 Pike Road 2018 Pinot Noir, Meyer Vineyard, Dundee Hills, Oregon (\$50)

98 Pio Cesare 2015 Barolo Mosconi, Piedmont, Italy (\$200) MAISON MARQUES & DOMAINES

97 Pio Cesare 2015 Barolo Ornato, Piedmont, Italy (\$144) MAISON MARQUES & DOMAINES

93 Pío del Ramo 2014 Alont, DO Jumilla, Spain (\$25) MERCADO WINE PRODUCTS

94 Poliziano 2015 Asinone VINO Nobile di Montepulciano, Tuscany, Italy (\$63) DALLA TERRA

94 Pomar Junction 2014 Cab Forward Red Bordeaux Blend, Paso Robles (\$65)

94 Portalupi Wines 2018 Barbera, Shake Ridge Ranch, Amador County, CA (\$45)

93 Portia 2016 Prima La Encina, Castilla y Leon, Spain (\$45) PACIFIC HIGHWAY

94 Potrero 2018 Reserva Malbec, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$24) M IMPORTS

95 Priest Ranch 2014 Coach Gun, Napa Valley (\$80)

95 PureCru 2015 M. Coz Meritage Red, Napa Valley (\$125)

93 PureCru 2015 pureCoz Red Wine, Napa Valley (\$65) SCOTTO CELLARS

96 Pym-Rae 2016 Tesserone Estate, Napa Valley (\$350)

93 Quench and Temper 2016 Chapter I, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$60)

94 Quench and Temper 2017 Chapter II, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$60)

93 Quinta das Apegadas, 2014 Douro Velha Reserva, Portugal (\$29) DENIZ CELLARS

93 Qupé 2017 Syrah, Bien Nacido Hillside Estate, Santa Maria Valley (\$45)

96 Qupé 2017 Syrah, Bien Nacido Hillside Estate, Santa Maria Valley (\$45) VINTAGE WINE ESTATES

93 Qupé 2018 Syrah, Central Coast (\$20)

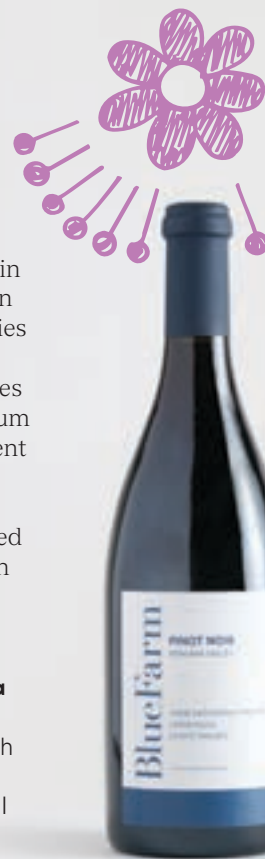
94 R 2017 Tempranillo, Shake Ridge Ranch, Amador County (\$27)

ROSIEST FUTURE:

BLUE FARM WINES

Compared to the historic estates in her native Germany—some of them among the oldest in the world—viticulturist Anne Moller-Racke's own Blue Farm Wines is just a baby, founded in southwest Sonoma in 2001. But what it lacks in years, it makes up for in the quality that legacies are built on. Just as Moller-Racke garnered renown for her work with cool-climate varieties over the course of nearly two decades at Donum Estate in Carneros, so she has gained consistent acclaim for the Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays she makes from five sites across Sonoma County, including her own meticulously farmed vineyard, Anne Katherina. Time, in short, is on Blue Farm's side.

Blue Farm 2017 Pinot Noir, Anne Katherina Vineyard, Farmhouse Block, Carneros, Sonoma Valley (\$95) Medium crimson color with a nose of cherry and toast. Lush, deep, and savory, with intense notes of cherry and a silky texture. A classic from the edge of Carneros with a name I love. **94** —A.D.B.



MINIMALIST TO THE MAX:

SOSIE WINES

Sosie (pronounced *so-zee*) means “look-alike” in French. It’s a fitting name, as this Sonoma, California–based brand aims to craft its wine in an Old World style that highlights the “California sun and French soul” of its expressions. Sosie favors traditional production methods and believes in intervening as little as possible in the winemaking process in an effort to let the grapes express their character: It uses native yeasts, strives for natural acidity, and adds only minimal sulfur. The brand also values transparency, so rest assured that if anything such as tartaric acid is added to its wines, it will be listed on the label.

Sosie Wines 2016 Syrah, Vivio Vineyard, Bennett Valley, Sonoma County (\$38) Dark cherry color; smooth and velvety, with ripe blackberry and spice. Deep, dense, rich, and intense, with complex flavors balanced by a long, refined finish. **95** —A.D.B.

BEST STEWARDS OF THE LAND:

WESTWOOD ESTATE

The Westwood Estate team: managing director David Green; winemaker Philippe Melka; Atelier Melka director of winemaking Maayan Koschitzky; and managing and founding partner Carl Stanton.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WESTWOOD ESTATES

Far more often than not, wines made by Napa's most formidable wine-making duo—namely Philippe Melka (Château Haut-Brion, Château Pétrus) and Maayan Koschitzky (Screaming Eagle, Dalla Valle)—garner high praise. But in featuring the fruit from Westwood Estate's Biodynamic Annadel Gap Vineyard, the duo truly gives us their best. And as if that weren't enough, founding partner Carl Stanton, managing director David Green, and the rest of the Westwood Estate team are committed to ensuring that all the other grapes they source throughout Sonoma County are sustainable or organic, if not Biodynamic.



Westwood Estate 2017 Legend, Sonoma Valley (\$65) Combining 25% Syrah, 19% Mourvèdre, and 10% Grenache from estate vineyard

Annadel Gap with 46% Sonoma and Napa Valley Cabernet, this California red with a French accent is alert with Old World acidity. A waterfall of violets, plum, and black-cherry skin cascades across the lush palate. Tannins are enveloped in dark chocolate and tempered by white pepper. **96** —M.M.

Westwood Estate 2017 Pinot Noir, Annadel Gap Vineyard, Sonoma County (\$52) Lilacs, plum, and wet

earth are just the first aromatics to grace the nose of this luxe red, whose palate is equally perfumed and charged with flavor, from molasses and wild cherry to savory mushroom. The texture is fleshy, and the finish sparks with black pepper, cedar, and sassafras. **94** —M.M.



Westwood Estate 2018 Chardonnay, Sangiacomo Vineyard, Sonoma Coast (\$55) An alluring perfume of kiwi, pineapple, and custard heralds

this bright, crisp-textured white, which has a cut-glass effect on first sip. Its creamy body is edged in slate, balancing the richness. Just-ripe pineapple aligns with pitch-perfect acidity. **94** —M.M.

- 94** R 2017 Tempranillo, Shake Ridge Ranch, Amador County (\$34)
- 94** Rabble Wine Company 2017 Amor Fati Syrah, Murmur Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$60)
- 95** Raeburn 2018 Chardonnay, Russian River Valley
- 95** Raeburn 2018 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley
- 93** Raeburn 2019 Rosé, Russian River Valley
- 94** Recanati 2017 Special Reserve White, Galilee, Israel (\$49) TAUB FAMILY
- 93** Recanati Winery 2018 Reserve Mawari, Judean Hills, Israel (\$35) PALM BAY INTERNATIONAL
- 93** Regal Rogue Vermouth NV Bold Red, Australia (\$27) THE ROGUE GROUP
- 93** Regal Rogue Vermouth NV Daring Dry, Australia (\$27) THE ROGUE GROUP
- 94** Ridge Vineyards 2015 Syrah, Lytton Estate, Dry Creek Valley (\$48)
- 95** Ridge Vineyards 2017 Klein Cabernet Sauvignon, Monte Bello Vineyard, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$87)
- 97** Ridge Vineyards 2017 Monte Bello, Santa Cruz Mountains (\$230)
- 94** Ridge Vineyards 2018 Zinfandel, Pagani Ranch, Sonoma Valley (\$40)
- 94** Ridge Vineyards 2018 Rockpile Zinfandel, Botticelli Vineyard, Sonoma (\$36)
- 94** Robert Biale Vineyards 2018 Barbera, Gaudi Carli Vineyard, Calistoga, Napa Valley (\$50)
- 94** Robert Biale Vineyards 2018 Zinfandel, Falleri Vineyard, Calistoga, Napa Valley (\$58)
- 93** Robert Biale Vineyards 2018 Zinfandel, Valsecchi Vineyard, Carneros, Sonoma Valley (\$58)
- 93** Robert Hall 2017 Cavern Select Syrah, Paso Robles (\$45)
- 98** Robert Mondavi Winery 2017 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, To Kalon Vineyard, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$180) CONSTELLATION BRANDS
- 95** Robert Mondavi Winery 2018 Fumé Blanc, Napa Valley (\$24) CONSTELLATION BRANDS
- 93** Round Pond Estate 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$75)
- 93** Round Pond Estate 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Rutherford, Napa Valley (\$28)
- 94** Royal Tokaji Wine Company 2017 Late Harvest Furmint, Tokaj, Hungary (\$21) WILSON DANIELS
- 97** Ruffino 2016 Alauda, Tuscany, Italy (\$100) CONSTELLATION BRANDS
- 93** Rusack Vineyards 2018 Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Ballard Canyon, Santa Barbara County (\$26)
- 95** Saint Helena Winery 2016 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley
- 95** Saiya Brewery NV Yuki No Bosha Cabin in The Snow, Akita, Japan (\$38) KOBRAND
- 93** Santa Ema 2017 Amplus One Carménère, Peumo, DO Cachapoal, Chile (\$30) PACIFIC HIGHWAY WINES
- 93** Santa Rita 2017 Medalla Real Gold Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Maipo Valley, Chile (\$17) DELICATO FAMILY WINES
- 94** Santi 2012 Proemio, Amarone della Valpolicella, Veneto, Italy (\$60) FREDERICK WILDMAN
- 93** Santi 2014 Santico, Amarone della Valpolicella, Veneto, Italy (\$45) FREDERICK WILDMAN
- 94** Santori 2017 Howell Mountain Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$92)
- 93** Scattered Peaks 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$40) PURPLE WINE + SPIRITS
- 94** Schramsberg Vineyards 2017 Blanc de Blancs, North Coast (\$40) WILSON DANIELS
- 93** Schug 2018 Chardonnay, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$35)
- 93** Schug 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma County (\$25)
- 93** Scotto Cellars 2017 Zinfandel Reserve, Mohr Fry Ranch, Lodi (\$20)
- 94** Segura Viudas Reserva Heredad, DO Penedès, Catalunya (\$30) FREIXENET
- 93** Segura Viudas Brut Rosé, DO Penedès, Catalunya, Spain (\$12)
- 97** Shafer 2015 Hillside Select, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$310)
- 97** Shafer Vineyards 2016 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$300)
- 93** Shafer Vineyards 2017 One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$95)
- 94** Shafer Vineyards 2017 TD-9, Napa Valley (\$60)

THE OREGON ORIGINALS:

ELK COVE VINEYARDS AND PIKE ROAD

A superstar in the world of Oregon Pinot Noir, Elk Cove Vineyards has been family-owned and -operated since 1974, when it was founded by Pat and Joe Campbell, multigenerational farmers who were among the first to recognize the state's potential as a growing region. Their 1978 Riesling, which earned gold medals at several tastings and competitions upon its release—including the Oregon State Fair and the Tri-Cities Wine Festival—was an early indicator of not only Elk Cove's own rising status but also the promising future of Oregon's wine industry.

Forty-plus years later, Pat and Joe's son, winemaker Adam

Campbell, continues his parents' tradition as the first producers of estate-grown, handcrafted cool-climate wines in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA; today, Elk Cove oversees six vineyards totaling 380 planted acres. In 2016, the Campbells expanded even further, founding a sister winery, Pike Road, to produce affordable yet high-quality Willamette Valley wines.

In addition to sourcing from Elk Cove's estate vineyards, Pike Road partners with other small family-owned farms across four of the region's sub-AVAs, offering consumers a glimpse of the diversity of soils, climates, and

elevations that define its terroir. Meyer Vineyard in Dundee Hills, for example, is organically farmed at elevations of up to 800 feet, while Yamhill-Carlton's Shea Vineyard uses sustainable practices to grow the highly allocated fruit it harvests from its 30-year-old vines. The resulting wines tell the story of both their place of origin and the people who live and work there.

In short, the Campbells have long been committed to producing best-in-class cool-climate wines, and with the release of the stunners below, 2020 was another banner year for their legacy. —Rachel Burkons

Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Five Mountain Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$60) Medium crimson color and a fresh cherry nose; silky and bright, with good length and complexity. Balanced and well rounded, generous and stylish. **94** —A.D.B.



Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Clay Court Pinot Noir, Chehalem Mountains, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$60) Deep ruby color and a silky texture. Lush and tangy black cherry and spice, with hints of toasted oak and vanilla; balanced and long. **94** —A.D.B.



Elk Cove Vineyards 2018 Mount Richmond Pinot Noir, Yamhill-Carlton, Oregon (\$60) Rich ruby color; lush black-cherry nose. Silky and juicy with bright cherry; deep and tangy, elegant and long. **95** —A.D.B.



Pike Road 2018 Pinot Noir, Meyer Vineyard, Dundee Hills, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$50) Lush ruby color; smooth and rich, with deep and lively flavors of berries and tangy black cherry. Lovely notes of wood and earth lead to a vibrant and long finish. **93** —A.D.B.



Pike Road 2018 Pinot Noir, Shea Vineyard, Yamhill-Carlton, Oregon (\$50) Ultra-smooth and velvety; lush, rich, and juicy with ripe cherry. Generous yet balanced, elegant, and long. **93** —A.D.B.



Elk Cove's Mount Richmond Vineyard in the Yamhill-Carlton sub-AVA of Oregon's Willamette Valley.



MOST RESOURCEFUL: HEARST RANCH WINERY

When Jim and Debi Saunders began planting Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah on their 400-acre ranch in Paso Robles in 1994, they sold most of their grapes to local wineries. As the years passed and they learned that their fruit yielded highly sought-after wines, the couple teamed up with family friend Steve Hearst to form Hearst Ranch Winery. In addition to the brand's flagship Proprietor's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, it also produces several small-lot offerings and has added Petite Sirah, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Tempranillo, Carménère, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot to its oeuvre.

Hearst Ranch Winery 2017 Proprietor's Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$105) Melting dark chocolate starts the elegant journey of this wine, which aged 22 months in French oak. Acidity and fruit are well balanced by distinguished notes of cedar, boysenberry, beetroot, soy sauce, and slate. The chalky mouthfeel from limestone-rich soils adds intensity, but the big picture here is downright sleekness. **95** —*M.M.*

MOST IN TOUCH WITH NATURE: MONTINORE ESTATE

It's one thing to farm organically and biodynamically, but it's another to complete the difficult process of certification through rigorous programs like California Certified Organic Farmers and Demeter. And it's a whole new can of happy, healthy worms to become one of the largest producers in the country to carry both certifications. Growing 200 acres of Pinot Noir and other cool-climate varieties in the northern reaches of the Willamette Valley AVA, Montinore Estate has achieved just that; the result is a stunningly vibrant collection of wines.

Montinore Estate 2016 Reserve Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$38) Opaque ruby color; lush notes of black cherry with depth and tangy style. Succulent, rich, and graceful; deep, long, and balanced. **93** —*A.D.B.*



- 93 Shamwari 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County (\$50)**
93 Shatter 2018 Grenache, IGP Côtes Catalanes, Languedoc-Roussillon, France (\$25) TRINCHERO WINE ESTATES
93 Shatter 2018 Grenache, IGP Côtes Catalanes, Languedoc-Roussillon, France (\$25) TRINCHERO WINE ESTATES
94 Shirvington 2017 Shiraz, McLaren Vale, Australia (\$67) QUINTESSENTIAL
97 Silverado 2015 SOLO Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District, Napa Valley (\$125)
96 Silverado 2016 GEO Cabernet Sauvignon, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$75)
94 Silverado Vineyards 2016 Estate Merlot, Mt. George Vineyard, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$40)
93 Silverado Vineyards 2018 Estate Grown Chardonnay, Carneros (\$35)
97 Silvio Nardi 2015 Vigneto Manachiara, Brunello di Montalcino DCG, Tuscany (\$115) KOBRAND
94 Small Vines 2017 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$55)
93 Smith & Hook 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles (\$65) HAHN WINERY
93 Smith-Madrone 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60)
94 Smith-Madrone 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, Spring Mountain District, Napa Valley (\$52)
94 Solomon Hills 2018 Estate Chardonnay, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$45) MILLER FAMILY
96 Solomon Hills Estate 2018 Pinot Noir, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Barbara County (\$60) MILLER FAMILY
96 Somerston Estate 2015 XCVI Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$123)
94 Sonoma-Cutrer 2018 Woodford Reserve Barrel Finish Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$69)
95 Sosie Wines 2016 Syrah, Vivio Vineyard, Bennett Valley, Sonoma (\$38)
94 St. Francis 2017 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$52)
93 St. Francis 2018 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$22) KOBRAND
94 St. Supéry 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$100)
95 St. Supéry 2018 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$35)
93 Steele 2016 Centennial Vines Zinfandel, Catfish Vineyard, Lake County (\$25)
93 Steele 2018 Chardonnay, Durrell Vineyard, Carneros, Sonoma County (\$38)
93 Susana Balbo Signature 2019 Rosé, Altamira, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$20) FOLIO FINE WINE PARTNERS
94 Tablas Creek Vineyard 2018 Esprit Blanc de Tablas, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$45) VINEYARD BRANDS
95 Tabor 2016 Malkiya Cabernet Sauvignon, Galilee, Israel (\$60) ROYAL WINE CORP.
95 Talley Vineyards 2016 Syrah, Rincon Vineyard, Arroyo Grande Valley (\$42)
93 Talley Vineyards 2017 Rosemary's Vineyard Chardonnay, Arroyo Grande Valley (\$50)
94 Talley Vineyards 2017 Oliver's Vineyard Chardonnay, Edna Valley (\$48)
95 Talley Vineyards 2017 Rosemary's Vineyard Pinot Noir, Arroyo Grande Valley (\$75)
95 Talley Vineyards 2018 Rosemary's Vineyard Chardonnay, Arroyo Grande Valley (\$60)
95 Talley Vineyards 2018 Stone Corral Vineyard Pinot Noir, Edna Valley (\$75)
96 Tapiz 2012 Las Notas de Jean Claude, Tupungato, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina (\$100) VINO DEL SOL
94 Tapiz 2014 Black Tears Malbec, San Pablo, Tupungato, Uco Valley Mendoza, Argentina (\$50) VINO DEL SOL
93 Tayson Pierce 2017 Chardonnay, Napa (\$65)
94 Tenuta di Arceno 2013 Arcanum, Toscana, Italy (\$100)
93 Tenuta di Arceno 2016 Strada al Sasso Gran Selezione, Chianti Classico, Tuscany (\$50)
96 Tenuta di Fessina 2017 a'Puddara, Etna DOC, Sicily (\$66) VINEYARD BRANDS
96 Tenuta Sant' Antonio 2010 Liliun Est Riserva, Amarone della Valpolicella DCG, Italy (\$90) DALLA TERRA
94 Tenuta Sant' Antonio 2015 Campo dei Gigli, Amarone della Valpolicella DCG, Italy (\$73) DALLA TERRA
96 Teperberg 2017 Legacy Cabernet Franc, Judean Hills, Israel (\$70) ROYAL WINE CORP.
94 Testarossa 2018 Diana's Chardonnay, California (\$77)
93 Testarossa 2018 Chardonnay, Fogstone Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$51)
94 Testarossa 2018 Clone 2A Pinot Noir, Sanford & Benedict Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills (\$68)
94 Testarossa 2018 Pinot Noir, Doctor's Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$70)
94 Testarossa 2018 Pinot Noir, Sanford & Benedict Vineyard, Santa Rita Hills (\$68)
93 The Calling 2017 Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley (\$36) DEUTSCH FAMILY WINE & SPIRITS

MOST WELL-ROUNDED:

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

Kobrand is one of America's great names in wine and spirits—a classic importer and marketer that balances old-school style with dynamic contemporary energy. Representing nearly every major wine region as well as many of the world's most storied producers, its portfolio is a testament to the long-term relationships the company has established over three quarters of a century in the trade as well as to its rigorous standards and meticulous pursuit of quality. That it remains one of the industry's few family-owned marketing firms also speaks to its success. The top-rated Kobrand wines of 2020 hail from all four hemispheres, five continents, seven countries, and 11 appellations. Talk about overachieving! —Lars Leicht

St. Francis 2018 Pinot Noir, Sonoma County (\$22)

Aged in French oak, this certified-sustainable wine from Sonoma County's coolest vineyard sites is lit from within. Tart cherry pops on the palate, introducing a sassy character that's punctuated by nutmeg and cinnamon. Dried blue flowers combine with orange peel on the unique finish. **93** —M.M.



Montes 2017 Purple Angel, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$95)

This blend of Carménère (92%) and Petit Verdot (8%) is a stunning example of Chile's sophisticated presence on the global wine stage. Powerfully aromatic scents of violets and crushed blueberries give way to a silky entry of dark chocolate, espresso, and sour cherries. A grilled meatiness ensues on the palate against a slate backdrop. **95** —M.M.



Bodega Norton 2016 Privada Family Blend, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40)

Grapes from 50- to 90-year-old vines yield this outstanding, elegant yet lush blend of 40% Malbec, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 30% Merlot with big notes of leather, espresso, and black olive. Black cherry washes over black pepper on the finish. **93** —M.M.

Bodega Norton 2016 Gernot Langes, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$105)

An exceptional blend of 50% Malbec, 40% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon from this estate's oldest vines. Aromas of bloody meatiness, licorice, leather, and black plum are seductive. From its bright start onward, the wine is lit from within, capturing violets and plum-skin tannins along with subdued notes of coffee bean and cedar. An inspired drinking experience. **94** —M.M.

Tenute Silvio Nardi 2015 Vigneto Manachiara, Brunello di Montalcino, Tuscany (\$115)

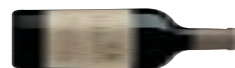
Second-generation producer Emilia Nardi oversees the 45-year-old Sangiovese Grosso vines in the vineyard for which this wine is named. It's berry-forward, with aromas of cherry liqueur and dark chocolate that work themselves into the muscular palate with verve. Plum, cinnamon, and espresso mingle with spiced earth. **97** —M.M.



Craggy Range Vineyards 2015 Aroha Pinot Noir, Te Muna Road Vineyard, Martinborough, New Zealand (\$150)

Ripe cherry nose and a smooth texture. Fresh notes of black cherry meet tangy acidity. Bright, silky, and elegant. **93** —A.D.B.

Saiya Brewery Yuki No Bosha Cabin in the Snow Junmai Ginjo Saké, Akita, Japan (\$38) Rich, aromatic nose; intense, luscious, and fruity. Deep and very long. **95** —A.D.B.



St. Francis 2017 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$52) **94**

Michele Chiarlo 2019 Moscato d'Asti DOCG Nivole, Italy (\$24) **93**



Michele Chiarlo 2016 Asili Barbaresco DOCG, Piedmont, Italy (\$90) **96**

Joto Sake The One with the Clocks Maboroshi Daiginjo, Hiroshima, Japan (\$45) **93**



Craggy Range 2016 Le Sol, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$103) **93**

Craggy Range Vineyards 2015 Le Sol Syrah, Gimblett Gravels, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand (\$105) **95**

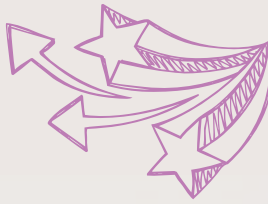


Viña Montes 2017 Montes Alpha M, Colchagua Valley, Chile (\$105) **96**

Domaine J.A. Ferret 2017 Pouilly-Fuissé Le Clos Tête de Cru, France (\$56) **94**

DREAMIEST DISTILLATE:

VIDO VODKA



VIDO Vodka honors Arvid “Vido” Monson, the late patriarch of Goose Ridge Estate Vineyard and Winery, a Columbia Valley producer that boasts the largest contiguous estate vineyard in Washington (see also page 5). His family first settled in the Yakima Valley in the early 1900s, and despite a legendary career spent producing wine, he dreamed of one day making his own premium vodka with his grapes.

Last summer, that dream finally became a reality: After grapes from Goose Ridge are pressed and fermented, the resulting wine is distilled 24 times. The vodka then rests for five days before it’s blended with pure Columbia Valley water and freeze-filtered through carbon 50 times, imparting a heady bouquet and silky mouthfeel. No wonder VIDO’s creamy texture and bright aromatics are a dream come true for vodka lovers too.



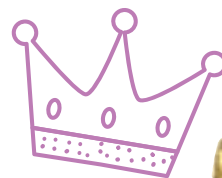
VIDO Premium Vodka

(\$34) Dry, fresh, and long, with a smooth texture; soft vanilla and a hint of sweetness on the finish. A very lovely effort—the late Arvid Monson (aka “Vido”) would be proud. **93** —A.D.B.



- 93** The Four Graces 2018 Reserve Pinot Noir, Dundee Hills, Oregon (\$37) FOLEY FAMILY ESTATES
- 97** The Vineyard House 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, H.W. Crabb's Hermosa Valley, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$225)
- 95** The Vineyard House 2017 Chardonnay, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$75)
- 95** The Vineyard House Winery 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon, H.W. Crabb's Hermosa Valley, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$225)
- 93** The Vineyard House Winery 2017 Chardonnay, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$75)
- 95** The Wine Foundry 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon, Broken Rock Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$115) CAPE CLASSICS
- 95** The Wine Foundry 2016 Cabernet Franc, Stagecoach Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$110) CAPE CLASSICS
- 95** Three Sticks 2017 Chardonnay, Durrell Vineyard, Sonoma Coast (\$55)
- 93** Three Sticks 2018 Chardonnay, Gap's Crown Vineyard, Sonoma Coast (\$55)
- 97** Tor 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Beckstoffer To-Kalon Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$225)
- 94** Tor 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Tierra Roja Vineyard, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$155)
- 95** Tor 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Vine Hill Ranch, Oakville, Napa Valley (\$225)
- 96** Torbreck 2016 The Factor, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$135) WINE CREEK IMPORTS
- 93** Torbreck 2016 The Steading, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$40) WINE CREEK IMPORTS
- 94** Torbreck 2016 The Struie, Barossa Valley, Australia (\$55) WINE CREEK IMPORTS
- 93** Trail 3150 2016 Proprietary Red, Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley (\$60)
- 96** Trincherio 2015 Mario's Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50) TRINCHERO WINE ESTATES
- 93** Trivento 2015 Eolo Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina FETZER VINEYARDS
- 95** Trivento 2016 Eolo Malbec, Luján de Cuyo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$85) FETZER VINEYARDS
- 93** Trivento Reserve 2018 Cabernet Sauvignon, Uco Valley, Mendoza, Argentina FETZER VINEYARDS
- 95** Utopia 2017 Clone 777 Estate Pinot Noir, The Utopia Vineyard, Ribbon Ridge AVA, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$65)
- 96** Utopia 2017 Estate Pinot Noir, The Utopia Vineyard, Ribbon Ridge AVA, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$48)
- 93** Vietti 2017 Barbera d'Asti Tre Vigne, Agliano Terme, Italy (\$18)
- 98** VIK 2014, Millahue, Cachapoal Valley, Chile (\$150) GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS
- 96** Viña Montes 2017 Alpha M, DO Valle de Colchagua, Chile (\$105) KOBRAID
- 94** Viña VIK 2015 La Piu Belle, Cachapoal Valley, Chile (\$85) GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS
- 96** Vinedos y Bodegas Garcia Figuero 2015 Tempranillo, Figuero Noble, DO Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$162) QUINTESSENTIAL
- 93** Vinha da Valentina 2018 Premium Red, Península de Setúbal, Portugal (\$13) MS WALKER
- 94** Virna Borgogno 2015 Noi, Barolo, Piedmont (\$44) SHIVERICK IMPORTS
- 94** Vivanco 2017 Parcelas de Mazuelo, Rioja, Spain (\$80) GUARACHI WINE PARTNERS
- 94** Walt Wines 2017 Chardonnay, Bob's Ranch, Sonoma Coast (\$70)
- 94** Walt Wines 2017 Pinot Noir, Bob's Ranch, Sonoma Coast (\$85)
- 95** Walt Wines 2017 Pinot Noir, Sierra Mar Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$85)
- 96** Westwood 2017 Legend, Sonoma Valley (\$ 65)
- 94** Westwood 2017 Pinot Noir, Annadel Gap, Sonoma County (\$52)
- 94** Westwood Estate 2018 Chardonnay, Sangiacomo Vineyard, Carneros (\$55)
- 93** William Hill Estate Winery 2017 Benchland Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$27) E&J GALLO
- 95** William Hill Estate Winery 2019 Winemaker's Series Chardonnay, Coombsville, Napa Valley (\$50) E&J GALLO
- 95** Work Vineyard 2016 Zina's Pinot Noir, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma Coast (\$55)
- 95** Yamhill Valley Vineyards 2015 Tall Poppy Pinot Noir, McMinnville, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$75)
- 94** ZD 2018 50th Anniversary Chardonnay, California (\$42)
- 94** Ziata 2015 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$35) TRINCHERO FAMILY WINES
- 94** ZIATA 2019 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$35) TRINCHERO WINE ESTATES
- 94** Zinke 2016 Reserve Syrah, Kimsey Vineyard, Ballard Canyon, Santa Barbara County (\$68)
- 93** Zinke 2017 Grenache, Derby Vineyard, Paso Robles (\$45)
- 93** ZOLO 2010 Black Petit Verdot, Alto Agrelo, Mendoza, Argentina (\$40) VINO DEL SOL

BEST IN BOTTLE SERVICE:



SIRE SPIRITS

Launched in 2018 by rapper Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson, Sire Spirits’ collection of Champagne and Cognac was built for bottle service; as Fiddy himself said, “You can find me in the club, bottle full of bub.” But these beverages are more than just glitzy status symbols: Sire Spirits crafts super-premium products with prestigious partners in the world’s best grape-growing regions.

Le Chemin du Roi, French for “the king’s path,” is a stately Champagne deemed worthy of royalty—and its packaging certainly reflects it, thanks to 14 karat gold-plated emblems emblazoned on the front of the bottles that are modeled after a king’s chess piece. The brand’s portfolio includes a Brut, Rosé, and Blanc de Blancs, each of which is crafted with grapes from the finest vineyards in Champagne. The Chemin du Roi NV Brut Champagne promises to “deliver the taste of victory,” and as editor-in-chief Meridith May’s tasting note below suggests, it certainly does just that.

Cognac is another winning bet for high-rolling consumers, so it’s no surprise that Sire Spirits has expanded its portfolio to include Branson Cognac, which partners with a historic Grande Champagne producer to offer expertly crafted spirits that overdeliver on power and elegance. Made from 100% Premier Cru estate-grown Ugni Blanc, Branson Cognac XO offers a coveted expression of Grande Champagne terroir. The eaux-de-vie is aged for a minimum of ten years, though some components see 25–50 years in barrel, resulting in a rich, complex, and flavorful Cognac. As for Branson Royal VSOP Cognac, it’s the XO’s softer counterpart, aged for four years in French oak. Dripping in Jackson’s signature bling, both bottles are readymade status symbols, but it’s the quality within that really impresses. —*Rachel Burkons*



Le Chemin du Roi NV Brut Champagne, Reims, France (\$200)

This special Champagne—which melds 60% Chardonnay with 20% Pinot Noir and 20% Pinot Meunier—aged for more than four years in bottle. Aromas of orange marmalade, brioche, and apple tart pave the way for soft bubbles that dissipate quickly on the palate. The gentle glide continues with notes of honeysuckle, apricot, and tarragon before the finish of tart lemon drop is highlighted by a touch of salinity. **96** —*M.M.*

Branson Cognac XO, France (\$250) Refined and toasty nose; rich and deep, with a style that’s equal parts luscious, creamy, and intense. Floral, spicy, and complex on the palate, with flavors of vanilla and caramel that give way to a lasting finish. Aged a minimum of ten years, with some of the eaux-de-vie aged 25-plus years. **94** —*A.D.B.*

Branson Royal VSOP Cognac, France (\$60) Medium amber color; lush and silky, with rich notes of spice, vanilla, and caramel as well as sweet and toasty oak; floral, fresh, and balanced, with good length and depth. **93** —*A.D.B.*

MOST CARING:

EL SATIVO ORGANIC TEQUILA

amazing

El Sativo Single Estate Organic Tequila is the ultimate do-gooder. Right off the bat (pun intended, as bats are agave's biggest pollinators), we know that it's certified organic, non-GMO, and certified by OK Kosher from the label—which is itself fashioned from organic soluble material; not only that, but the bottles are made with 100% recycled glass.

As for the liquid inside, it's well worth sipping neat. The Blanco expression is made with 100% Tequila Valley agave that's steamed in small batches for up to 72 hours in stone ovens; the purified water it contains is filtered through 135 feet of volcanic rock.

Finally, a portion of the proceeds from every bottle of El Sativo goes to the Ocean Conservancy, an organization that advocates for the protection of ocean ecosystems. So the more you drink—responsibly, of course—the better you'll feel.

El Sativo Tequila Blanco, Jalisco, Mexico (\$40)

This organic and kosher single-estate tequila, made with 100% lowland agave, was awarded Best Tequila of Show as well as a double gold medal at the 2020 San Francisco World Spirits Competition. The nose is opulent with bright lime and base notes of earth, musk, and vanilla. The palate is equal parts round, seductive, creamy, and earthy, with flavors of white pepper, marshmallow, peach, and apple tart. **94** —*M.M.*



SPIRITS

- 96** 123 Tequila Uno Blanco Tequila, Mexico (\$40) 123 SPIRITS
- 93** Absente Absinthe, France CRILLON IMPORTS
- 94** Absente Refined Liqueur, France (\$50) CRILLON IMPORTS
- 95** Acre Mezcal Artesanal Joven, Mexico (\$60)
- 94** Admiral Rodney Formidable Column Still Rum Aged 9-12 Years, Saint Lucia (\$130)
- 94** Airem Organic Wheat Vodka, Spain (\$35)
- 94** Artingstall's Brilliant London Dry Gin, England
- 94** Auchentoshan Single Malt Scotch Whisky Three Wood, Scotland (\$70)
- 95** Aultmore of the Foggie Moss Single Malt Speyside Scotch Whisky Aged 18 Years, Scotland (\$115)
- 94** Balcones Distilling Texas Rye 100, USA (\$40) DAVOS BRANDS
- 94** Balcones Distilling Texas Single Malt Whisky Classic Edition, USA (\$70) DAVOS BRANDS
- 94** Balcones Distilling Texas True Blue Straight Corn Whisky, USA (\$50) DAVOS BRANDS
- 96** Balcones Distilling Texas Single Barrel Single Malt Whisky, USA (\$80) DAVOS BRANDS
- 95** Basil Hayden's Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Aged 10 Years, USA (\$70)
- 95** Beefeater London Dry Gin, UK (\$24)
- 96** Belfour Limited Edition Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$300)
- 95** Benjamin Chapman 7-Year-Old Canadian Whiskey, Canada (\$39) 3 BADGE BEVERAGE
- 94** Benjamin Chapman Small-Batch Whiskey, Canada (\$39) 3 BADGE BEVERAGE CORP.
- 96** Benromach 15 Year Old Speyside Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland CHOPIN IMPORTS
- 93** Big 5 Cafecito Cuban Coffee Flavored Rum, USA (\$23) BLUE RIDGE SPIRITS & WINE
- 93** Big 5 Spiced Rum, USA (\$23) BLUE RIDGE SPIRITS & WINE MARKETING
- 94** Blue Angel Ultra Premium Vodka, USA
- 93** Blue Shark Vodka, USA
- 96** Bonampak 13-Year-Old Gran Reserva Rum, Chiapas, Mexico (\$79) ICONIC BRANDS INCORPORATED
- 94** Bonampak 3-Year-Old Coffee Rum, Chiapas, Mexico (\$45) ICONIC BRANDS INCORPORATED
- 95** Booker's Beaten Biscuits 2019-04 8 Years, 6 Months and 10 Days, USA (\$79)
- 94** Booker's Boston Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey Aged 6 Years and 100 Days, USA (\$90)
- 93** Boot Hill Distillery Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$40)
- 95** Bottega Limoncino Liqueur Sicilian Lemons and Grappa, Italy (\$25) TAUB FAMILY COMPANIES
- 96** Bouvery CV Chocolate Liqueur, USA (\$30)
- 95** Bowling & Burch Gin, USA (\$40) LIMESTONE BRANCH DISTILLERY
- 94** Bowmore Darkest 15 Year Old Sherry Cask Finished, Scotland (\$70) MORRISON BOWMORE DISTILLERS
- 95** Bozal Mezcal Single Maguey Artesanal Madrecuishe, Mexico (\$80)
- 97** Bozal Mezcal Single Maguey Artesanal Cenizo, Mexico (\$70) 3 BADGE BEVERAGE
- 96** Bozal Mezcal Single Maguey Sacatoro, Guerrero, Mazatlán, Mexico (\$80) 3 BADGE BEVERAGE
- 93** Branson Cognac VSOP Royal 4 Years, France (\$60)
- 94** Branson Cognac XO 10-25 Years, France (\$250)
- 94** Bushido Series Meiyo Single Grain Whiskey, Japan (\$250) AIKO IMPORTERS
- 94** Camus Borderies XO, France (\$140) CIL US INC.- BAY VILLAGE, OH
- 97** Cardinal du Four 21 Rebellion Armagnac, France (\$355)
- 98** Chartreuse Liqueur (Green), France (\$60) FREDERICK WILDMAN & SONS
- 95** Chicken Cock Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$70) GRAIN & BARREL SPIRITS
- 97** Clement Rhum 15 Year, Martinique (\$200)
- 93** Cocalero South American Herbal Spirit, Ireland (\$27) LEVECKE IMPORTS
- 96** Cooperstown Select American Blended Whiskey, USA
- 96** Cooperstown Select Four Grain Mash Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA

93 Cooranbong Australian Vodka, Australia (\$26) G DAY IMPORTS

95 Cozumel Rum Company Mayan Spiced Rum, Chiapas, Mexico (\$86) ICONIC BRANDS INCORPORATED

96 Da-Cyu Liquor Baijiu, Taiwan

93 Daniel Bouju Cognac Tres Vieux Brut de Fût, France (\$160) ELITE BRANDS

93 David Nicholson Reserve Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA LUX ROW DISTILLERS

93 Disaronno Originale Liqueur, Italy (\$25) ILLVA SARONNO

94 Drumshanbo Gunpowder Irish Gin, Ireland (\$37) TAUB FAMILY COMPANIES

93 Dry Fly Cask Strength Straight Wheat Whiskey, USA (\$50) DRY FLY DISTILLING INC.

94 Dry Fly Port Barrel Finish Straight Wheat Whiskey, USA (\$50) DRY FLY DISTILLING INC.

93 Dry Fly Straight Wheat Whiskey Cask & Release Series: KettleHouse Brewing Co., USA (\$55) DRY FLY DISTILLING INC.

95 Dry Fly Straight Wheat Whiskey Cask & Release Series: Pelican Brewing Co., USA (\$55) DRY FLY DISTILLING INC.

98 Duke Grand Cru Founder's Reserve Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$100) DUKE SPIRITS

93 Egan's Centenary Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$100) INTREPID SPIRITS

94 El Sativo Organic Blanco Tequila, Jalisco, Mexico (\$40)

96 El Tesoro Extra Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$100)

96 Elegance Australian Grape Vodka, Australia (\$99) EL-ELEGANCE BRANDS INC

93 Elijah Craig Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$30)

93 Elijah Craig Small Batch Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA HEAVEN HILL BRANDS

94 Elijah Craig Toasted Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA HEAVEN HILL BRANDS

93 Glendalough Pot Still Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$55)

99 GlenDronach Highland Single Malt Scotch Whisky Kingsman Edition 1989, Scotland (\$1,299)

95 Glenmorangie Single Malt Whisky The Cadboll Estate, Scotland (\$85)

93 Gracias a Dios Artesanal Mezcal Joven Espadin, Oaxaca, Mexico (\$40) TAUB FAMILY COMPANIES

93 Grand Brulot VSOP Cognac & Cafe Liqueur, France (\$35) PARK STREET IMPORTS

95 Guillotine Vodka Heritage Edition, France (\$125) EWS IMPORTS, LLC

94 Guillotine Vodka, France (\$100) EWS IMPORTS, LLC

93 Hard Chaw Strong Irish Cream Liqueur, Ireland (\$25)

94 Highclere Castle London Dry Gin, England (\$45) HIGHCLERE CASTLE SPIRITS, LLC

94 iichiko Saiten Shochu, Japan (\$30) DAVOS BRANDS

93 iichiko Silhouette Shochu, Japan (\$23) DAVOS BRANDS

96 Joseph Magnus Cigar Blend Bourbon, USA (\$150)

97 Kangakoi Single Grain Whisky Aged 7 Years in Oak Sherry Casks, Japan (\$100) AIKO IMPORTERS

95 Kavalan Peaty Cask Single Malt Whisky Single Cask Strength, Taiwan (\$40)

93 Kilbeggan Single Pot Still, Ireland (\$45)

93 King St. Vodka, USA (\$30) PASSION SPIRITS, LLC

95 Kirk and Sweeney XO Limited Edition No. 4 Rum, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic (\$229) 3 BADGE BEVERAGE

94 Knob Creek Quarter Oak Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$50)

96 La Adelita Añejo, Mexico DUKE SPIRITS

96 La Adelita Black Añejo Cristalino, Mexico DUKE SPIRITS

94 La Adelita Blanco, Mexico DUKE SPIRITS

97 La Adelita Extra Añejo, Mexico DUKE SPIRITS

94 La Adelita Reposado, Mexico DUKE SPIRITS

94 Laphroaig Islay Single Malt Scotch Aged 16 Years, Scotland (\$90) LAPHROAIG IMPORT COMPANY

96 Laphroaig Islay Single Malt Scotch Whisky PX Cask Triple Matured, Scotland (\$250)

94 Lenark Vodka, Poland (\$28)

93 Loch Lomond 18 Year Old Highland Single Malt Scotch, Scotland (\$60)

94 Lonerider Sherry Cask Finish Bourbon, USA (\$70)

94 Lux Row Distillers Limited Edition Double Barrel Cask Strength Whiskey Aged 12 Years, USA LUX ROW DISTILLERS

95 Mezcal Convite Espadin Madrecuixe, Mexico (\$85)

95 Mezcal Vago Espadin, Mexico (\$75) MONTENARO MEZCAL, LLC

95 Michter's 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky Rye Whiskey, USA (\$160)

SMOOTHEST OPERATOR:

RICKHOUSE CASK STRENGTH BOURBON

New to the market this year from the award-winning Gold Bar Spirits Company is RICKHOUSE Cask Strength Straight Bourbon. Bottled at a barrel proof of 103, this triple copper-pot distilled whiskey shines with rich and robust flavors, thanks to its double-cask finish with tailored French oak staves. Expressing two different wood types and char levels, it overdelivers on value at an SRP of less than \$35 to ensure that RICKHOUSE, like its companion label GOLD BAR Whiskey, is a highly sippable, true must-have for collectors and bourbon aficionados.

RICKHOUSE Bourbon, California (\$35) This deep and delicious San Francisco spirit with a mash bill of 80% corn and 20% rye is intensely colored and toasty, with a rich, sweet style. Notes of vanilla, spice, and toasted oak are pronounced, and although it adheres to the legal definition of bourbon, it's another animal altogether. **94** —A.D.B.



MOST ROOTED IN COMMUNITY:

DRY FLY DISTILLING

Dry Fly Distilling founder Don Poffenroth loves fly fishing almost as much as he loves the Pacific Northwest—so much, in fact, that he opened his Spokane distillery to honor both the pastime and the place. To craft his farm-to-bottle expressions, including Dry Fly Straight Triticale Whiskey and Dry Fly Vodka made with soft white winter wheat, he obtains his grain solely from nearby sources in eastern Washington, such as the Engel family's 117-year-old Wisota Farm.

Dry Fly Port Barrel Finish Straight Wheat Whiskey, USA (\$50) Aging in Port barrels adds color and flavor to this striking spirit: Lighthearted but deep amber in hue, it's a mineral-driven whiskey with delicacy and complexity. The perfume of nougat, raisin, walnut, and chocolate goes deep, and flavors of candied almond meld with coffee bean, grain, and cedar before the dry, seamless finish. **94** —M.M.



YEARBOOK 2020

PHOTO COURTESY OF COOPERSTOWN DISTILLERY



ALL-AMERICAN:

COOPERSTOWN DISTILLERY



Made with a mash bill of grains sourced almost exclusively from New York, Cooperstown Distillery is best known for its handcrafted and highly lauded whiskeys inspired by 19th-century writer James Fenimore Cooper. The distillery itself is not far from the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum; it's a fitting location given that Cooperstown whiskey is to the spirits world as baseball is to sports—bona fide American.

Cooperstown Select Straight Rye Whiskey, New York This 102-proof blend of two- to three-year-old small-batch whiskeys is finished in ex-Cabernet Sauvignon oak barrels and features aromas of peanut brittle, peach, and apricot in maple syrup. Black pepper seasons rich, unctuous notes of buttered plantains and stone fruit on the finish. **96** —M.M.

Cooperstown Select American Blended Whiskey, New York Matured in American oak, then blended before aging six months in French oak. Aromas of maple, cherry, and cedar warm the nose before exotic spices, sandalwood, leather, and black pepper converge in the sleek, nectar-like mouthfeel of this 90-proofer. **96** —M.M.

Cooperstown Select Straight Bourbon Whiskey Four Grain Mash, New York This intense 100-proof whiskey blends three- to four-year-old small-batch bourbons made from New York-grown grains. Aromas of spiced apricot, chocolate, and cedar give way to dark chocolate, new leather, nutmeg, orange rind, pekoe tea, and walnut, which add a textural dryness while keeping the palate slightly sweet. The finish lasts forever. **96** —M.M. *LD*

- 94** Michter's 10 Year Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon, USA (\$130)
- 95** Michter's Toasted Barrel Finish Kentucky Straight Rye Whiskey, USA (\$85)
- 94** Mr Black Cold Brew Coffee Liqueur, Australia (\$30)
- 95** Old Ezra 7 Year Barrel Strength Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA LUX ROW DISTILLERS
- 95** Old Fitzgerald Fall 2020 Edition Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey 14 Year, USA (\$90)
- 97** Old Fitzgerald Bottled in Bond Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$90) HEAVEN HILL DISTILLERY
- 93** Old Pulteney Huddart Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$65)
- 97** Omar 8 Year Bourbon Cask Cask Strength Single Malt Whiskey, Taiwan (\$100)
- 94** Papa's Pilar Blonde Rum, USA (\$30) HEMINGWAY RUM CO
- 95** Papa's Pilar Dark Rum, USA HEMINGWAY RUM CO
- 95** Papa's Pilar Marquesas Blend Dark Rum, USA (\$47) HEMINGWAY RUM CO
- 94** Pinhook Bohemian Bourbon High Proof, USA (\$53)
- 93** Pinhook Bourbon War Vertical Series, USA (\$50)
- 93** Port Askaig Single Malt Scotch 8 Years Old, Scotland (\$70)
- 93** Prairie Navy Strength Organic Gin, USA (\$35)
- 93** Prigly Prickly Pear Liqueur, USA (\$30)
- 96** Pristine Vodka, Ukraine (\$27)
- 95** Rebel Yell Single Barrel Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA LUX ROW DISTILLERS
- 94** Redwood Empire Pipe Dream Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$45) PURPLE BRANDS
- 98** Remus Repeal Reserve IV Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$85)
- 95** Rhum Barbancourt Aged 8 Years, Haiti (\$28) CRILLON IMPORTS
- 95** Riazul Extra Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$145) TERLATO ARTISAN SPIRITS
- 94** Rickhouse Bourbon, USA (\$35)
- 94** Rock Town Bottled in Bond Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA
- 93** Rock Town Chocolate Malt Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA
- 93** Rogue Spirits Rolling Thunder, USA (\$75)
- 93** Saint Luna Charcoal Filtered Moonshine, USA (\$50)
- 95** Salcombe Start Point London Dry Gin, England (\$40) SALCOMBE DISTILLING
- 94** Salcombe Gin Rosé Sainte Marie, England (\$46) PARK STREET IMPORTS
- 95** Tequila Chamucos Extra Añejo, Mexico (\$178) TAUB FAMILY COMPANIES
- 96** The GlenDronach Master Vintage 1993 (25 Year Old), Scotland (\$343) BROWN-FORMAN BEVERAGES
- 95** The Glenlivet 14-Year-Old Cognac Cask Selection Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland (\$56) PERNOD RICARD USA
- 95** The Glenrothes 1998 1998 Vintage, Scotland (\$55) BERRY BROS. & RUDD
- 98** The Scotch Malt Whisky Society Single Malt Scotch Whisky, Scotland
- 95** Traverse City Whiskey Co. Straight Bourbon Whiskey Barrel Proof, USA (\$70)
- 90** Underberg Digestif Natural Herb Bitters, Germany
- 93** Vavoom Vodka, USA (\$170)
- 95** Vida de Louie Añejo Tequila, Mexico (\$43)
- 94** Vida de Louie Reposado Tequila, Mexico (\$37)
- 93** VIDO Premium Vodka, USA (\$34) GOOSE RIDGE ESTATE
- 93** Watershed Distillery Guild Chamomile Flavored Gin, USA (\$31)
- 93** Weed Oak Cellars Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA (\$40) WEED CELLARS
- 98** West Cork Bourbon Cask Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$27) MS WALKER
- 94** West Cork 8 Year Old Single Malt Irish Whiskey, Ireland (\$39) MS WALKER
- 96** ZU Zubrowka Bison Grass Flavored Vodka, Poland (\$30) RUSSIAN STANDARD *LD*



The Man Behind the Brands



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