

# The Obviously Wine Blog

## Wine Tasting Report of 2023

### Statement of Intention:

To identify emerging trends, dominant flavor profiles, and production methods in the wine industry from a variety of producers from the West Coast of the United States.

### Guidelines of the Report

- 1) All wines included in this report have been submitted directly from the participating wineries, hospitality managers, and/or marketing representatives from each Domaine.
- 2) I have received zero compensation from any producers included in this report.
- 3) Each wine being reviewed in this report has been done so based solely on the quality of each individual bottle. The historical significance or popularity of the producer has been taken into context only for descriptive purposes to be found in individual tasting notes.
- 4) The quality of each wine will be assessed based upon the Wine Spirit and Education Trust [WSET Conclusions Scale](#)<sup>1</sup>, please see below:

### Quality Level:

Faulty    Poor    Acceptable    Good    Very Good    Outstanding

### Level of readiness for drinking and/or Potential for Ageing:

Too young	Can drink now, but shows potential for ageing	Drink now, not suitable for ageing or further ageing	Too old
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## Acknowledgments:

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all the producers, PR representatives, hospitality managers, wine growers, journalists, and sommeliers who have aided me on this journey of creating and releasing my first ever wine report; hopefully the first of many. I feel privileged to have connected with so many members of this global community over the past several years and



I am eternally grateful to you all for your time and trust. To my wife Kara, thank you for your unfaltering support during these past several months of intense tasting, conversation, and for your own contributions to this report; your encouragement and unconditional love mean everything to me. Finally, a special thank you my blind tasting partners Matt, Ashley, Charlie, Erica, Renee, John, Tim, Jessica, and Kara for instilling a confidence in me and continuing to challenge me to take on this task of creating my own space in this world of wine... santé mes amis.

## Author:

Tanous El-Kareh

## Co-Author and Editor:

Kara El-Kareh

## Special Mentions:

Timothy Campbell (CMS and DipWSET Candidate), Charles Horn (WSET 3 Candidate), Matt Doyle (WSET 2 and Senior Wine Consultant: Binnys Beverage Depot), Renee Pollock (WSET 3), John Pollock (WSET 2), Jessica Ried (WSET 3, DipWSET Candidate CSW, and Certified Sherry Wine Specialist.)

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Producer: Railsback Frères

Proprietors: Lyle and Eric Railsback

Label: 2021 Clairette Blanche

Appellation: Santa Ynez, Alisos Canyon AVA (American Viticultural Area), California

Varietal Composition: 100% Clairette Blanche

Production: 3,948 Bottles

MSRP: \$3000

Alcohol: 12.1%

Tasting Notes:

-A pale lemon white wine with a watery meniscus and pale green reflections in the glass. Notes of underripe citrus, tart apple, melon rind, prairie grass, and chamomile gracefully primed our palates for the first sip. On the palate were notes of grapefruit pith along with a slightly leesy undertone that round out this playfully acidic and thirst-quenching wine.

Food Pairing:

-Fresh Chèvre, roasted walnut salad with fresh strawberries, and champagne vinaigrette.

-Stuffed artichoke hearts.

Recommendation:

-A wine of good quality that is meant to drink now and would not be suitable for extended ageing.

Notes on the Producers:

-The Railsback brothers are wine industry journeymen with both having launched several of their own successful businesses. Eric, alongside Master Sommelier Dustin Wilson, co-founded the wildly successful wine retail shop [Verve Wine](#)<sup>16</sup> with retail locations in New York, San Francisco and Chicago as well as his own wine label, [Lieu Dit](#)<sup>17</sup> based out of his home base in the Santa Ynez Valley. Lyle, formerly a National Sales Manager at [Kermit Lynch Wine Merchants](#)<sup>18</sup> recently opened his very own wine import business, [France-Western](#)<sup>19</sup>, that focuses on, "sourcing wine of distinction," from producers of exceptional quality throughout France, Italy and Austria.



Producer: Railsback Frères

Proprietors: Lyle and Eric Railsback

Label: 2021 Roman Ceremony Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation: Happy Canyon AVA & Los Olivos AVA

Varietal Composition: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon

Production < 1,000 Cases

MSRP: \$35.00

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A semi translucent Cabernet Sauvignon with a firm ruby core. The nose is diverse with notes of boysenberry pie, jalapeno seeds, black berry bramble, and river-stones. The soft tannins and mild acidity lead directly into more tertiary notes on the palate including wild mushroom, freshly tilled earth, and Tuscan kale. This wine has an almost retro-Bordelaise approach in its construction and should be enjoyed at a true cellar temp. I only wish I could have tasted this from barrel!

Food Pairing:

-Rosemary and stilton blue cheese stuffed mushrooms with a braised lamb shoulder.

-New York Strip Steak with a red wine demi glaze reduction, and rosemary truffle whipped potatoes.

-Eggplant Parmesan bites with arrabiata sauce.

Recommendation:

-A wine of good quality that that be drunk now but shows potential for ageing. I would love to revisit this in the next 3-5 years.



Producer: Railsback Frères

Proprietors: Lyle and Eric Railsback

Label: 2021 Roman Ceremony Sauvignon Blanc

Appellation: Santa Ynez Valley, Los Olivos AVA, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Sauvignon Blanc

Production: < 1,000 Cases

MSRP: \$2800

Alcohol: 12.8%

Tasting Notes:

-A starbright white wine with reflections of green in its core. This whole cluster fermented Sauvignon Blanc showcases notes of green apple, finger lime, and bartlett pear on the nose but finishes more tropical on the palate with lychee and ginger. The alcohol and acid work harmoniously together in this wine, delivering a standout example of what Sauvignon Blanc can taste like coming out of Santa Barbara County. A wine of full of identity and terroir, I would hope to see more of this style being produced in the United States.

Food Pairing:

- Warm baguette with French brie and lemon curd.
- Maine lobster rolls with a fresh dill and lemon butter sauce.
- Fried feta cheese drizzled with green goddess dressing.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that should be enjoyed now and would see no additional benefit of prolonged ageing. A perfect aperitif to share with friends before your meal.



Producer: Smith-Madrone

Proprietors: Charles Smith and Stuart Smith

Label: 2018 Estate Grown Chardonnay

Appellation: Napa Valley, Spring Mountain District, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: 945 Cases

MSRP: \$45.00

Alcohol: 14.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A truly golden chardonnay with high intensity of color and aroma. It has an aromatically diverse nose of ghee butter, and movie theatre popcorn that work in concert with the scents of bruised yellow apple, and late harvest orchard fruits. The palate consists of notes of oak, beeswax, cooked sugar, toast, and a leesy flavor profile that makes for a tremendously satisfying wine and is begging to be paired with food. This Estate Grown Chardonnay is as robust as it is complex and serves as a fine example of why Smith-Madrone has found success for over 50 years.

Food Pairing:

-Cave aged cheddar cheese, Red Leicester, 18-Month-old Mimolette.

-Rosemary and thyme roasted chicken with crispy skin.

-Lobster tail with herbed grassfed butter.

-Spanish Flan.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that that be drunk now but shows potential for ageing. I would be curious to revisit in the next 3-5 years. This Chardonnay over delivers for the price and is a wonderful option to purchase if you tend to enjoy traditional California Chardonnay.





Producer: Smith-Madrone

Proprietors: Charles Smith and Stuart Smith

Label: 2018 Estate Grown Riesling

Appellation: Napa Valley, Spring Mountain District, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Riesling

Production: 1,611 Cases

MSRP: \$33.99

Alcohol: 13.3%

Tasting Notes:

-A starbright Riesling from Smith-Madrone with a pale straw core leading to a watery meniscus. Notes of petrol, white spring florals, and lime skin jumped right out of the glass on the nose, but the palate was the real showstopper. With notes of just ripened white peach, green apple skin, and the taste of fresh apple cider running circles over the palate, this California Riesling won't disappoint even the most critical of the variety. A very approachable and food friendly wine but is still firmly developing. Smith-Madrone has once again overdelivered on quality. I think I'm starting to see a pattern of excellence here.

Food Pairing:

-Bitter green salad with champagne citrus vinaigrette.

-Baked peaches filled with walnuts and blue cheese

-Pine-nut Hummus with assorted crudité

Recommendation:

--A wine of very good quality that that be drunk now but shows potential for ageing. Drink from 2023-2028. As stated above, this Riesling over delivers for the price and is a wonderful option for those who wish to attempt to convert close-minded wine drinkers who still believe all Riesling is clawingly sweet and not world class.



Producer: Smith-Madrone

Proprietors: Charles Smith and Stuart Smith

Label: 2018 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation: Napa Valley, Spring Mountain District, California

Varietal Composition: 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc

Production: 1,523 Cases

MSRP: \$6500

Alcohol: 14.3%

Tasting Notes:

-A deep ruby and purple core with high extraction and intensity of aromas. Notes of toasted black pepper, green pepper, cardamom, balsamic vinegar, tomato leaf, gun powder, prune, black tea, and bay leaf continued to deep and develop of the 45 minutes of tasting this Cabernet Sauvignon. Balanced in nearly all aspects with tannin and alcohol in unison as the wine was exposed to more and more oxygen. A wine of exceptional quality that if taken care of will cellar for the next quarter century without cause for concern.

Food Pairing:

-Prime Rib with red wine demi glaze.

-Peppercorn crusted beef fillet with white truffle oil roasted Brussel Sprouts.

-Classic American meatloaf brushed with ketchup. (For the kid in all of us)

Recommendation:

-A truly outstanding wine that is too young for my palate and would greatly benefit from extended aging. That being said, of course the wine is exceptional, but I wish we had case to return to over the next decade. A New World masterpiece that truly exceeded all our expectations.



Producer: Reynolds Family Winery

Proprietors: Steve and Suzie Reynolds

Label: 2019 Steward of The Land Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation: Persistence Vineyard, Coombsville, Napa Valley, California

Varietal Composition: 99% Cabernet Sauvignon 1% Cabernet Franc

Production: 325 Cases

MSRP: \$5900

Alcohol: 14.3%

Tasting Notes:

-The 2019 Steward of The Land from Reynolds Family Winery is a blend of 99% Cabernet Sauvignon and 1% Cabernet Franc that showcases notes of coco nibs, dark chocolate, cassis, jalapeno seeds, and green bell pepper on the nose. Notes of fresh vanilla bean, saddle leather, red currants, macerated cherries, mocha, and petrichor continued to develop in the glass with each revisit. Despite its bravado, the 2019 Steward of the Land stands out in my memory as a wine of distinction; deeply rooted in a philosophy of excellence. With well integrated alcohol, gripping tannins, and a moderate plus level of acidity, this vintage can stand the test of time and will continue to develop for years to come. Let us all pray that winemaker Steve Reynolds, along with his wife Suzie and son Cameron, continue to produce benchmark examples from what Coombsville has to offer.

Food Pairing:

-Parsley and black truffle goat cheese stuffed mushroom caps.

-Grilled beef short loin with a garlic brown butter glaze.

-Rosemary whipped potato bites with caramelized onions.

Recommendation:

- An outstanding Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon based blend that exudes a strong sense of place and terroir. This wine is capable of being enjoyed now but would greatly benefit from extended ageing. Revisit in 2026.



Producer: Reynolds Family Winery

Proprietors: Steve and Suzie Reynolds

Label: 2021 RFW Sauvignon Blanc

Appellation: Persistence Vineyard, Coombsville, Napa Valley, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Sauvignon Blanc

Production: 146 cases

MSRP: \$33.00

Alcohol: 14.2%

Tasting Notes:

-A clear, youthful looking white wine that visually resembles the color of winter wheat, along with sparkling flecks of green at its core. This 100% Sauvignon Blanc was truly thought-provoking. The notes of fresh lemon, pear, overripe cantaloupe, and toasted coconut on the nose were so in balance with one another that it was hard to put down. Light bodied and the deliciously acidic on the palate gave way to more subtle notes of grapefruit, and kiwi. Exceptionally fresh and supple, this hand crafted and small production Sauvignon Blanc was harvested straight from their estate owned Persistence Vineyard in Coombsville. My only issue with this wine is that I don't have a case of it in my cellar... other than that it's, for a lack of a better word, perfect.

Food Pairing:

-Fresh chevre crostini topped with grated lemon rind and springs of arugula.

-Whole lemon roasted chicken with haricot verts.

-Sea scallops in a white wine reduction.

Recommendation:

- A wine of very good quality that should be enjoyed now and would see no additional benefit from prolonged ageing. A straight to the point and wildly delicious bottle with seriously good winemaking backing it up. The exceptional terroir is shining brightly through and if you can purchase what is left in stock, I would recommend you do so immediately.



Producer: Matthiasson Wines

Proprietors: Steve and Jill Matthiasson

Label: 2020 Matthiasson Vineyard Cabernet Franc

Appellation: Napa Valley, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Cabernet Franc

Production: 236 cases

MSRP: \$5900

Alcohol: 12.0%

Tasting Notes:

-This estate grown Cabernet Franc from Matthiasson is intense right out of the glass. Notes of warm black berry compote, cooked plums, sour cherry, black pepper, tomato leaf, and warm gravel filled the air during our tasting. The acid is front and center on the palate displaying a great example of what makes Cabernet Franc, with its plum, pepper and more earthy identifiers, a critical part of the recipe in blending Cabernet-based blends. Exposure to more oxygen allowed its more vegetal side to come through as well as notes of sage and oolong tea. It is no surprise to find out that 50% of the fruit was picked and fermented in whole clusters during its fermentation due to its more pronounced vegetal nature.

Food Pairing:

-Oven roasted oyster mushroom with radicchio and fennel salad.

-Carnitas with fire roasted peppers.

-Grass-fed beef striploin with Hasselback potatoes.

Recommendation:

-A wine of good quality that can be opened now but shows potential for ageing. Drink 2023-2027. From my perspective, Steve Matthiasson not only produces complex wines with exceptional terroir, but I believe his work is helping to redefine what it means to be a vigneron in California.



Producer: Matthiasson Wines

Proprietors: Steve and Jill Matthiasson

Label: 2021 Linda Vista Chardonnay

Appellation: Napa Valley, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: 2,601 cases

MSRP: \$3800

Alcohol: 12.5%

Tasting Notes:

-This clean and starbright wine is 100% old-vine Chardonnay picked from the estate owned Linda Vista Vineyards behind the Matthiasson homestead in Napa Valley. This Chardonnay reminds me of warm spring with scents of apple blossoms, freshly baked lemon curd tart, citrus peel, fresh cucumber, honeysuckle, and dill. The acidity and body of this wine are both medium plus on the palate, but the finish is surprisingly long with a very creamy and saline like quality.

Food Pairing:

-Mediterranean small plates; cucumber and dill tzatziki with shatta (Mediterranean chili paste) roasted fingerling potatoes, whipped feta dip and fresh pita bread.

-Bulgarian Kashkaval cheese with Spanish olive oil and radishes with sea salt.

Recommendation:

-A wine of good quality that can be enjoyed now but is still firmly developing. Revisit in 2026.



Producer: RAEN Winery

Proprietors: Carlo and Dante Mondavi

Label: 2021 Lady Marjorie Chardonnay

Appellation: Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: 450 cases

MSRP: \$6999

Alcohol: 12.5%

Tasting Notes:

-RAEN Winery, established by brothers Carlo and Dante Mondavi in 2013, can be found along the western edge of the true Sonoma Coast. The release of their 2021 Lady Marjorie Chardonnay is the first in the winery's history. It isn't just an homage to their Grandmother Marjorie, of whom both winemakers' credit for establishing a strong sense of work ethic within them, but it is a step into the ever-evolving landscape of high achieving producers helping to promote and redefine what the Sonoma Coast is truly all about.

-A highly complex and integrated white wine with aromas that range from that of petrichor, white peach, apricot, acacia, and peony. On the palate notes of honeysuckle, ripe pear, and grapefruit pith linger on for what feels like an eternity. The decision to handpick the fruit and ferment whole-cluster only helps to elevate the extraordinary flavor profile this wine has on the palate. A shining example of how gentle hands and intentionally low intervention winemaking can create. Much like the generations of Mondavi's before them, Carlo and Dante have produced an elegant wine, deserving of high praise. I cannot recommend this cuvée enough.

Food Pairing:

-Freshly baked sea salt ciabatta with whipped parsley and lemon butter.

-Triple Cream Brie and apricot jam on crostini.

-Maine lobster roll with freshly cut chives and black garlic aioli.

Recommendation:

-An outstanding wine that can be drunk now, but shows tremendous potential for ageing, cellar for 10+ years without giving it a second thought.



Producer: RAEN Winery

Proprietors: Carlo and Dante Mondavi

Label: 2021 Royal St. Robert Cuvée

Appellation: Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Pinot Noir

Production: 1,800 cases

MSRP: \$6999

Alcohol: 13.0%

Tasting Notes:

-A pale ruby core leading to a tight rose petal colored meniscus, the 2021 Royal St. Robert Cuvée Pinot Noir from RAEN Winery exudes elegance and was created as an homage to the late great Robert Mondavi. Gentle notes of bergamot tea, orange peel, roses, wild iris, and macerated raspberries protrude from the glass and sit beautifully alongside well with the wild strawberry, black sour cherry, and fresh pomegranate notes on the palate. The practice of hand picking the fruit and fermenting whole cluster at RAEN helps to round out the powerful floral and fruit notes with a slightly stemmy and earthy finish this lingers on and on.

Food Pairing:

- Beet and goat cheese salad with champagne vinaigrette dressing
- Wild mushroom pizza with fresh burrata and black truffle oil.
- Australian rack of lamb roasted with rosemary and thyme infused olive oil.

Recommendation:

-A wine of outstanding quality that is ready to drink now but will continue to develop over the next 5-7 years. Drink from 2023-2031





Producer: Gran Moraine

Proprietors: Jackson Family Wines

Label: 2019 Yamhill-Carlton Chardonnay

Appellation: Yamhill-Carlton AVA, Oregon

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: 1,030 cases

MSRP: \$50.00

Alcohol: 12.7%

Tasting Notes:

-A starbright white wine with a pale lemon core and medium minus intensity of aromas right out of the bottle. However, as the wine was exposed to more oxygen intoxicating aromas of spring florals, rose petals, cedar wood, dill, coconut, and underripe pineapple vaulted out of the glass. Notes of quince, brioche, lemon peel, and bruised yellow apple round out the palate, a slow starter, but with time this wine showcased a certain old-world elegance. The 194-acre vineyard planted mostly of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, rests at a slightly higher elevation in the Yamhill-Carlton AVA helping to preserve the freshness and acidity of this precious Willamette Valley fruit.

Food Pairing:

-Baked goat cheese and shallot tart.

-Maryland blue-crab crabcakes.

-Lemon orzo pasta with blanched asparagus and curls of aged Parmigiano Reggiano.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that is ready to drink now and would see no benefit from further ageing. Extremely fresh with bright flavors, although tight at the beginning. I recommend decanting for about 15-30 minutes before serving at cellar temperature.



Producer: Gran Moraine

Proprietors: Jackson Family Wines

Label: 2019 Yamhill-Carlton Pinot Noir

Appellation: Yamhill-Carlton AVA, Oregon

Varietal Composition: 100% Pinot Noir

Production: 5,000 cases

MSRP: \$3999

Alcohol: 13.0%

Tasting Notes:

-A clear red wine with a pale ruby core leading to a slightly watery rim. This wine appears youthful in the glass and has a high tone polish look to it. Dark chocolate, wild raspberries, coffee, green tobacco, and leather help to balance the grippingly tannic and alcohol forward nature of this wine. The palate moves into more tertiary aromas of mushroom, forest floor, and iron with a slightly bitter, although not at all off-putting, finish. A wide range of flavor components, along with its lively acidity make for a compelling wine that is begging to be paired with food.

Food Pairing:

-Cedar wood grilled salmon fillet.

-Roasted pistachio and goat cheese stuffed portobello mushrooms with panko breading.

-Smoked chicken leg quarters with raspberry compote sauce.

-70% Dark Chocolate with Sea Salt.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality but still in its infancy. This Pinot Noir has excellent potential, but it must give itself over to time before it can be fully appreciated. Revisit in 2026.



Producer: Au Bon Climat

Proprietors: Isabelle and Knox Clendenen, founded by Jim Clendenen

Label: 2019 Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot Noir

Appellation: Sanford & Benedict Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills AVA, Santa Barbara, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Pinot Noir

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$5000

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A clear, pale ruby core leading to a pinkish meniscus on the rim. On the nose are notes of lilac, red gummy bears, fresh strawberry, and graham cracker pie crust that is so warm and inviting I must admit that the red gummy bears made me visibly grin from ear to ear. On the palate we have a predominantly dry wine with medium acidity and a high intensity of flavors such as cranberries, macerated cherries, pomegranate juice, vanilla extract, fresh dates, and baking spices.

Food Pairing:

-Classic Steak Frites with béarnaise sauce.

-Whole roasted chicken with wild mushroom, pine nut parmesan stuffing.

-Roasted brussel sprouts with shaved Manchego cheese.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that is ready to drink now but will continue to develop and improve over time. This wine significantly overdelivers for its price. Drink from 2023-2030.



Producer: Au Bon Climat

Proprietors: Isabelle and Knox Clendenen, founded by Jim Clendenen

Label: 2020 Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot Noir

Appellation: Sanford & Benedict Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills AVA, Santa Barbara, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Pinot Noir

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$5000

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A clear red wine with low viscosity and a translucent pale ruby core leading to a rose-colored meniscus. This Pinot Noir has notes of ripe cherry, strawberry, fresh roses, red licorice, gummy candy, and pomegranate seeds on the nose. The palate has a crushed gravel, cherry cola, and black tea profile that is also magnificently juicy. Lower tannins and a more fruit forward approach make this Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot just different enough from its 2019 counterpart to showcase the fantastic terroir that vineyard sight has to offer.

Food Pairing:

-Tuna tartar with baked sesame crackers.

-Mushroom risotto with peas and black pepper.

-Grilled salmon with thyme and rosemary baked fingerling potatoes.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that is ready to drink now but will continue to develop and improve with time. I would recommend decanting for at least 30 minutes prior to serving to help settle the heat coming from the alcohol. Drink from 2023-2027



Producer: Au Bon Climat

Proprietors: Isabelle and Knox Clendenen, founded by Jim Clendenen

Label: 2019 Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Chardonnay

Appellation: Sanford & Benedict Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills AVA, Santa Barbara, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$4000

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A youthful looking white wine with a medium lemon core leading to a translucent rim. This 2019 bottling of Au Bon Climat Chardonnay from their Santa Barbara Historic Vineyards Collection is absolutely alluring. The rich aromas of grass-fed butter, puff pastry, butterscotch, overripe guava, and cantaloupe make for a richly complex wine. On the palate, the elevated levels of alcohol and acid are supported by notes of cooked sugar, toasted marshmallow, and charred oak barrel. Spicy and endlessly delicious, this bottling from the late Jim Clendenen is seriously impressive.

Food Pairing:

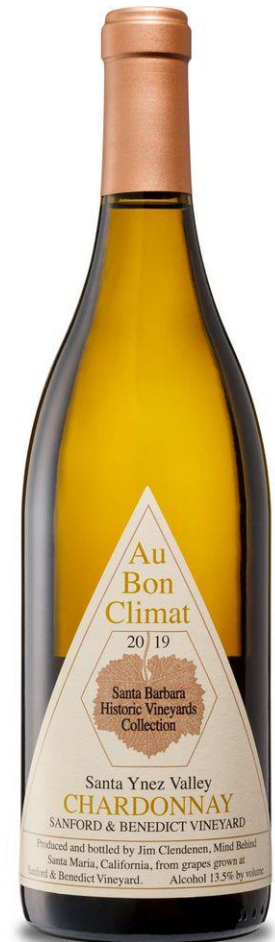
-Buttered popcorn

-Baked apple and pear tart

[-Ina Garten's Salad with Warm Goat Cheese from the Barefoot Contessa Parties<sup>20</sup>](#)

Recommendation:

-A wine teetering between very good and outstanding quality that can be enjoyed now but will continue to develop for anywhere from 5-10 years' time. Drink from 2023-2033.



Producer: Au Bon Climat

Proprietors: Isabelle and Knox Clendenen, founded by Jim Clendenen

Label: 2020 Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Chardonnay

Appellation: Sanford & Benedict Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills AVA, Santa Barbara, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$4000

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A clear white wine with a pale lemon core with minimal reflections of green and gold. The nose opens with aromas of ripe pear, bruised yellow apple, and quince. The nose gracefully transitions into more creamy lactic notes of butter, and caramel. The palate, in comparison to its 2019 predecessor, is much more reminiscent of fresh apple cider, with bruised orchard fruit characteristics. Notes of vanilla bean, charred oak, dill, and coconut round out the otherwise fruity profile. High quality oak went into the making of this Chardonnay from Au Bon Climat.

Food Pairing:

-Tarte Tatin

-Grilled Swiss cheese sandwich with apple and pear chutney.

-Croque Monsieur

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that is ready to drink now but will continue to develop for several more years. Drink now to 2026 for optimal freshness.



Producer: Pursued by Bear

Proprietors: Kyle MacLachlan

Label: 2019 Bear Cub Red Wine

Appellation: Columbia Valley AVA, Washington

Varietal Composition: 93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 1% Syrah

Production: 1,175 cases

MSRP: \$35.00

Alcohol: 14.5%

Tasting Notes:

-Right out of the bottle this wine is expressive, bold and unapologetic; the 2019 Bear Cub from Pursued by Bear is more the leader of a pack than a newborn cub. This Bordelaise blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Syrah is sourced from several vineyard plots spanning the Columbia Valley: including the Walla Walla Valley, Wahluke Slope, Yakima Valley and even the prized Horse Heaven Hills AVA. The wine has an opaque garnet core leading to a very tight rim. Rich notes of stewed blackberries, jalapeno seeds, crushed black pepper, and crème de cassis make up the backbone of this wine. On the palate notes of dried tobacco, dark chocolate, crushed gravel, and wild iris support its higher alcohol content; you feel every bit of the 14.5% ABV in the glass. A highly complex wine with firm tannins and a long finish, year after year this label from Owner and Vintner Kyle MacLachlan is a must have in our home cellar.

Food Pairing:

- Dark chocolate covered cherries with sea salt.
- Porterhouse steak with black truffle whipped polenta.
- Lebanese beef shawarma with Makdous and a variety of mezza.

Recommendation:

-The 2019 Bear Cub is a steal at the suggested MSRP of \$35.00. It significantly overdelivers for the price and can be a great bottle for any occasion. A wine of very good quality that can stand to rest for a few more seasons. The nearly two years of sitting in 100% French Oak Barrels have done their job and I recommend you purchase what is left of this vintage and start enjoying over the next several years.



Producer: Trothe

Proprietors: The Andrews Family along with Todd Chapman, Raymond McKee and Justin Michaud

Label: 2019 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation: Horse Heaven Hills AVA, Washington

Varietal Composition: 96% Cabernet Sauvignon with 4% Merlot

Production: 205 Cases

MSRP: \$234.00 (Members Only Allocation)

Alcohol: 14.7%

Tasting Notes:

-A red wine with a profoundly purple core, high levels of extraction, and high viscosity. This release from newcomer Trothe is an instant classic. On the nose are aromas of dried roses, green olives, wild blackberries, cassis, and saddle leather. More flavors of menthol, coffee, green pepper and tertiary notes of warm forest floor and wild mushrooms. A spectacular and cellar worthy vintage from the majestic Horse Heaven Hills AVA in Washington State. Access to this Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as other limited releases from Trothe, are limited to List Members so make sure to secure an allocation if you're looking to purchase any of their offerings.

Food Pairing:

-Bone in ribeye steak with rosemary and thyme infused mushroom gravy.

-Classic French beef bourguignon.

-Brazilian Picanah steak with chimichurri

Recommendation:

-This wine is of outstanding quality and will only be improved with time, patience and restraint on your part. If you find yourself lucky enough to come across this bottle, I highly recommend that you purchase it and put a big red bottle neck label on it that says the following... "Don't you even think about touching this..." Drink between 2029-2050.





Producer: Trothe

Proprietors: The Andrews Family along with Todd Chapman, Raymond McKee and Justin Michaud

Label: 2020 Estate Syrah

Appellation: Horse Heaven Hills AVA, Washington

Varietal Composition: 93% Syrah with 7% Viognier (3% Whole Cluster Syrah Co-fermented in concrete vessel with 7% whole-cluster Viognier)

Production: 95 cases

MSRP: \$188.00 (Members Only Allocation)

Alcohol: 14.3%

Tasting Notes:

-A clean, starbright red wine with a medium garnet core leading to a thin rose-colored rim in the glass. This inaugural release of Syrah from Trothe is extraordinary. The harmonious notes of crème brûlée, pomegranate molasses, roasted coffee beans, toasted black peppercorns, cardamom, almond bark, cedar, and fennel on the nose are simply intoxicating. Despite the 14.3% ABV, the alcohol is well integrated and helps to balance out the more concentrated black fruit and stewed fig flavor characteristics on the palate. The exceedingly iron rich finish was hauntingly long and profound. Despite the massive heat wave and fires that plagued many producers in the Columbia Valley during the 2020 vintage, this debut bottling from Trothe is miraculously untouched and will continue to evolve for many years to come.

Food Pairing:

-Texas style smoked beef brisket

-Smoked gruyere, aged asiago, Spanish Manchego and Emmental cheese board with dark chocolate and raspberry jam.

-Barbecue beef spareribs.

Recommendation:

-A wine of outstanding quality that can be enjoyed now but will continue to develop and mature over the next decade. Drink from 2023-2029



Producer: Mayacamas Vineyards

Proprietors: The Jay Schottenstein Family

Label: 2020 Mayacamas Mt. Veeder Merlot

Appellation: Mt. Veeder AVA, Napa Valley, California

Varietal Composition: 75% Merlot with 25% Cabernet Franc

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$75.00

Alcohol: 14.0%

Tasting Notes:

-This Merlot from Mayacamas has a bright ruby core leading to a watery rim in the glass. On the nose are contrasting notes of ripe red fruits, lingonberry, and black pepper with an underlying taste of iron, and petrichor. Surprisingly soft tannins and more vegetal notes of stemmy tomato leaf, and grilled green pepper help to promote a more inviting and herbaceous flavor profile to the mid-palate that keeps you coming back for glass after glass. The wine finishes strong with persisting flavors of oolong tea, cedar and graphite. An intense, but balanced wine hailing from Mt. Veeder, this Merlot is a must have for your cellar.

Food Pairing:

- Frenched rack of lamb with blackberry glaze.
- Whole roast chicken with sautéed thyme and rosemary mushrooms.
- Black garlic Pappardelle pasta

Recommendation:

-This wine from Mayacamas is of very good quality and is ready to be enjoyed now. Drink from 2023-2030.



Producer: Mayacamas Vineyards

Proprietors: The Jay Schottenstein Family

Label: 2021 Mayacamas Mt. Veeder Chardonnay

Appellation: Mt. Veeder AVA, Napa Valley, California

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$65.00

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A clean white wine with a pale straw core, this 2021 Chardonnay from Mayacamas was hand harvested and fermented with 95% whole cluster for 12 months on 50% French Oak. On the nose this wine showcased rich notes of butter, orchard fruit, toasted oak, vanilla bean, and candied lemon peel. This more full-bodied offering had mouthwatering notes of lemon rind, Thai basil, honeycomb, and white peach coating our entire palates. A great option for entry level Napa Valley Chardonnay this release is fresh and weighty and should be enjoyed alongside food and good quality company.

Food Pairing:

-Creamy lemon pasta with pan-seared chicken breast.

-Chinese broccoli with garlic sauce.

-Spanish Paella with seafood.

Recommendation:

-A wine of good quality that can be enjoyed now alongside a variety of dishes ranging from creamy pastas, firm cheeses, and seafood inspired tapas. Serve closer to 55°. Drink now to 2027.



Producer: Ramey Wine Cellars

Proprietors: David and Carla Ramey along with their children Claire and Alan Ramey

Label: 2018 Ramey Claret

Appellation: North Coast AVA, California

-Vineyard Sites: 28% Alexander Valley, 22% Mount Veeder, 20% Sonoma County, 10% Oakville, 9% Russian River Valley, 8% Oak Knoll, and 3% Napa Valley

Varietal Composition: 55% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, 9% Syrah, and 2% Petit Verdot

Production: 2,432 cases

MSRP: \$4000

Alcohol: 14.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A red wine with an opaque, deep ruby core leading to a tight rim in the glass. Produced in the traditional Bordelaise style of vinification with malolactic fermentation being completed in barrel, this Claret from Ramey Wine Cellars was deliberately left to age while resting on its lees for eighteen months in a combination of twenty percent new French and American Oak Barrels. Aromas of black and red currant, toasted black peppercorns, rose water, and fresh thyme transition seamlessly into a palate with a soft tannin structure and a surprisingly long finish. It's no surprise that David Ramey, long recognized as a top winemaker in Sonoma and Napa, has managed to create a stunning rendition of an historic namesake. This Claret is simply world class.

Food Pairing:

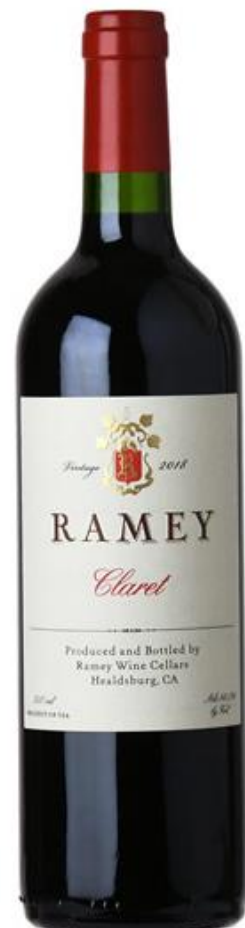
-Roasted pork tenderloin medallions with fingerling potatoes.

-Peppercorn crusted fillet of beef with mushroom gravy.

-Neapolitan style pizza with pepperoni with pepperoncini

Recommendation:

-A wine of outstanding quality that is ready to drink now but will continue to develop for the coming decade. Drink 2023-2033.



Producer: Ramey Wine Cellars

Proprietors: David and Carla Ramey along with their children Claire and Alan Ramey

Label: 2019 Ramey Sonoma Coast Syrah

Appellation: Sonoma Coast AVA, Sonoma County, California

-Vineyard Sites: 55% Cole Creek Vineyard, 45% Rodgers Creek Vineyard

Varietal Composition: 87% Syrah and 13% Viognier, co-fermented

Production: 900 cases

MSRP: \$4000

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A red wine with a concentrated core of ruby, leading to a tight rim and high levels of viscosity and extraction on the glass. "This wine is painting with broad strokes, its massive, but it's also classic." CMS Timothy Campbell. Aromas of smoked meats, black and white pepper, iron, potpourri, and wild strawberries are front and center on the nose. The palate is lush and very intense with austere tannins and intense flavors of macerated raspberries, fig jam, and crushed stones. A tremendously exciting wine that significantly overdelivers for the price point.

Food Pairing:

-Braised lamb shoulder with roasted spring vegetables and garlic.

-Red chili chicken Boti with paratha.

-Barbecue pork rib tips and burnt ends.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that can be enjoyed now but will see benefit from several more years of cellaring. Try after 2027.



Producer: Sean Minor Wines

Proprietors: Sean and Nicole Minor

Label: 2021 Nicole Marie Signature Series Red Blend North Coast

Appellation: North Coast AVA, California

Varietal Composition: 50% Merlot, 25% Zinfandel and 25% Petit Sirah

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$2800

Alcohol: 14.5%

Tasting Notes:

-Bombastic in the glass, this generous blend of Merlot, Zinfandel, and Petit Sirah from the North Coast of California has an intensely opaque deep purple core. This bottling is an homage to Nicole Minor, Marketing Director of Sean Minor Wines as well as wife of Founder and CEO Sean Minor. This vibrant blend is masterfully crafted with notes of stemmy wild strawberries, cherry preserves, lingonberry, black pepper, and black currant on the nose. On the palate are flavors of stewed plums, dark chocolate truffles, rose water, and jammed red fruit that help balance the heat from the elevated alcohol.


Food Pairing:

-Fresh gnocchi Bolognese.

-Open faced focaccia sandwich with roasted summer squash, mozzarella and arugula.

Recommendation:

-A wine of good quality that is ready to be thoroughly enjoyed now and will continue to develop over the next 3-5 years. I can't say that I'm surprised by the quality of this wine considering my experience with the portfolio over the years. Every time I see a Sean Minor wine at a wine shop or on a wine list, I always inquire about it.

 As a treat from Sean and Nicole please visit <https://always-invited.com/> or if you are viewing this in a digital format, click the Sean Minor Logo for a way to stay connected with monthly emails and **15% discount** toward your first order. Each bottle has its own QR Code for you to scan as well!



Producer: Dough Wines

Proprietors: James Beard Award Recipient and Winemaker Heidi Bridenhagen

Label: 2019 Sauvignon Blanc

Appellation: North Coast AVA, California

Varietal Composition: 95% Sauvignon Blanc with 5% Semillon

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$16.99

Alcohol: 14.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A clear white wine with a pale lemon core along with green and gold reflections in the glass. Aromas of freshly squeezed Meyer lemons, lemongrass, and spring florals are in concert with its palate consisting of grapefruit pith, lemon peel, and freshly squeezed pomelo juice. Fermented in 100% Stainless Steel Vats, this Sauvignon Blanc has a brightness that makes for a food friendly option to pair with an assortment of small bites and appetizers.

Food Pairing:

-Crostini with burrata, olive oil, sea salt and grated lemon.

-Garlic stuffed Spanish olives and cold tapas.

-Traditionally made seafood paella.

Recommendation

-A wine of acceptable quality that should be opened now and will see no improvement from any additional ageing.



Producer: Evening Land Vineyards

Proprietors: Rajat Parr and Sashi Moorman

Label: 2021 Seven Springs Chardonnay

Appellation: Eola-Amity Hills AVA, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Varietal Composition: 100% Chardonnay

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$35.00

Alcohol: 13.0%

Tasting Notes:

-A clean and starbright white wine with a pale lemon core and low viscosity. This Chardonnay contains subtle aromas of bright, ripe citrus fruits as well as notes of honeysuckle, peony, and canned pears. Equally bright on the palate, the notes of lemon zest, yellow apple skin, banana peel, and wet stones complement each other perfectly. Fantastic acidity and an almost never-ending finish make me feel as if I am tasting a Premier Cru Chardonnay from the heart of Burgundy rather than from the rolling hills of Oregon. At \$35.00 you would be a fool to not purchase at least a half case of this from your local retailer if possible.

Food Pairing:

-Friend halloumi cheese drizzled with pomegranate molasses.

-Pan-seared scallops with tarragon butter.

-Toasted French baguette with *delice de Bourgogne*.

Recommendation:

-A wine of outstanding quality that is ready to be enjoyed now but will continue to develop gracefully for years to come. Taste again in 2025.





Producer: Evening Land Vineyards

Proprietors: Rajat Parr and Sashi Moorman

Label: 2021 Seven Springs Pinot Noir

Appellation: Eola-Amity Hills AVA, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Varietal Composition: 100% Pinot Noir

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$4500

Alcohol: 13.1%

Tasting Notes:

-A clean and translucent pale ruby core leading to a rose-colored meniscus with no signs of gas or sediment. This Pinot Noir has a medium plus intensity of aromas with its notes of cedar, roses, boysenberry, fresh figs, and Medjool Dates. The highly complex nose is accompanied by an equally robust palate with flavors of red currants, lingonberries, wild iris, luxardo cherries, wild strawberries, and polished leather. With medium plus tannins, well-integrated alcohol and an iron rich finish this bottling showcases its terroir beautifully and is unapologetically unique.

Food Pairing:

- Grilled salmon fillet with dill and herbed butter.
- Beat salad with roasted walnuts and gruyere.
- Pot roast with oven roasted vegetables and potatoes.

Recommendation:

-A wine of outstanding quality that is ready to be enjoyed now but will continue to develop gracefully for years to come. This Pinot Noir from Rajat Parr and Sashi Moorman significantly overdelivers on so many levels.



Producer: Evening Land Vineyards

Proprietors: Rajat Parr and Sashi Moorman

Label: 2021 Seven Springs Passetoutgrain

Appellation: Eola-Amity Hills AVA, Willamette Valley, Oregon

Varietal Composition: 50% Pinot Noir and 50% Gamay

Production: N/A

MSRP: \$35.00

Alcohol: 13.5%

Tasting Notes:

-A clear red wine with a medium ruby core, medium viscosity, and no signs of gas or sediment. This wine is an homage to the Burgundian tradition of blending both Pinot Noir and Gamay grapes together. The namesake of Passetoutgrain is a French term that when translated means, "all the berries go through." Both grapes were picked whole-cluster and were co-fermented together with native yeast fermentation to create this wildly delicious wine. Notes of violets, lilac, pomegranate juice, and fresh figs poured out of the glass and continued to develop over time. The palate showcased more of a stemmy black and blue fruit profile along with classic Gamay notes of gummy candy and black pepper.

Food Pairing:

-Roasted fennel and goat cheese stuffed portobello mushrooms.

-Grilled flat-iron steak with rosemary roasted fingerling potatoes.

-Traditional French charcuterie with assorted Jambon and Saucisson Sec.

Recommendation:

-A wine of very good quality that is ready to drink now but will continue to develop over the next several years. Try again in 2025.



### Book Recommendations:

- 1) [Wine Girl](#) by Victoria James
- 2) [Cork Dork](#) by Bianca Bosker
- 3) [Secrets of the Sommeliers](#), by Rajat Par and Jordan McKay
- 4) [Adventures on The Wine Route](#) by Kermit Lynch
- 5) [The World Atlas of Wine 8<sup>th</sup> Edition](#), by Hugh Johnson and Jancis Robinson
- 6) [Becoming a Sommelier](#), by Rosie Schupp
- 7) [Tasting Wine and Cheese: An Insider's Guide to Mastering the Principles of Pairing](#), by Adam Centamore

### Podcast Recommendations:

- 1) Reading and Drinking, hosted by Jill Zimorski (MS)
- 2) The SOMM TV Podcast, hosted by Jason Wise and contributors.
- 3) The JancisRobinson.com Podcast, hosted by Jancis Robinson and contributors.
- 4) Straight Talk, hosted by James Molesworth and a revolving cast of Wine Spectator Editors and Industry Professionals

*For consideration to be included in future reports please contact Tanous El-Kareh via email or on social media; please see below.*

### Contact Information:

Email: [obviouslywine@gmail.com](mailto:obviouslywine@gmail.com)

Website: [www.obviouslywine.com](http://www.obviouslywine.com)

Instagram: [@obviouslywine](https://www.instagram.com/obviouslywine)



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Reference page:

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.wsetglobal.com/media/3119/wset\\_l3\\_wines\\_sat\\_en\\_jun-2016.pdf](https://www.wsetglobal.com/media/3119/wset_l3_wines_sat_en_jun-2016.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.railsbackfreres.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.smithmadrone.com/index.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.reynoldsfamilywinery.com/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.matthiasson.com/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.raenwinery.com/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.granmoraine.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://aubonclimat.com/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.pursuedbybearwine.com/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://trothe.com/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mayacamas.com/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.rameywine.com/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.seanminorwines.com/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://doughwines.com/>

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<sup>16</sup> <https://chi.vervewine.com/pages/about>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.lieuditwinery.com/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://kermitylynch.com/our-wines/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.franceandwestern.com/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://barefootcontessa.com/recipes/salad-with-warm-goat-cheese>