Connoisseurs' Guide to California Wine

January inevitably has us looking both forward and back. It is a time for reflecting on the ways we have come as well as a month when we find renewed excitement for the upcoming vintage and the seemingly endless parade of new wines that will occupy our time in the months ahead. As always, Zinfandel gets top billing in our first issue of the new year, but we also take a look at an especially affordable contingent of Sauvignon Blancs, as well as a handful of exceptional fortified dessert wines that deserve to be better known. January has traditionally been the month when Zinfandel Advocates and Producers (ZAP) hold their annual celebratory gathering, and, as appreciative supporters of the organization's efforts to advance Zinfandel's cause, we always like to remind our readers of when and where the event will take place. This year, owing to COVID's recent resurgence, the festivities have been postponed to late March, and we have our fingers crossed that spring will signal a return to semi-normalcy and that Zinfandel will again have its day. We have no connection to ZAP other than that we are grateful for what they do, and those wanting to know more should check out ZAP's website at **https://zinfandelexperience.com/about-experience/**

ZINFANDEL

Since the earliest days of *Connoisseurs' Guide* we have been fervent fans of good Zinfandels, and through the years of Zin's ups and down, our love of well-made examples has remained undimmed. This month's collection of new bottlings, mostly from the very successful 2018 and 2019 vintages, shows Zinfandel in especially fine form and includes many collectible, cellarworthy bottlings that are sure to bring smiles to fellow admirers of California's unique contribution to the world's roster of fine wines.

SAUVIGNON BLANC

Sauvignon Blanc is both versatile and affordable, and it remains a value leader among varietal white wines. In this issue we take a look at a raft of new releases from the 2020 vintage, a year famously plagued by wildfires, but, as one of the first grapes to be picked in any harvest, Sauvignon Blanc was spared the problems of smoke in the vineyard that presented such a challenge to winemakers and growers in the late summer and fall.

FORTIFIED DESSERT WINES

California's fortified dessert wines, those heady, very sweet, meal-ending delectables, are often referred to as "Port-style" wines. While they are not true "Ports" in the classic Portuguese sense bound by any set of varietal rules and can be made from most any grape that a local vintner desires, they can, as we discover in this edition of *Connoisseurs' Guide*, can be remarkably good wines with a distinct, California voice of their own.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Weather, as always, is the big story of any winemaking year, and, in 2021, the West Coast's ongoing drought had us all more than a little concerned, but, as things turned out, the vintage was exceptional, even if comparatively small, and has wine country breathing an excited sigh of relief. And, considering the high quality we continued to see in the new wines from 2018 and 2019 that made their ways to our table, 2021, unlike the year before, was a season with far more high points than lows.

BEST WINES OF THE YEAR

It is once again time for Stephen, Charlie and Lynne to offer up their picks as the most memorable wines of the past year. The selection of our favorites is both fun and a bit maddening as there are simply so many outstanding candidates from which to choose when going over our notes of the thousands of wines reviewed over the course of the past twelve months. While we relish the task, we approach it with serious thought and are always surprised that it takes far longer than expected. This year is no exception.

BEST BUYS

There is no question but that the prices commanded by Cabernet Sauvignon show no signs of easing, but there are plenty of good examples that are surprisingly affordable, and this installment of Best Buys features a full dozen that make just that point. Sparkling wines are on the January's Best Buy marquee as well, and, as always, we continue to be amazed at how inexpensive so many well-made *Méthode Champenoise* bottlings are considering the time and expense that go into their making.

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Zinfandel

Zinfandel may not be indigenous to California, but great wines made from Zinfandel most certainly are. Once referred to as the "mystery grape," Zinfandel is not an orphan of lost lineage, and we now definitely know of its European "roots," but it has never been regarded with anything close to esteem in its continental home, and unlike such so-called noble varieties as Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, there is simply no Old World model against which it can be compared. That, of course, is undoubtedly the reason that it continues to occupy a lesser place on the global stage, but, closer to home, discerning students of fine wine know that, when it comes to complex, deeply satisfying wines of singular character, Zinfandel stands with any red variety in the world.

Zinfandel has been cultivated in California since the mid-1880s, and there are still producing vineyards dating back to the late nineteenth century, but Zinfandel took its time in finding its greatness. Even as California's trajectory as a producer of fine wines skyrocketed in the 1970s, Zinfandel did not enjoy the new-found fame of its classic European cousins, and though there were a handful of exceptional examples that were coveted by its modest coterie of in-the-know fans, it was, for most wine drinkers, thought of as a producer of innocuous, slightly sweet, pink wines. After all, how could Zinfandel be any good? If so, why wasn't it being made in France? It has also been argued, with some justification, that Zinfandel suffered from a different problem once the era of White Zins ran its course. In the 1980s and 1990s, extremely ripe, high-octane wines became the rage, and Zinfandel can assuredly get ripe, but it can get so ripe that any semblance of complexity or nuance is lost. It soon developed a reputation for making nothing other than big, blockbuster wines wholly lacking in sophistication.

Now, big Zins still exist and, make no mistake, many are quite good, but there are also many contemporary, well-balanced Zinfandels that have a more temperate voice and show the requisite complexity and, yes, sophistication inherent in truly great wines. The thing that is too often missed about Zinfandel is that it can succeed famously in a number of styles from big and burly to lively and fresh. There is not, nor should there be, a single model by which it should be judged.

Like many of our generation – and we confess to having been of legal drinking age for some time – we cut our vinous teeth on the wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy, but, from our earliest days as budding wine lovers, we have been fascinated by and admirers of Zinfandel. We were drawn to its uniqueness. It, as much as any wine, drew to us to California, and we fervently believe that the state of Zinfandel has never been as good as it is today. Concerted efforts at preserving and protecting legacy, old-vine vineyards and ongoing research about varying clonal types and the impact of specific *terroirs* on Zinfandel within individual appellations point the way to even better ahead, and, we wish we had a crystal ball in which to peer and see the heights Zinfandel has reached after another fifty years have passed. We will not be here, but Zinfandel assuredly will.

Tasting Note Legend

OUTSTANDING WINES

THREE STARS: (95-98 points) An exceptional wine. Worth a special search of the market.

TWO STARS: (91-94 points) A highly distinctive wine. Likely to be memorable.

ONE STAR: (87-90 points) Fine example of a type or style of wine. Without notable flaws.

NOTE: Wines not marked with stars are often delightful wines. Each has unique virtues and any of these wines may be the best wine to serve your needs based on value, availability or for your dining and taste preferences. *Prices – Approximately California full retail prices.

Connoisseurs' Guide tastings are conducted with RIEDEL Stemware.

CHARACTERISTICS & TRADITIONAL USE WITH FOOD

- Soft and fruity wine. Quaffable by itself or with light foods.
- Crisp white. Medium acid and dry. Fish or delicate flavored foods.
- Mellow white. Dry to slightly sweet. Enough acid for white meats.
- Full and balanced dry White. Try with rich seafood and fowl dishes.
- Light Red and powerhouse White. Fowl, veal and light meats.
- Medium Red. Balanced, good depth, medium tannin. Beef and lamb.
- Robust Red. Full tannin, intense flavors. For highly spiced meat dishes.
- Sweet Dessert wine. Enjoyable by itself or with sweet desserts.

AVAILABILITY

- Generally available in most market areas.
- Limited production and/or limited geographic distribution.
- Very limited availability.
- GV Good Value

DRINKABILITY

- Drinkable now. Unlikely to improve with further aging.
- Drinkable now. Further bottle aging can improve this wine.
- Cellar for future drinking. Wine will improve with bottle aging.
- Not suitable for drinking.

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DELIVERY OPTION: The Magazine version is downloadable on the first of the month through our email to you. For those who prefer that Connoisseurs' Guide send a Magazine version via the Post Office (First Class mail), we are pleased to offer that option for an additional $25 per year.

Bella

92 BELLA Barrel 32 Dry Creek Valley 2018
Deep and very pure, nicely concentrated fruit sits at center stage here, and the wine's impressively sustained delivery of raspberries and blackberries is never compromised by out-of-bounds ripeness. Full, fleshy and slightly supple on entry with fine firming tannins and integrated acidity warding off any sensation of softness, this is a big but exceptionally well-balanced wine for a Zin of its size and has the fruity depth and construction to age effortlessly for a full decade and, perhaps, more. $68.00

91 BELLA Florence Dry Creek Valley 2018
Here, again, is a Zinfandel from Bella that is ripe and weighty, but wonderfully well-balanced with a keen fix on concentrated, incisively varietal berry-like fruit from first sniff to finish, and it flirts intriguingly with a bit of dusty soil complexity at every stop. It has the firm underbelly of a wine destined to age for six to ten years, yet it is so carefully crafted and its fruit so bright and buoyant that, while we would opt for a bit of cellar time, it would be hard to argue with anyone choosing to pull its cork and pour it in the very near term. $48.00

89 BELLA Westphall Vineyard Rockpile 2018
Aromatically a little pulled back compared to its cellarmates from Bella with a mid-density nose of blueberries laced with a subtle streak of briar and woody spice, the 2018 Westphall Zin is, after a fairly rounded palatal start, a tad coarse in feel and shows an edge of heat to its moderately tannic finish. If neither as deep nor as energetic as its two same-vintage siblings from the Dry Creek Valley – and not a wine that promises to evolve for as long or quite as well as either – it is nonetheless a solidly varietal working that cannot but improve if allowed an additional three or four years of smoothing. $58.00

86 CABANA Old Vine Lodi 2020
A little half-hearted when it comes to definitive Zinfandel fruit on the nose but fairing a bit better once in the mouth, this medium-full-bodied wine shows a nice bit of richness on entry then drifts slowly and steadily to dryness and finishes with a little too much astringency and not quite enough fruit to warrant full, one-star recommendation. $25.00

91 CAROL SHELTON Rockpile Reserve 2019
Florence Vineyard Rockpile. 15% Petite Sirah; 5% Carignane. This very solid, and substantial wine shows the concentration and depth inherent in well-made Rockpile Zinfandels, and, while not in the least lacking for ripeness, it is well-stated blackberry fruit, and not ripeness, that is its defining trait throughout. It is a big wine, but it is also exceptionally well-structured with neatly fit, lightly grippy tannins and enlivening acidity ensuring no less than a half-decade of successful cellaring. It is a serious Zin with plenty to like even now, but we expect to like it even more when a few years have passed. $40.00

Carol Shelton WINES

90 CAROL SHELTON Oakley Zin Old Vine 2019
Contra Costa County. 20% Carignane. Fully ripe as Zins of its particular provenance typically are, yet not at all hampered by jammy excess and a wine that keeps its sights steadily set on very well-stated, slightly juicy, blackberry-like fruit from start to finish, this moderately full-bodied bottling sports nicely integrated tannins for grip and aging potential while avoiding the kind of astringency that makes cellaring a must. Enjoy it early on with savory pork stews or set it aside for a few years in anticipation of more complexity to come.
GOOD VALUE $28.00

89 CAROL SHELTON Wally Zin Wallstrum Vineyard 2019
Alexander Valley. Yet another very good Zinfandel in the 2019 Carol Shelton collection that earns the nod both for its keen and continuous, indelibly varietal statement and its fine, firm construction, the "Wally Zin" is a weighty, age-worthy effort that is presently on the tannic side. Its back-end astringency is hard to ignore even if it does not outpace its persistent, sure-footed, dark berry fruit, and we strongly advise a few years of patience before pouring it as a partner to the likes of a slow-roasted, well-seasoned pork roast. $34.00

88 CAROL SHELTON Monga Zin Old Vine 2019
Cucamonga Valley. Temperate in ripeness yet sporting plenty of bright, berry-like fruit and a wine charged with lots of snappy acidity without erring to tartness, the 2019 Monga Zin is a solidly varietal effort that counts lively balance high on its list of assets. It is a Zinfandel that will fill the bill handily with tomatoey pastas of all sorts, and, while tasty now, it is sure to keep comfortably for several years. $27.00

Beekeeper Cellars

95 BEEKEEPER Montecillo Vineyard 2018
Sonoma Valley. Taking its accustomed place at the head of the class, Beekeeper comes through once more with a top-tier Zinfandel that impresses equally for its concentration, its precision and sheer fruity depth. Time and again, Beekeeper has proven that richness, ripeness and balance are not mutually exclusive, and, as outgoing and involving as this so very generous wine may be at the moment, it is structured to age famously and is, in our minds, one that absolutely demands time if it is to achieve its full potential. As for cellaring strategy, three years seems the minimum while ten is not too much, and one or two bottles is not nearly enough. $70.00

Zinfandel

87 CAROL SHELTON Wild Thing Old Vine 2019

Mendocino County. 16% Carignane; 8% Petite Sirah. Rich, open and juicy on the nose and in the mouth with an ample measure of sweet, blackberry-like fruit, Ms. Shelton's 2019 Wild Thing is a weighty, well-balanced Zinfandel whose complement of Carignane and Petite Sirah affords it a good bit of tactile grip without imparting too much tannic astringency. It will keep very comfortably for several years but is a tasty match for hearty fare now and earns enthusiastic "Good Value" recommendation.

GOOD VALUE $19.00

87 CAROL SHELTON Pizzaz Zin Old Vine 2020

Piazza Vineyard Lodi. Ripeness is the central theme of this slightly jammy, chocolate-tinged effort, but the wine is not ripe to a fault and is kept on the varietal track by the berryish fruit expected in Zinfandel. It is medium-full-bodied, sparing in tannin and balanced to softness, and, even though very young, it invites near-term drinking and should be at its best over the next two or three years. $22.00

85 CLOSE CALL Lodi 2018

Showing a scant edge of chocolate to its lightly berryish nose with clean, but relatively limited flavors whose modest, loosely defined fruit tends to dryness, this ripe, easy going, but less-than-lively Zinfandel is short on palatal staying power and pulls up short at the finish. $24.00

86 CRISS CROSS Old Vine Lodi 2019

If not out-and-out jammy, this full-bodied wine suggests a bit of raisiny sweetness in both scant and taste, and it does not entirely hide its heat. It does, however, exhibit the unmistakable, berry-like traits of real Zinfandel and is relatively well-structured for a wine marked by such obvious ripeness. $24.00

87 CROOKED PATH Paso Robles 2017

57% Zinfandel; 20% Primitivo; 15% Syrah; 8% Petite Sirah. If little tentative on first nosing, this wine opens to reveal a good sense of berryish fruit and takes on a touch of earthy complexity with a brief bit of time in the glass. A moderately full and nicely composed Zin of middling richness with fine linearity and length on the palate, it stays in its lane from entry to finish and closes on a lightly tannic note. While it is certainly accessible and easy to taste now, its fruity vitality suggests that it will hold up for several more years. $30.00

85 DEAVER Big Brix Amador County 2017

Checking in with an imposing 17.5% alcohol and 3% residual sugar, this aptly named offering certainly makes a big impact, but it is not a wine that will easily find a place at the dinner table with typical Zinfandel fare. If not quite so sweet as to enter the dessert-wine realm, its sweetness is hard to ignore, and it will pair better with meal-ending cheeses than most any entrée that comes to mind. $35.00

85 DEAVER Deaver's Red Amador County

This non-vintaged mix is all Zinfandel and includes a bit of Rosé, as well as a touch of late-harvest Zin and a splash of Zinfandel "Port," the result of which is a full, slightly soft-edged wine that flirts with a suggestion of jammy sweetness and shows but a trace of evident tannin. It is easy drinking stuff for gulping down without further age. $20.00

85 DEERFIELD Ivy Glen Vineyard Reserve 2014

Sonoma Mountain. Though this seven-year-old Zinfandel can arguably claim a degree of complexity, it shows little in the way of fruity energy at this point in its life, and it is shot through with too-obvious heat owing to its 17.5% alcohol. It is big and bold, but it is also quite crude, and its slide to sere dryness will only accelerate with further age. $95.00

87 DRY CREEK VINEYARD Old Vine Dry Creek Valley 2019

19% Petite Sirah; 3% Carignane. Reasonably ripe and slightly spicy, but a bit reticent in its aromatic expression of fruit and taking a bit of coaxing to find a distinct varietal voice on the nose, this solidly structured youngster is similarly a wine that does not race to overt fruitiness in flavor but quietly hints here and there at dark berries enough to get on the Zinfandel track. It is not now or likely to become an especially outgoing wine in the future, and it is roughed up a bit by late-to-arrive tannin, but it should relax and come into better varietal focus a few years down the line. $38.00

DUTCHER CROSSING

90 DUTCHER CROSSING Maple Vineyard 2019

Dry Creek Valley. Both ripe and moderately deep in defined fruit, yet still on the slightly tight and narrow side with youthful energy to spare, Dutcher Crossing's 2019 Maple Vineyard Zin may be free of the kind of tannic bite that warrants additional age, but aging it nonetheless needs in order unwind and fill out. That it will is without question, and, while its vitality is definitely a plus, we see it becoming a richer, more generous wine with a even a few more years of cellaring. $50.00

90 DUTCHER CROSSING Bacigalupi Vineyard 2019

Russian River Valley. Much as is the case with its same-vintage companion from the Maple Vineyard, this is, again, a Zinfandel that is both deep and wonderfully alive, but it is not as tight and abounds in comparatively accessible, very continuous, optimally ripened blackberry fruit enriched by a judicious measure of sweet, slightly creamy oak. Of the two, it is the wine that we would reach for first, and, even though it is thoroughly enjoyable now and less demanding of age, it will keep handily for another five or so years without fading and promises to reveal more layering and polish along the way. $41.00

90 EASTON D'Agostini Brothers Vineyard 2017

Shenandoah Valley. Here is a young, well-defined, moderately full-bodied Zin that puts that emphasis on structure and balance rather than lavish ripeness yet still conveys a continuous presence of slightly juicy, ripe berry fruit. If not quite backward or closed in to the point of being reluctant and difficult to assess now, it is far from fully developed and holds plenty of promise for those patient Zinfandel lovers who are willing to set it aside for three to five more years. $35.00

90 EASTON "E" Fiddletown 2017

Sweet, fully ripened, blackberry fruit gets the starring role in this good and gutsy, very substantial, full-bodied Zin. There is plenty to sink one's teeth into here, and, while it is on the sturdy side of the varietal spectrum, it does not default to tannic toughness.

Richer dishes are definitely called for if one opts to pour it any time soon, and, even with the three to five years of age for which it seems to ask before reaching its peak, it will remain a robust wine that wants pairing with robust foods.
GOOD VALUE $30.00

87 EASTON Rinaldi Vineyard Old Vine Fiddletown 2017
This is an entirely respectable Zinfandel that offers up a good look at the berry-like fruit of the variety, but it is not one of great reach or range and wants for more fruity depth to stand as an equal to its two companions from Easton reviewed just above, While its otherwise modest tannins stand out at the finish owing to its slightly abbreviated buffering fruit, this is not a rugged wine in need of protracted aging and should be marked for drinking over the next three or four years. $35.00

87 EASTON Amador County 2019
Here is solid, if somewhat basic Zinfandel that manages to speak with a reasonably clear varietal voice, but that voice becomes a bit muted as the wine crosses the palate with fairly gruff tannins closing in after its fairly rounded, slightly soft tactile start. Despite winding up a bit too chalky and dry to presently earn higher marks, it has the fruity heart to improve with age, and a few years of cellaring are prescribed. $25.00

85 EASTON Zinster Lot 1852 Fiddletown 2020
Slightly dry and a little strained in its impressions of fruit right from the first and never a wine that speaks strongly of Zinfandel, this edition of Easton's Zinster conveys a fair sense of substance on the palate, but its too-passive fruit fights a losing battle with drying tannins and fails to convince that its lot will be appreciably bettered with age. $25.00

FRANK FAMILY VINEYARDS

92 FRANK FAMILY Reserve Napa Valley 2018
Chiles Valley. 11% Petite Sirah. Bursting with optimally ripened berries, both red and black and filled out by a good dollop of lovely, slightly creamy oak, Frank Family's Reserve Zinfandel from the 2018 vintage is a full, slightly supple, wonderfully polished offering that is as accessible as it is so very deep. That is not to say that it will not get even better with age, and it is balanced to do just that for upwards of a half-dozen or so years, but it is immensely tasty stuff now that will shine in the short term with a flavorful, leg-of-lamb roast. $60.00

89 FRANK FAMILY Napa Valley 2019
10% Petite Sirah. Nicely ripened blackberries are front and center in both the mid-density aromas and well-fruited flavors of this balanced, invitingly supple Zin, but, along with its fruit, the wine displays a careful veneer of sweet oak as well as a bit of loamy richness that, together, lift it above simple "fruitiness." It is not a powerhouse version that owes overly to ripeness but is, instead, a tailored, well-balanced working that will complement a wide range of foods, and, though young and capable of aging nicely for three to five years, its evident sense of crafting and polish makes it easy to enjoy now. $38.00

90 FRITZ Estate Reserve Dry Creek Valley 2019
Showing good varietal credentials with fine fruity volume, the

FRITZ

2019 Fritz Estate Reserve is a full, well-extracted, solidly built offering that hits all of the right Zinfandel marks from its keen, blackberry focus and slightly briary spice to its careful balance and structure. It is big and it is ripe, yet, despite its tilt to ripeness, its deep, long-lasting flavors hold fast to unwavering fruit and never come close to being in any way overdone. Though it is certain to age well and will evolve nicely for another four or five years, it is so tasty and seamlessly constructed that it is immensely enjoyable right now. $60.00

87 FRITZ Estate Dry Creek Valley 2019
Tipping to the slightly savory side of things in the nose with hints of briary spice and dusty soil lending a bit of complexity to its ripe, but less-than-effusive, berryish fruit, this full-bodied Zin starts out on a slightly viscous note on the palate and slowly firms on its way to a moderately tannic finish that is punctuated by a bit of obvious heat. Sufficiently ragged at the moment to want the buffering effects of food, it will benefit from another couple of years of smoothing. $35.00

GREEN & RED VINEYARD

89 GREEN & RED Tip Top Vineyard Napa Valley 2016
A wine of well-managed ripeness that shows little indication of being over 15% alcohol as it, in fact is, the Tip Top Vineyard bottling is a solidly structured Zinfandel that possesses plenty of well-defined fruit without being "fruity" per se. It shows notes of woodsy spice and stony soil as adjuncts to its steady and sustained themes of concentrated blackberries, and, if like its mate from the Chiles Mill Vineyard, it sports the tannic structure to age, it is deeper in fruit and thus the more promising of the two to be bettered by time. $42.00

87 GREEN & RED Chiles Mill Vineyard Napa Valley 2017
Dark, dense and geared to ripeness on the nose and then slowly finding more fruity definition with elements of black cherries and plums a step ahead of Zinfandel's more typical blackberries, this wine follows with well-extracted flavors that similarly show a bit more fruity fullness as they go. Its trailing tannins provide it with several years of aging potential, yet they are not so pronounced as to preclude drinking now so long as it is poured alongside something fairly hearty. $42.00

87 GROSSO KRESSER Paso Robles 2016
As is not uncommon in Zin, this is a wine, that while quite ripe, does not come across as being nearly so hot as its stated 16.3% alcohol portends and is, in fact, a fairly well-balanced, effort that claims a good bit of continuous, mildly spicy, blackberry fruit. If by no means a lightweight, neither is it at all heavy-footed, and it is a nicely focused, gently tannic Zinfandel that, at five years of age, is fully ready to drink. $46.00

Zinfandel

HARNEY LANE
WELCOME TO A NEW TRADITION

89 HARNEY LANE Home Ranch Lodi 2019
Just as it did in 2018, Harney Lane's Home Ranch Zinfandel goes right to the varietal point and keeps its sights set on well-defined, blackberry fruit, and, though it very much hews to the ripeness that we expect in Lodi Zins, it is comfortably balanced and pulls back from chocolaty extremes. It is, all in all, a well-made wine that is true to its variety and its place, and it offers both plenty to like now and the promise of several years of positive growth should one choose to wait. $30.00

88 HARNEY LANE Scottsdale Vineyard Lodi 2019
Sweet, fully ripe blackberries immediately assume the lead here and are joined in both the wine's ample, slightly chocolate-tinged aromas and flavors by scattered suggestions of earthy complexity. The wine is full, fleshy, a tad jammy and a touch soft in balance, yet it does not drag its feet and is, withal, a rich and outgoing Zinfandel that looks to be at its best if poured during the next two or three years. $40.00

87 HARNEY LANE Lizzy James Vyd. Old Vine Lodi 2019
Size more than overt fruitiness is the story here, and, if a dense, decidedly rich wine, this is a big-bodied Zinfandel that emphasizes ripeness first and last and at all points between. It runs to obvious, but not-ruinous heat and elevated tannins that conspire to keep its fundamental fruit under wrap, yet, when all is said and done, its richness and stuffing cannot be ignored even if it makes no claim to grace. $44.00

89 J. DUSI Dante Dusi Vineyard Paso Robles 2019
This good, indelibly varietal wine features ample, ripe berry fruit throughout and is joined by hints of cocoa, coffee and creamy oak in a rich and outgoing aromatic mix that is echoed in kind on the palate where a little more ripeness comes into play. Its fullness and ripeness noted, it is very comfortably balanced and never inclines to late-harvest extremes, and its integral, never-tough tannins afford it structural firmness and good potential for three to five years of development without being so obvious as to interfere with enjoyment now. $42.00

Jeff Cohn CELLARS

92 JEFF COHN St. Peter's Church Vineyard 2019
Alexander Valley. Always among the biggest and richest Zins from this maker, the current edition from St. Peter's Church Vineyard is, again, a mouthfilling wine of serious substance and size, but it ranks as our favorite of the family in 2019 owing to its engaging juiciness and its sustained fruity focus and depth. Big it is, but it is also surprisingly well-balanced for a wine of its considerable girth, and, although very showy and tremendously satisfying right now, it is sure to be even better in five years and will easily last for ten. $60.00

91 JEFF COHN Isabel Sweetwater Springs Vineyard 2019
Russian River Valley. Boasting all of the richness and the fruity density that we have come to expect in Jeff Cohn Zinfandels and matching its riper traits with a nice bit of juicy freshness, the 2019 Isabel is weighty, generously filled wine wherein precise, blackberry fruit is met by sympathetic sweet, slightly vanillin oak in a well-composed mix. It stands out from the crowd for its mix of polish and power, and, if it is sure to tempt drinking while still very young by way of its fine and supple feel, its integral tannins and acidity provide the structure to ensure no fewer than a half-dozen years of positive growth and a lengthy life of as many more after that. $55.00

90 JEFF COHN Iron Hill Vineyard Sonoma Valley 2019
This hefty wine pushes the limits of ripeness without quite crossing the line into dried-grape desiccation and unbuffered heat, and it does convey plenty of intense fruit, but it is, at least for the nonce, slightly simple and lesser in range than the best Zins in Mr. Cohn's 2019 collection. Now, it may well be that it is held back by its youth and that it will show more complexity with time as its moderate tannins ease, but, even if not, it is still a wine of considerable richness that will more than hold its own with intensely flavored, boldly seasoned foods such as gamy meat braises, a peppery garlic-laced leg of lamb or wild boar sausages hot off the grill. $60.00

90 JEFF COHN Rinaldi Vineyard Old Vine Fiddletown 2019
As ripe as any in the Jeff Cohn line-up and a little more obvious in its astringency and heat than most, this full-bodied Zinfandel starts out one way and finishes another with a bit of back-end tannic gruffness contrasting its rounded, slightly glyceriny palatal start. It lacks for nothing in the way of richness and essential fruit, but it definitely could do with some polish, and, though we doubt that its rustic bent will give way to mannerly elegance regardless of how long it rests in the cellar, we do see its present raggedness becoming far less of a limiting factor once three or four years have passed. $55.00

87 KENWOOD Jack London Vineyard Sonoma Mtn 2018
If a tad on ripe, dried berry side in its basic fruit, and accordingly tight on the palate, this wine, while not dramatic, does deliver a fair bit of early structure. A slight nod to underlying softness is wholly in keeping with its ripeness, yet with both a touch of jam and good continuity, the wine does suggest that a few years in bottle will be worth the patience. $35.00

86 KENWOOD 75% Sonoma Co./25% San Joaquin Co. 2019
There is nothing fancy or thought provoking about this medium-bodied wine, but, if fairly simple and light on concentration, it has the ripe berry traits of a true Zinfandel and a few scattered touches of sweet spice. Its principal virtue is that it is a very decent wine priced for everyday drinking, especially when the weather warms and the cover comes off the grill.
GOOD VALUE $12.00

87 KLINKER BRICK Old Ghost Old Vine Lodi 2018
On the one hand a Zin of considerable heft and one that is very much driven by ripeness, but, on the other, a wine that is both slightly soft then rather tough in its progression with challenging

tannins taking control at the finish, this year's Old Ghost effort is a big, but patently unrefined look at the variety that, if arguably benefitting from a few years of smoothing, wants more fruity authority to garner higher marks. $40.00

87 KLINKER BRICK Old Vine Lodi 2018

Though offering a good look at varietal berries, this is a wine of somewhat mixed minds as it is moderately fruity, slightly soft, a tad sweet, fairly tannic and a bit hot all at once. It musters enough varietal richness to earn recommendation despite its back-end astringency, yet, even with its phenolic finish, it is a Zinfandel that will show at its best over the next several years before its limited fruity energy flags. $22.00

86 KLINKER BRICK Brickmason Lodi 2018

80% Zinfandel; 10% Syrah; 5% Petite Sirah; 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2018 Brickmason is a firmly structured wine of medium-full-body that flirts with a note of blackberries which brings it a modicum of varietal identity, yet it is a bit sparing in the fruity richness of front-line Zinfandel. That said, it shows good, food-worthy balance and shies away from overt ripeness with relatively muted, background tannins affording it a light bit of finishing grip. $17.00

85 KNOTTY VINES Red Blend California 2018

By Rodney Strong. 31% Zinfandel; 28% Cabernet Sauvignon; 25% Merlot; 16% Malbec. Simple and straightforward with a clean, but low-keyed nose of berries and plums that is, at best, only distantly suggestive of Zinfandel, this inexpensive red blend deserves credit for being clean and decently balanced, but, as its mixed *cépage* predicts, it is rather generic in character and a wine of diminished tannins that seems designed for uncritical sipping in the near term. $15.00

86 LAPIS LUNA North Coast 2020

20% Sangiovese. On the lighter side as Zinfandels go, but a likeably fruity, slightly juicy working all the same, this mid-sized look at the variety is a clean and easy-going wine that, while firmed by a gentle bit of tannin, is made in a rounded, ready-to-drink style that asks for nothing in the way of additional age. It is a good choice for unceremonious quaffing with burgers and ribs in the coming year, and, though inexpensive, never comes across as being cheap.

GOOD VALUE $13.00

86 McMANIS Lodi 2020

Here is a cleanly made, very direct Zin that shows a touch of jammy sweetness to its fully ripe fruit, and, if not a wine that claims a whit of complexity, it is nicely balanced with good acidity imparting a welcome bit of fruity brightness. And, as is the case with many McManis offerings, it gets an appreciative nod for fine value at the price.

GOOD VALUE $12.00

89 MEADOWCROFT Speedy Creek Vineyard 2018

Knights Valley. Counting moderately deep and nicely defined, berry-like Zinfandel fruit first on its list of assets and not a wine that ever once threatens to sacrifice that fruit on the altar of extreme ripeness, Meadowcroft's rendition stays confidently on the varietal track from first nosing through to its lingering finish. There are, to be sure, fancier and bolder Zins to be had, but this one has plenty to offer and gets an appreciative nod for its food-friendly balance. Sorry $42.00

87 METTLER Epicenter Old Vine Lodi 2019

Certainly tipping in the direction of chocolaty ripeness, but not to the point of being heavy or hot, Mettler's Epicenter Zin is a solid example of Lodi Zinfandel. It is full and fleshy in feel, and, if, not a wine of finesse, neither is it compromised by obvious heat. It is sufficiently tannic to support a few more years of age, yet its tannins are not dissuasively abrasive and will go unnoticed now so long as the wine is poured as an accompaniment to comparatively hearty dishes. $25.00

Opolo VINEYARDS

89 OPOLO Reserve Collection Remo Belli Vineyard 2019

Adelaida District. Opolo's two Reserve Collection Zinfandels from 2019 are cut from very similar cloth and are big, fully ripe efforts of emphatic richness, but, of the pair, this one from the Remo Belli Vineyard gets the nod as our pick by dint of its extra complexity and range. Its ample, sweet berry fruit is enriched with a nice bit of woodsy spice, and it boasts a bit more solidity with the tannic structure to age. While not so tough as to be unapproachable now, it does, in fact, ask for a few more years of cellaring to relax and fully unfold, and its concentrated core of moderately deep fruit makes patience a proposition entirely free of risk. Sorry $50.00

88 OPOLO Reserve Collection Paso Robles 2019

Lightly chocolaty in tone yet a little reticent on the nose, this full and fleshy offering follows with mouthfilling, ripe berry flavors that hold nothing back. While it does not dangerously go to the brink of alcoholic excess and is quite well-structured for a wine of its unabashedly ripe persuasion, "delicacy" is assuredly not in its vocabulary, and it is most definitely one for unrepentant fans of big and bold Zins. $46.00

89 PAPER STREET Paso Robles 2019

By J. Dusi. This is an immense, very ripe Zin that holds nothing back and on initial nosing sends the message that it is has little to do with fruit, yet, with a bit of air, its underlying fruit rises to meet the challenge of unbridled ripeness, and, on the palate, it surprises by being juicier, far deeper and more explicit in distinctly varietal, blackberry fruit than first billed. It will be less liked by those who favor wines of restraint and finesse just as sure as it will be roundly embraced by others who believe that Zinfandel's first duty is to be big, bold and rich. $68.00

PEACHY CANYON WINERY

92 PEACHY CANYON Willow 2019

Willow Creek District. A big, delicious, very well-balanced wine, this mouthfilling bottling lists higher alcohol (15.3%) but does not smell or taste of anything but lively, keenly focused berries and creamy oak. It has depth and richness in spades and will be prized for its precision as much as it will be for its palate-filling fruity concentration. Long at the end if a bit hot, it has tannin to notice, and its inviting flavors allow it to be enjoyed today with savory lamb roasts yet it promises to remain in fine fettle for the rest of the decade. $44.00

Zinfandel

91 PEACHY CANYON Nancy's View 2019
Adelaida District. 13% Petite Sirah. If a tad more direct than the Willow bottling, both in its ripe, concentrated, berry and jam fruitiness and in its slightly open stance under a useful streak of tannins that add some needed grip to the finish, this so very tasty effort would be the one to drink while "Willow" ages into gracefulness. Full-bodied and just a touch fleshy in feel, and so well-balanced that it never suggests any notion of excess, it does not want more than a few years of aging, and, does not demand great patience of its admirers. $44.00

89 PEACHY CANYON Especial Adelaida District 2019
Every bit as ripe as the ripest of the Peachy Canyon bunch, this one does pick up a touch of a pert blueberry-like edge to its very concentrated, still-developing fruit. Full on the palate and bright enough to handle the demands of tomato-sauced pastas, and not all that tannic, this is another wine that can be enjoyed in its youth rather than setting it aside for a half-decade. For those who would age Zinfandel, however, this bottling is a candidate for its noticeable energy. $42.00

88 PEACHY CANYON Bailey Adelaida District 2019
The least ripe of the fully ripened Peachy Canyon group, this one will never be confused with a shrinking violet despite being pulled back a bit in concentration and palate weight relative to its sibs. It smells and tastes of mid-volume fruit hinting at blackberry jam, and, given its moderate tannin load, it can be drunk up now or allowed a few years of aging. $50.00

88 PEDRONCELLI Mother Clone Dry Creek Valley 2019
Tipping to ripeness but not tipping too far and doing a good job at conveying Zinfandel's dark berry fruit with a trim of sweet spice in both its well-focused varietal aromas and like-minded flavors, this is a fairly full, yet somewhat polished look at the grape that, while weighty and rich, is never extreme in any of its parts. It can be enjoyed now yet is still a couple of years away from reaching its best, and it is a notable success at the price.
GOOD VALUE $24.00

87 PEDRONCELLI Bushnell Vineyard Dry Creek Vly. 2019
Smelling and tasting distinctly of boysenberries and holding its fruity focus nicely despite being fully ripe, this youthfully tight and moderately tannic, fairly full-bodied working steers clear of plushness and is built along firm and ageworthy lines. It finishes with enough puckery astringency to require the softening effects of heartier meat dishes if brought to the table soon, and, given the choice, we would allow for another two or three years of additional time on the cork. $30.00

82 PEDRONCELLI Courage Faloni Vineyard 2018
Dry Creek Valley. Extreme ripeness has robbed this big, but very haphazard effort of its essential fruit and left it hot, tough and pruney, and the wine's intrusive streak of citrusy sourness that cuts through its patently unfruity aromas and flavors only adds to its woes. $38.00

89 R BY RUNQUIST Esola Vineyard Amador County 2019
Nicely ripened without tipping to excess and a very well-defined Zinfandel long on the blackberry fruit and slightly briary spice of its variety, Runquist's Esola Vineyard bottling is a moderately full-bodied effort that exhibits fine concentration as well as excellent acid balance with a lengthy, insistently fruity finish. No more than lightly tannic, it is an inviting glassful now, but its energy, fruity continuity and structure are such that it is bound to age agreeably for another three or four years. $30.00

88 R BY RUNQUIST Cooper Vyd. Amador County 2019
Here is a good reminder that a wine of high ripeness is not always jammy or hot, and, despite its claimed 15.5% alcohol, this one is surprisingly bright and buoyant with fresh berries to the fore at every stop, and, while boasting a good deal of richness, it is enlivened by fine fruity acidity that keeps it lively and light on its feet throughout. Though balanced to keep, it does not demand cellaring and is a decidedly tasty, varietally specific Zin that is fully ready to drink now. $28.00

87 R BY RUNQUIST Nostro Vino Vineyard 2019
Amador County. Yet another ripe and very lively Zinfandel from Runquist whose structural firmness owes to acidity rather than tannin, this one veers to slight tartness following a bit of initial palatal roundness and finishes with a mildly lemony edge to its insistent themes of black and red berry fruit, and whether enjoyed in the short term or set aside for a few years, it is a zesty Zin sure to shine with tomatoey pastas. $28.00

86 R BY RUNQUIST Peroni Ranch Amador County 2019
Geared far more to obvious ripeness than any of its cellarmates with suggestions of chocolate and mocha to the side of its loosely defined, dried-berry fruit, the winery's Peroni Ranch Zinfandel is an extracted, big-bodied working that runs to coarseness and heat. Like most all of its siblings, it is marked by acidy firmness, but, in this case, its acidity serves to accentuate the drying, tea-bag astringency that crops up at the end, and it is a wine that will require a turn of good luck if keen fruit is to emerge as a central player with time. $38.00

91 RIDGE Pagani Ranch Sonoma Valley 2019
6% Petite Sirah; 4% Alicante Bouschet. Focused first and foremost

RIDGE
VINEYARDS

95 RIDGE Lytton Springs Dry Creek Valley 2019
73% Zinfandel; 16% Petite Sirah; 9% Carignane; 2% Mataro. Here is an old-fashioned Zinfandel wrapped in new clothes and scoring both for its mix of berries and black fruits with hints of spice and briar, as well as a nicely integrated layer of sweet, rich oak. The wine enjoys the depth of the "big boys" but never gives in to its full ripeness, and its supple entry, mid-palate polish and finishing tannins amplify its keen focus and continuity from front to back. Lytton Springs Zins have shown well in our tastings of older wines, and there is every reason to believe that this one will also perform well for years to come. $45.00

on ripe berries, the wine layers in a brown leaf, tobacco-like note that adds nicely to its range and depth. Very well-balanced with vibrant acidity somewhat noticeable at present, it may impress some as unusually tart for a ripe Zinfandel while others will be happy with its pert aspects. It is somewhat tight in the late going and bottle age will be a benison here. $40.00

90 RIDGE Mazzoni Home Ranch Alexander Valley 2018
56% Zinfandel; 42% Carignane; 2% Petite Sirah. Interesting for its savory overlays of spice and briar that lift its ripe blackberry notes, this wine is medium-full in weight with enough acidity in the background to balance with its otherwise supple texture. It may not be the biggest wine around, or even among the Ridges tasted here, but it is polished and nicely continuous from front to back. It can be enjoyed now and over the next half-decade in the company of savory pork roasts. $36.00

89 RIDGE Guadagni Dry Creek Valley 2019
24% Petite Sirah. Nicely formed Zinfandel fruit starts this effort off on the right foot, and a hint of dusty spice adds its own bit of range to the proceedings. Full on the palate but not at all heavy, it delivers well-balanced ripe fruit flavors with a spot of youthful zestiness and enough tannin to last for four to six years without fading. While the wine should work with red sauces, we would more likely pair it with pork roasts. $36.00

88 RIDGE Benito Dusi Paso Robles 2019
Even higher in evident acidity than its mate from Pagani Ranch, this one is also riper than it is fruity overall, and it is saved by its full and rich flavors that make it attractive even now, once the tart edge is taken into consideration. Still, and all, it is fairly deep and reasonably well-focused despite leaning towards the riper end of the spectrum. Its tannins ask for a bit of forbearance but its flavors are not so demanding. $36.00

88 RIDGE Hooker Creek Sonoma Valley 2018
4% Petite Sirah; 2% Alicante Bouschet. If a tad less forceful in its fruitiness, this clean, presentable, fairly ripe Zinfandel is open at entry then firms up under its tannin load at the back. The slight fleshiness to its texture is held in check by adequate acidity and if on the quiet side as it ends, it is on point throughout. It needs a couple of years for its rough edges to soften and will serve as an understated partner to lamb roasts. $36.00

90 SEAWOLF Battaglini Vineyard 2019
Russian River Valley. Here is a good, honest, well-balanced Zin that toes the varietal line with notable precision throughout and never once lets ripeness get ahead of its nicely stated, very continuous blackberry and raspberry fruit. Though it exhibits fine concentration and depth, accuracy, structure and fruity stamina rather than swagger and sheer size are its strengths, and, if a tasty and satisfying wine in its youth, it has the right pieces in place to age into better yet if relegated to the cellar for another three or four years. Sorry $53.00

90 SEAWOLF Red Triangle Russian River Valley 2019
Showing very clear kinship to its equally well-made relation from the Battaglini Vineyard and differing only slightly in that it is a tad deeper and brighter in its expression of very pure varietal fruit, this is again a neatly measured Zinfandel that shows a very careful winemaking hand. In truth, it would be hard to go wrong with either of the Seawolf offerings from 2019, yet, if we had to pick between the two, this one, at least for the time being, gets the nod by but the smallest margin. We would, however, not be surprised if, after a few years, our vote might change. Both are very good efforts. Sorry $48.00

94 SIMONCINI Estate Dry Creek Valley 2017
20% Petite Sirah. Albeit the least expensive of Simoncini's three very good Zins from 2017, this is the deepest and richest of the bunch and sports a wealth of slightly juicy, blackberry fruit from front to back. It is fairly open and approachable now, yet it is a wine of immense fruity muscle and concentration with a sense of as-yet-untapped reserve that bodes well for its future. It a serious effort that will please even the most critical collectors of cellar-worthy Zinfandels, and, if sure to reward four or five years of additional age, it has the look of a wine that will continue to grow and show increased complexity and discreet layering for upwards of ten. $50.00

91 SIMONCINI St. Peter's Church Vineyard 2017
Alexander Valley. Fully ripe, very dense and a wine that takes its time to come into focus, the St. Peter's Church bottling is the biggest Zin of the 2017 Simoncini trio. It is a wine of considerable extraction that at first seems a bit monolithic and lacking in detail, yet, with time in the glass, it exhibits great fruity depth along with complexing touches of sweet oak, bitter chocolate and accents of dark soils. Although not gruffly tannic, it shows enough latter-palate grip and the structural firmness to make a strong case for additional age. Lay it away for three or four years before pulling its cork, and, when well-cellared, it should evolve favorably for at least twice as long. Sorry $65.00

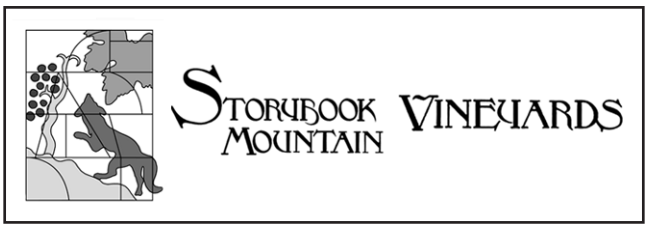
90 SIMONCINI Florence Vineyard Rockpile 2017
25% Petite Sirah. Rich and fully ripened without overdoing it and possessing plenty of fruity extract and varietal solidity, this full, yet somewhat tightly wound wine comes across as seeming a bit younger than it is. It is firmed by plenty of obvious acidity that pushes its nominal tannins to prominence at the finish, but time is on its side, and three to five years of cellaring should find it rounding into fine drinking shape. Sorry $60.00

87 ST. AMANT Lodi Native Marian's Vineyard 2019
Mokelumne River. Lodi Native is a collaborative project by a half-dozen vintners in the appellation the aim of which is to produce Zinfandels with minimum winemaking intervention that focus on the attributes of specific old vine sites. St. Amant's version is a well-made, mid-sized effort that backs away from the aggressive ripeness common to Lodi Zins and favors cherries more than berries with a slight cranberry-like tang to its gently tannic finish. Sorry $35.00

87 ST. AMANT Marian's Vineyard Old Vine Lodi 2019
Sporting a very well-stated mix of berries and plums graced with a bit of sweet spice in its ripe, mid-density aromas that is reiterated clearly in its relatively full and juicy flavors, this out-in-the-open Zin makes no bones about being ripe, but it does not err to chocolate or dried-grape desiccation, nor is it compromised by intrusive heat. It is rounded in feel and light in tannin and is a tasty, moderately rich effort that is ready to enjoy without need of further cellar time. $24.00

Zinfandel

86 ST. AMANT Mohr-Fry Ranch Old Vine Lodi 2019
A little lighter overall than its stated 15.1% alcohol might suggest and not in the least hampered by heat, St. Amant's Mohr-Fry Ranch Zinfandel is a mannerly, cleanly made, mid-sized wine that, while a reasonably well-balanced and pleasant enough offering, wants a little more stuffing and fruity authority to merit unqualified recommendation. $20.00



93 STORYBOOK MOUNTAIN Estate Reserve 2018
Napa Valley. The Zinfandels of Storybook Mountain Vineyard and, in particular, its flagship Estate Reserve bottlings, inevitably stand out from the crowd for their depth and signature sense of claret-like sophistication rather than big, flashy fruit and unctuous richness, and the 2018 edition meets every expectation in doing just that. Though many would argue that Zinfandel generally reaches its best in four or five years, this is a wine to tuck away for a relatively lengthy stay in the cellar rather one made with hasty drinking in mind. It is not that it is anything other than impressive right now, but a full decade of patience is bound to make a very good thing even better. $75.00

91 STORYBOOK MOUNTAIN Eastern Exposures 2018
Napa Estate Napa Valley. Very much hewing to the Storybook Mountain style of precise, never flashy, very well-structured Zins with terrific aging potential, the 2018 Eastern Exposures is a deep, somewhat tightly wound youngster that hits all of the varietal marks smartly and never lets pushy ripeness have the final word. We have often commented that this maker's Zinfandels can be uncannily claret-like in their construction, and, given the winery's long track record for making wines that get better and better with cellaring, this one can and should be confidently laid away for another five to ten years. $55.00

85 TRAILHEAD Paso Robles 2018
A little subdued with respect to richness and defined fruit on the nose, but marginally more fruity in taste, if only briefly so, this wine struggles to get on the defined Zinfandel track, and its efforts to do so are blunted by unbuffered, back-palate tannins that leave us a bit skeptical about its chances of finding better fruity expression with age. $25.00

88 TRES SABORES Perspective Rutherford 2019
By and large, Zinfandels tend to be fairly outgoing in fruit even when very young, but this dense and weighty, well-extracted, fully ripe version, though smacking of berries and plums, is more brooding than forthcoming and is structured with the tannin and firming acidity to age. Give it a few years to start rounding into shape, and anticipate a wait of a few more after that before all of its pieces are seamlessly joined. $50.00

86 TRUTH AND VALOR Paso Robles 2019
A bit lighter overall as Zinfandels tend to go and more redolent of red berries and plums than of the darker, blackberry qualities that the variety more typically displays, this cleanly made, mid-sized offering is likely to be seen as being deficient by those who like their Zins to be big and aggressively ripe, but it will provide likeable drinking with accordingly lighter dishes that would pale when paired with its oversized cousins. $20.00

87 VICTOR HUGO Templeton Gap District 2018
Here is a balanced, straightforward Zin that tempers its ripeness with well-defined, berry-like fruit and shows good varietal identity from beginning to end. It is just shy of full-bodied with fine acid balance and an insistent sense of fruity brightness that together makes it a wine that will prove a versatile mate to service with a comparatively wide range of foods running from a rack of ribs hot of the grill to sundry, tomato-sauced pasta dished now and for the next several years. $26.00

91 V. SATTUI Pilgrim Vineyard Old Vine Lodi 2019
We have been impressed with this maker's Pilgrim Vineyard Zins over the past couple of vintages, and this latest is, to our minds, the best to date. It hews to the ripeness and richness that mark the better wines of its provenance, yet it is wonderfully well-focused on very deep, very pure, blackberry fruit and beautifully balanced for the big wine that it is. It is, quite simply, as good a Lodi Zinfandel that one is likely to find and, although it is so accessibly rich that it can be enjoyed in the short term, it can be safely tucked away in the cellar with the prospect of aging quite well for another half-decade or more. $40.00

90 V. SATTUI Crow Ridge Vineyard Block 7 2018
Russian River Valley. Ripe and slightly rounded at first whiff, the wine adds a red berry sweetness to its blackberry focus as it opens, and while it is not fully developed, it is generous on the palate as well. It comes with enough acidity to stay comfortably in balance, and that openness continues all the way to the end, despite a bit of tightening as it finishes. Drink it now or drink it five years from now, this inviting wine will score well with red-sauced pastas or savory pork roasts. $48.00

89 V. SATTUI Black Sears Vineyard Howell Mountain 2018
Highly concentrated and a tad over the top, this big, rich, bold wine will find takers among those who like mass and unbridled depth in their Zins. Its 16.1% alcohol level cannot be overlooked as the source of its very full-bodied, fleshy texture even as it gives the wine its dramatic flavors. Its best use at our tables will see it paired with post-prandial nuts and cheeses, yet its style will find fans with main courses. Its tannins are buffered but not hidden, and a few years of age will be useful. $56.00

90 WONDERMENT Pritchett Peaks Vineyard 2019
Rockpile. Deeper, denser, riper and built along far sturdier lines than its much more forward, Russian River Valley sibling from the Bacigalupi Vineyard, this ample wine leads with aromas of black cherries and chocolate that are followed by largely like-minded flavors that differ only in their increased intensity. Pushy tannins leave their mark in its lengthy, if slightly drying finish, and it is a Zin best set aside for a few years of smoothing while enjoying its

more mannerly mate earlier on. $60.00

89 WONDERMENT Bacigalupi Vineyard Old Vine 2019
Russian River Valley. Smelling and tasting of sweet, perfectly ripened raspberries deftly trimmed with a touch of creamy oak, this is far and away the more open and accessible of the two Wonderment Zinfandels from 2019 and is a comparatively direct, affably balanced, moderately full-bodied bottling fit with very mannerly, fine-grained tannins. It is in no danger of fading before its sixth or seventh birthday arrives, but it is a decidedly tasty morsel ready to enjoy tonight. $46.00

86 Z BY RUNQUIST Massoni Ranch Amador County 2020
10% Petite Sirah. On the one hand a fairly weighty and ripe-seeming wine but, on the other, one that comes up a bit short on fruity concentration and is not as fresh or lively as its tender age predicts, this barely-one-year-old offering is, at least for the present, a comparatively simple and monotone wine short on detail and depth. It may, with a bit more time in bottle, muster more varietal confidence, yet its present reticence to do so costs it unqualified endorsement now, and additional cellaring comes without guarantees. $27.00

87 ZINNIA Napa Valley 2018
Though still a bit backward and prone to tannic toughness, yet a wine with good fruity density and varietal definition that clearly evokes the dark berries and spice of Zinfandel, this structured, slightly rugged working can be enjoyed now for its somewhat rustic richness, but it will improve with cellaring and our vote is to lay it way for another few years. $38.00

Sauvignon Blanc

It is best to keep in mind the idea that Sauvignon Blanc is a bit of a chameleon and that one example may be markedly different than another. While Sauvignon Blanc can be successfully grown in a wide range of places and excels in many, when grown in cooler sites, it is one of the most immediately identifiable varieties by dint of the distinctive herbaceousness that comes by way of its high pyrazine content. But, in warmer climes, its grassy qualities give way to riper fruit aromas and flavors suggestive of everything from melons to peaches and, sometimes, mango and guava. The wines it makes can be decidedly complex or simple and irrepressibly gulpable, and one of its great appeals is that, more often than not, it is a variety responsible for wines that offer exceptional bang for the buck. Though there are particularly high-achieving Sauvignon Blancs with price tags that might discourage regular, week-night drinking, it is not at all hard to find tasty, well-made versions for twenty-five dollars or less, and, in this issue, more than one-third of the Sauvignon Blancs reviewed earn special "Good Value" recommendation.

85 1858 60% Solano County/40% Napa County 2020
By Emmolo. There is a slight, but annoyingly persistent matchsticky intrusion that gets in the way of any clear fruity expression here, and, while the wine has reasonable palatal weight and balance, it is always a bit stolid and muddled, and its varietal credentials are less than convincing. $20.00

Angeline VINEYARDS

87 ANGELINE Reserve Sonoma County 2020
Spry, fairly fresh with a light grassy overlay to its citrus and green melon fruit, this is a fresh, very clean and specific, mid-sized Sauvignon Blanc that is varietally expressive without ever seeming extreme. Its fruity brightness and lively balance make for an enjoyable, food-friendly glass now, and it is a ready-to-drink effort that will pair nicely with a wide array of simple seafoods and lighter chicken dishes in the immediate term.
GOOD VALUE $18.00

87 ATHENAEUM Napa Valley 2020
This somewhat slender wine finds a place on the lighter end of the varietal spectrum, yet, while it is not one that plays to big, fruity richness, Sauvignon Blanc it clearly is with a lightly grassy veneer to its clean and lively, sweet lemon and lime fruit. It is likely to get lost at mealtime were it to be poured with weightier foods, but it will serve as a refreshing foil to the likes of pan-fried trout or cracked crab. $30.00

ATHENAEUM {ath·e·nay·um}

86 BOGLE California 2020
Bogle has earned its fair share of Good Value recommendations in these pages over the years and does so once again with this squeaky clean Sauvignon Blanc that, though not a wine of great concentration or depth, clearly conveys a bit of its variety's tell-tale grassiness while keying on sweet lemons and limes. And, it does so at a price that invites regular week-night drinking.
GOOD VALUE $11.00

85 CASTLE ROCK California 2020
A bit nondescript as far a keen varietal character goes and a bit abbreviated in fruit, but a clean, light-bodied white wine with a slightly muted, mildly melony presence that does not trade on softness or candied confection as is commonly the case with wines of its price, and, even if sparing in clear-cut Sauvignon Blanc identity, it will prove a versatile, everyday mate to sundry lighter foods and gets the nod for its affordability.
GOOD VALUE $10.00

Sauvignon Blanc

87 CHARLES KRUG Napa Valley 2020
Moderately rich yet lively and light on its feet with a steady line of well-stated fresh melon fruit running its length and a light, but persistent touch of varietal grassiness always reminding that it is, indeed, a Sauvignon Blanc, Krug's is a clean-as-can-be, very congenial middleweight that becomes all the more likable yet when discovering just how affordable it is.
GOOD VALUE $18.00

87 CRAFTWORK Monterey County 2020
A wee touch of fresh grass peeks out in this wine's clean, mid-density aromas of stone fruit and sweet limes, but the slightly juicy, easy-to-get-at flavors that follow are wholly about fruit and go missing in herbs. The wine is medium-bodied and nicely balanced and its firm and lasting finish shows a slight minerally streak without getting chalky or stiff.
GOOD VALUE $20.00

DAVIS BYNUM

88 DAVIS BYNUM Virginia's Block Jane's Vineyard 2020
Russian River Valley. A little deceptive at first in that it is less than forthcoming on the nose even if it quietly conveys a sense of fruity substance, this rich, full-scaled Sauvignon Blanc contrasts its aromatic reticence with deep, surprisingly ample, ripe melon flavors. It is a wine that will age well and will be better for it as it finishes with a bit of youthful, latter-palate coarseness, and, if service with richer foods will certainly help smooth its way now, we would set it aside for at least another year – two or three are preferred – then bring it out as a foil to something along the lines of a boldly flavored Moroccan chicken preparation or richly sauced salmon. $25.00

85 DEAVER Amador County 2020
A slight, matchsticky element appears in this one's aromas and does so again with a little more emphasis in its flavors and works against this otherwise ripe and rounded, moderately rich effort's expression of fruit. While there are good pieces here, the wine never wholly shakes free of its vaguely chemical distractions and is not as clean as it could be. $22.00

85 DEERFIELD Peterson Vineyard Sonoma Valley 2020
Here is a wine that goes several directions at once without ever managing to get on a clear Sauvignon Blanc track. It is soft and slightly slick on entry then veers to stony astringency while its narrow, near-thin, very sparingly fruited flavors are no more than ambiguously varietal at best. $34.00

87 DUTTON ESTATE Kylie's Cuvée 2020
Russian River Valley. A subdued, but evident streak of slightly sweet oak lends a bit of extra richness to the blossomy aromas and like-minded flavors of fresh lemons and pears of this fairly ripe, medium-full-bodied look at Sauvignon Blanc, and the wine no more than distantly hints at the grape's herbal traits. A wee bit of heat comes through at the finish but is effectively masked by the richer foods such as well-seasoned, seared ahi tuna that its slightly elevated ripeness commends. $27.00

DUTTON ESTATE WINERY

88 EASTON Natoma Sierra Foothills 2020
Opting for a minerally style rather than running to grass and herbs but boasting a good core of well-stated, mildly limey fruit on the nose that is reprised in kind but with more concentration in its ripe, moderately full, fairly long-lasting flavors, this is a Sauvignon Blanc with a little more size and weight. It is not in the least heavy, however, and is a well-structured wine that is best overlooked when light-hearted quaffing is the aim. Save it, instead, for pairing with richer seafood and poultry recipes.
GOOD VALUE $25.00

88 FRITZ Native Dry Creek Valley 2020
More spicy than herbal with a bent to preserved lemons, this characterful and comparatively ambitious Sauvignon Blanc was barrel-fermented using native yeast and, from first sniff to finish, shows scattered touches of cinnamon and cloves as accents to its faintly grassy, citrus-tinged fruit. It is medium-full-bodied and gradually firms after a rounded palatal start and finishes on a note of grapefruity tartness. $45.00

GREEN & RED VINEYARD

90 GREEN & RED Catacula Vineyard Napa Valley 2020
This is a deep and defined, very well-crafted look at Sauvignon Blanc that combines the stone fruit and slightly herbal traits of the variety in its very clean and specific, yet slightly low-intensity nose and then with more emphasis and drive in its ample, well-balanced flavors. Not a simple quaffer by any means even if it can be enjoyed without food, this is a more serious look at the grape that seems to get a bit more expressive and interesting with each successive sip and is a wine best reserved for drinking with flavorful, though not overly heavy dishes, and it is structured to keep for another three to five years.
GOOD VALUE $26.00

88 HONIG 66% Napa County/34% Lake County 2021
Every bit as fresh and lively as its extreme youth might predict, yet a wine with fine varietal focus and a slightly weedy edge to the nicely sustained combination of green peaches and limes that runs its considerable length, Honig's well-made, mixed-county blend is a standout success in affordable Sauvignon Blanc that is both decidedly tasty now and has the balance and fruity vigor to keep handily for a few years.
GOOD VALUE $22.00

86 KENDALL-JACKSON Vintner's Reserve California 2020
Very clean and inclining to fresh pears in both scent and taste with a slight trim of sweetness enhancing its simple fruitiness, this pleasantly balanced, light-hearted effort is a wine that will afford friendly quaffing with lighter luncheon and picnicky fare,

but it is limited in richness and reach and keen Sauvignon Blanc character is not its forte. $15.00

87 KENWOOD 74% Lake Co./26% Sonoma Co. 2020
A light, lettuce-leaf note stands in for more pronounced varietal herbaceousness in the mildly melony nose of this very comfortably balanced, medium-bodied Sauvignon Blanc, and the wine shows a distinct minerally edge to its nicely filled, similarly melon-like flavors. Its richness and confident varietal expression come as a bit of a surprise given its affordability, and it would be a mistake to ignore what is an enjoyable, well-made wine simply because of its very low price. This one is what good value is all about.
GOOD VALUE $12.00

87 KING ESTATE Oregon 2020
9% Semillon. Smelling sweetly of fresh blossoms rather than anything grassy or herbal and inflected to slightly juicy white peaches with a hint of limes sitting quietly in the background, King Estate's 2020 Sauvignon Blanc is a ripe and rounded effort that, if not a wine of far-reaching complexity, delivers lots of up-front fruity appeal. Neither crisp nor soft in balance, it finds a comfortable place in between and will make for very convivial sipping with or without food.
GOOD VALUE $19.00

KOKOMO WINERY

88 KOKOMO Timber Creek Vineyard 2020
Dry Creek Valley. Wispy suggestions of fresh grass afford nice varietal identity here without overdoing it and are joined by notes of sweet lemons and limes on the nose that are carried forward in the wine's fuller-than-expected flavors. Quite nicely balanced with well-integrated acidity keeping it lively throughout, this one has the structure to work handily with slightly richer foods and will hold up effortlessly with a few more years of age.
GOOD VALUE $24.00

85 KUNDE Magnolia Lane Sonoma County 2020
It is not that there is anything woefully wrong with this wine, it is just that there is nothing especially right. It teases to start with a subdued bit of fruit on the nose while hinting faintly of varietal grassiness but is weak in its fruity follow-through in the mouth and a little low on energy, and, as its fruit flavors begin to sputter on the latter-palate, it takes a slightly bitter turn then pulls up short at the finish. $18.00

86 MAIN & GEARY Central Coast 2019
Lightly grassy but rather half-hearted in its fruit and a little light on concentration, this clean, light-to-medium-bodied offering flirts with a slight suggestion of sweetness that nudges its flavors in the direction of candied melons and limes. It is not a wine to pull out when the menu calls for one of varietal potency, yet it is a likeable, easy quaff that can be unceremoniously sipped on its own or paired with lighter luncheon dishes such as chicken or crab salads. $20.00

88 MARKHAM Napa Valley 2020
Sweetly fruited with a slight tropical bent that brings a bit of pineapple into play but showing nicely defined adjuncts of fresh grass as well that get a bit more emphasis in its juicy, moderately

MARKHAM VINEYARDS®

deep, distinctly varietal flavors, this well-composed Sauvignon Blanc earns its spurs for its sustained fruity focus and offers plenty to like at the moment while having the vitality and balance to be attractive for several years.
GOOD VALUE $20.00

87 MUIRWOOD Arroyo Seco 2020
Lightly grassy and redolent of fresh dill and cucumbers on the nose with a suggestion of white melons sitting quietly in the background, this slightly fleshy, firmly balanced middle-weight stays on the herbal track once in the mouth. It stays away from weedy pungency, but its varietal credentials are never in doubt, and, it is a good look at Sauvignon Blanc at a very good price.
GOOD VALUE $15.00

86 NAVIGATOR Napa Valley 2019
Not in the least grassy or herbal but keyed on direct, slightly sweet melons with a hint of pineapple on the nose, this fruit-forward offering is a little soft in balance to start and a little tight and stony to finish. It asks for a little more brightness and freshness, however, at most every stop and is a wine that, if not demanding immediate drinking, will be best if enjoyed within the next year – no more than two – before its youthful energy starts to fade. $28.00

PEJU

88 PEJU Legacy Collection Napa Valley 2020
Although rather restrained in its clean, but limited, lightly fruity aromas, Peju's Legacy Collection Sauvignon Blanc turns out to be surprisingly expressive in the mouth with lively, layered, very continuous flavors of white peaches, pears and sweet limes that are brightened by a well-integrated streak of crisping acidity. It is light in weight but not in character and will serve as a winsome, palate cleansing companion to seafood salads, crab cakes and classic shrimp scampi. $28.00

86 RAYMOND North Coast 2020
Clean, lightly fruity and graced with touches of fresh grass sitting atop its slightly peachy, citrus-tinged aromas and flavors, this wine is ripe and rounded on the palate to start with a suggestion of early sweetness, but its grasp on fruit loosens as it goes and it drifts towards slight bitterness with a bit of stony astringency working to abbreviate its finish. $30.00

86 RODNEY STRONG Charlotte's Home Sonoma Co. 2020
The grassier traits of Sauvignon Blanc are nowhere to be found here, and this crisply balanced middleweight is focused on lightly floral, white melon fruit instead. Up-front, easy to taste and clean as can be, it takes on an edge of slightly stony bitterness in the late going that, while of no consequence when the wine is enjoyed with meals, is a little too obvious when it is poured for unaccompanied sipping. $17.00

Sauvignon Blanc

88 RUSACK Estate Ballard Canyon 2019
This fairly substantial Sauvignon Blanc does a good job at being both rich and brightly balanced with a mildly minerally, lightly floral nose of white melons and peaches and consonant flavors that, though likable from the start, show a little more fruity depth and richness as the wine progresses across the palate. Slightly riper and a bit bigger in scale than many but very fresh and lively as well, it is entirely enjoyable now but its energy will hold it in good stead for several years.
GOOD VALUE $26.00

87 RYDER ESTATE Central Coast 2019
With a fairly direct, low-keyed nose of white melons and flavors to match, this not-quite-medium-bodied effort is slightly rounded in feel and buoyed by a bit of balancing acidity. It is amicably drinkable stuff even if its varietal voice is subdued, and it will capably fill the bill when the situation calls for a clean and quietly fruity, mid-sized white wine. $20.00

87 SAMUEL CHARLES High Valley 2020
Smelling and tasting of sweet limes with a nice trim of varietal grassiness, and a well-balanced wine of a lively, slightly lighter persuasion, this Sauvignon Blanc pulls back just a bit in ripeness and richness but shows good cohesion and continuity and will turn the trick nicely tonight as a partner to lighter seafood dishes of all kinds. $25.00

86 SAND POINT California 2020
With a slightly floral aspect to its sweet citrus aromas that steers it in a different direction from its grassier cousins, this medium-bodied effort is never all that keen about its varietal identity. Its flavors begin with a quick burst of fruit then quickly tighten under the influence of pushy acidity that serves to accentuate the edge of lemon-pith bitterness that appears in its slightly chalky, sparsely fruited finish. $18.00

85 SEAGLASS Central Coast 2020
Flirting quietly here and there with hints of cucumber and fresh grass to the side of its slightly sweet, vaguely tropical, guava-like fruit, this soft, fairly light-bodied wine is a bit thin and watery at its heart and, while clean and quaffable, tastes all too much like the inexpensive wine that it is. $12.00

STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS

89 STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS Aveta Napa Valley 2020
Here is a good, very food-friendly Sauvignon Blanc that hits the varietal mark smartly in its fragrant, lightly grassy, fresh melon aromas and its relatively rich, very like-minded flavors. A medium-full-bodied working that stands out from what is an otherwise fairly attractive crowd of contenders in this issue by way of its vitality and extra depth, it is balanced to keep but is drinking wonderfully right now with dishes ranging from salmon roasted with lemons and herbs to Oysters Rockefeller to crisp and juicy fried chicken. $30.00

87 TAFT STREET Russian River Valley 2020
Not sweet, but slightly juicy with a very continuous line of fresh, well-ripened, clearly stated fruit that is suggestive of both limes and white peaches, Taft Street's Sauvignon Blanc from 2020 is a medium-bodied, firmly balanced, very food-friendly effort free of any oak influence and is as notable for its brightness as it is for its fine, fruity volume. $24.00

87 TRAILHEAD Napa Valley 2020
Vaguely minerally more than it is openly fruity on the nose and quietly hinting at a touch of dried grass, yet a wine with a fair sense of fruity weight and amplitude to its richer-than-expected, moderately deep flavors, this is a Sauvignon Blanc with the structural firmness of one that does not invite simple quaffing as much as it wants service with food. $24.00

Tres Sabores

88 TRES SABORES Sonoma Mountain 2020
Inclining a bit more to fresh apples than to stone fruits with a slightly floral cast and but a distant touch of grass, the 2020 Tres Sabores Sauvignon Blanc is a structured wine of medium body that is presently marked by plenty of youthful firmness and energy. It is a bit taut and slightly chalky at the finish just now, but its "edgier" traits will be less evident with age and/or food, and it is, withal, a good effort that will appeal especially to those who favor Sauvignon Blancs that are not emphatically weedy or herbaceous. $34.00

86 UNRULY California 2020
Its name notwithstanding, there is nothing at all unruly about this easy-going, slightly juicy wine, but neither is there much in the way of specific Sauvignon Blanc character in evidence, and its flagging sense of freshness commends perfunctory sipping before the next vintage appears. $14.00

89 URGENCY Lake County 2019
By Shannon Ridge. Green and grassy, but not pungently so and nicely filled out by juicy, properly ripened, white melon fruit, this very well-focused, incisively varietal offering attests to the success that Lake County can achieve with Sauvignon Blanc. It claims a fair sense of complexity right from the first and delivers on its aromatic promise with continuous, multi-faceted flavors, and it is balanced to work famously with most any herb-inflected dish, be it chicken or fish or pasta. $30.00

87 WONDERMENT Hyde Vineyard Carneros 2020
Napa Valley. Geared more to minerals than outgoing fruit on first nosing and only with some reluctance finding a suggestion of green peaches and melons to its very clean, but less-than-intense aromas and similarly a wine whose flavors reprise its stony traits while speaking with a slightly subdued varietal voice, this very clean, firmly balanced middleweight ends on a lightly astringent note. Service with food in the short term will aid in smoothing its way, but so will another year of age, and we see glimmers of nascent complexity that convince us that even a brief wait is in its interest. $35.00

FORTIFIED DESSERT WINES

Here in California, sweet dessert wines fortified with brandy date back to the late nineteenth century and until fifty or so years back accounted for more of the wine made in the state than dry "table wines." The quality offered in yesteryear's examples, however, was quite low and bore little to no relation to the classic versions of Portugal and Spain. The last generation or two of local winemakers have, if on an admittedly limited scale, been giving such wines a far more serious look, and these days there are many surprisingly good, home-grown renditions to be found, a handful of which employ the classic grapes used in their European counterparts, but the majority are made from the mainstream varieties, most notably Zinfandel, that are the basis of the state's fame as a producer of world-class wines. For the most part, the better bottlings coming from California are made in very small amounts and may not signal an imminent, explosive rise in consumer interest, but, as this month's brief survey of nearly two dozen examples from up and down the coast and points more inland attests, the best are memorable, meal-ending wines that are well worth seeking out.

Amphora WINERY

89 AMPHORA Port LPR Dry Creek Valley
A bit of creamy oak and a trim of sweet spice suggest a nice bit of aged complexity here, yet the wine also conveys a good sense of fairly lively, young, blackberry-like fruit as well. Sweet, but not at all heavy and comparatively light on its feet for a fortified wine and one that keeps heat nicely in check, it is a tasty offering for pouring with lighter, not aggressively sweet desserts and will make a lovely complement to a handful of roasted nuts after dinner. 375 ml bottle. $48.00

CLIF FAMILY

89 CLIF FAMILY Arriva Petite Sirah Dessert Wine Napa Valley. The peppery spice and elevated tannins of Petite Sirah are both manifest here, and, although moderately sweet, this solidly built wine is a bit undeveloped, a little rough around the edges and impresses as wanting for more time. It gets good marks for its density and depth, and it clearly has the fruity stuffing as well as the structure to age. It may not be as unruly as young, dry-finished, table-wine Petites can be, but it looks to benefit from even a few more years of cellaring and might improve for as many as ten. 375 ml bottle. $45.00

DAOU VINEYARDS & WINERY

91 DAOU Dessert Wine Adelaida District 2018
Extremely rich and absolutely bursting with very pure blackberry and blackcurrant fruit from beginning to end, Daou's dessert wine shows off Cabernet in a very different guise, and, even though very young with the structure and integral tannins to age beautifully for years and show more and more discreet layering as it does, it holds nothing back now in the way of fruity largesse. It is exceptionally well-balanced for a wine of its ample sweetness, substance and size, and, it presents its considerable richness with surprising finesse. 750 ml bottle. $100.00

Deaver™ VINEYARDS

91 DEAVER Angelica 15 Year Amador County
100% Mission. Though of the same age and made from the same grapes as Deaver's Golden Nectar Port, this tawny-hued wine is deeper and richer yet. It smacks of dried figs and dates with suggestions of toffee and brown sugar peeking out here and there, and it has a bit of the nutty, pecan-like complexity that comes with age without so much as trace of oxidation. Good. well-aged, carefully tended Angelica can be a rare treat when found, and this one is well worth any search its finding requires. 375 ml bottle. $79.00

90 DEAVER Golden Nectar Port 15 Year Amador County
100% Mission. This fascinating, light gold dessert wine smells and tastes of ripe apricots, pineapple and brûleéd oranges liberally sweetened with caramel and maple syrup. Its alcohol is obvious, yet the wine is so rich and intensely flavorful that its heat is easy to forgive, and for one that is as unctuously sweet as it is, it sports a surprisingly tangy streak of enlivening acidity and winds up far less heavy than its viscous beginnings predict. It is a dessert on its own but will pair famously with caramelly confections and, at fifteen years of age, is not in the least old-seeming and should hold up for years. 375 ml bottle. $79.00

89 DEAVER Petite Sirah Port California
100% Petite Sirah. Very sweet, very ripe but not overly raisiny in tone and mustering a good sense of fairly dense, blackberry-like fruit that stays in play from its aromas all the way through its slightly earthy flavors, Deaver's Petite Sirah Port is a weighty, full-bodied wine with a good degree of firming acidity that keeps it from bogging down. Richness, rather than nuance or finesse is its strength and is likely to remain so regardless of how long it is held. 375 ml bottle. $30.00

FORTIFIED DESSERT WINES

88 DEAVER Port California

Employing the five class Port wine varieties – Souzao, Touriga Nacional, Alavarelhão, Tinta Cão and Tinta Roriz in equal parts – Deavers' California Port nonetheless has a certain blackberry bent that strongly reminds of Zinfandel but is more spicy and mocha-like than fruity as it goes. It is slightly lighter in weight and not as dense as many of the fortified red wines surveyed in this issue, and, if possibly faltering a bit with heavy desserts, it is a wine that will turn the trick handily as a partner to moderately rich cheeses. $40.00

86 DEAVER Tawny Port 15 Year Amador County

100% Zinfandel. Its advanced age has robbed this one of any obvious fruit and, while fairly sweet to start, the wine tends to dry a bit in its palatal progression and is a tad brittle at the finish. It shows a nutty edge of oxidation that might arguably be called complex, but it is also on the fade. Not without interest, it has aged beyond ita best and wants drinking before any more time has passed. 375 ml bottle. $49.00

Fortunati
NAPA VALLEY

90 FORTUNATI Dessert Wine Oak Knoll District 2017

100% Petite Sirah. Very much following the lead of Fortunati's sweet Petite Sirah from 2014 that was reviewed in these pages a year back, this edition is a big, highly concentrated offering that features immense, blackberry fruit and, in this outing, is a bit more temperate in its tannins. Complexity will come with age, and the wine is balanced and definitely structured to keep, but it is a little more polished than its predecessor and not at all hard to access now. 750 ml bottle. $75.00

GLUNZ FAMILY
WINERY & CELLARS

92 GLUNZ Angelica California

76% Mission; 24% mixed whites. Derived from a Solera of wines that average twenty-five years in age, the latest Angelica from Glunz not only repeats but exceeds the success of last year's bottling. It is very sweet and as rich as can be with elements of caramel, maple sugar and roasted vanilla showing at every stop along its way, and, while in a way, it recalls the complexity of a fine old tawny Port, its fruitier mix of honeyed apricots and peaches provides it with a distinctive voice all its own. It needs no dessert pairing to impress and is a remarkable glass by itself, but we gave it a try with a slice of pecan pie and can report that we plan on doing so once again when the right special occasion arrives. 500 ml bottle. $38.00

HARNEY LANE
WELCOME TO A NEW TRADITION

89 HARNEY LANE Lizzy James Old Vine Zin Lodi

It may be labeled simply as Old Vine Zin, but this half-liter bottling is a dessert wine through and through that, though long on the ripe berry fruit of its variety, inflects to mocha and chocolate in ways that table wine does not. It is full and sweet but sports fine acid balance that wards off any sense of syrupy softness, and it is a wine that, while clearly capable of holding up for no fewer than a half-dozen years if well-cellared, makes no demand for further age and is delicious stuff for post-prandial sipping tonight. 500 ml bottle. $35.00

Hawk and Horse Vineyards

89 HAWK AND HORSE Latigo Red Hills Lake County 2014

100% Cabernet Franc. Sweet, fully ripe, black cherry fruit merges with elements of vanilla, baking spice and a scant suggestion of black olive in the mid-density aromas of this one. Its very visible tannins are reflective of Cabernet Franc, but they provide a nice bit of structural grip and some five to ten years of aging potential without imparting imposing astringency, and, while moderately sweet, the wine is not overbearingly so and will do double duty as a partner to meal-ending cheeses and fruity or light chocolate desserts alike. 375 ml bottle. $60.00

85 MIDNIGHT Hannah & Joe's Gemini Port Paso Robles

Dense but not keenly fruity and redolent of dried grapes with an odd, balsamic-like sourness showing up in both its aromas and flavors, this tangy, tannin-bound wine is marginally sweet but loses its way too soon to astringency. It has the structure to last for a decade or more but lacks the core of fruit to make aging worthwhile. 375 ml bottle. $42.00

PATLAND
ESTATE VINEYARDS

89 PATLAND D'Oro Red Dessert Wine Napa Valley 2016

100% Petite Sirah. Striking out on a singular path all its own, this fortified Petite Sirah opens with a sweet, highly extracted nose of dark berries and subtle spice that gradually takes on a touch of roasted pecans and follows with very dense, similarly extracted flavors that, while a bit bound by sizeable tannins, are still abundant in concentrated fruit. Notable for the way that its brandy is so seamlessly integrated, it is not at all bothered by heat and can be enjoyed in the short term, but its structure is such that it should age famously for years and years, and, if

arguably a bit simple just now, it is certain to gain in detail and complexity as it does. 375 ml bottle. $80.00

PEACHY CANYON WINERY

91 PEACHY CANYON Zinfandel Port XVII Paso Robles
Given its long-time success as a producer of distinctive Zins, it should not be surprising that Peachy Canyon has come up with a first-rate, fortified version that is both long on very pure, black and red berry fruit with complexing notes of milk chocolate and toasted almonds lifting it above simple fruitiness. If anything, its very sweet flavors are deeper and more interesting yet, and, not the least of its many virtues is its excellent vitality and balance. It is structured to keep and will not fade any time soon, yet it is so expressive and inviting right now as to beg the question of why wait any further. 375 ml bottle. $35.00

PEDRONCELLI

90 PEDRONCELLI Four Grapes Vintage Port 2015
Dry Creek Valley. 30% Tinta Madeira; 30% Tinta Cao; 20% Souzao; 20% Touriga Nacional. We liked the 2014 version of Pedroncelli's Four Grapes Vintage Port, but we like this one even more. It is a little tight out of the gate and aromatically resembles a late-harvest table wine, but, once in the mouth, it assumes the density, breadth and richness of a classic Port. It abounds in sweet blackberry- and cherry-like fruit and its fruity extract so effectively buffers its tannins and alcohol that it can drunk with ease right now, but those willing to set it aside for another four or five years will be rewarded with more complexity and tactile polish yet. And, not the least of its many virtues is its surprisingly low asking price for a full 750 milliliter bottle.
GOOD VALUE $22.00

88 SCOTT HARVEY Forté Amador County 2014
60% Touriga Nacional; 14% Tinta Cão; 13% Alvarelhão; 13% Souzao. Made from classic Portuguese varietals in the style of a late-bottled vintage port, Scott Harvey's is a big, fairly gutsy effort whose alcohol gets a short step ahead of what is fairly good, well-extracted, dark berry fruit. It is moderately sweet but well short of jammy and boasts the tannic structure to age, and, even if approaching its eighth anniversary, it is a wine that has room to grow. 500 ml bottle. $49.00

SCOTT HARVEY WINES

Summit Lake VINEYARDS

88 SUMMIT LAKE Clair Riley's Pirate Reserve 2007
Howell Mountain. 100% Zinfandel. Very ripe and moderately sweet with a touch of peppery spice to its vinous, late-harvest aromas, this wine lightens up just a bit and shows a little less density and concentration than a full-on "Port" but maintains good Zinfandel focus for most of its length before ending with a flare of undisguised heat. Its alcohol might be better integrated with additional age, but, as it is approaching its twelfth birthday, how much more polish it might gain is hard to predict, and near- to mid-term term service with creamy, full-flavored cheeses would be our choice. 375 ml bottle. $45.00

TRENTADUE WINERY

90 TRENTADUE Zinfandel Port Alexander Valley 2019
Zinfandel shows its marvelous versatility here, and, while the wine is very sweet, its varietal stamp is clear. Its aromas of ripe boysenberries show Port-like concentration and accents of slightly savory spice, and it steps back from syrupy unctuousness in its rich, but relatively refined, very continuous, definitively fruity flavors. Minimally tannic with beautifully buffered heat, it may not demand hasty drinking but it is wonderfully tasty and wholly inviting now. 500 ml bottle. $28.00

V. Sattui Winery NAPA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

95 V. SATTUI 20-Year-Old Port California
Smelling and tasting like it could have come from any of the famous producers of Oporto, this exceptional working strains our memories in trying to recall a "Port" from California that is as good as it is. It is rich, beautifully balanced and its manifold parts, including its brandy component, are seamlessly joined, and, while it has remarkable energy and vibrancy for a wine of its age, it has the far-reaching complexity that can only come by way of time. It is a genuine treat now and should remain so for years to come. 500 ml bottle. $52.00

The Year in Review 2021

Many of the trials faced by the business of California wine in 2020 certainly eased in the last year, yet 2021 reminded that "normal" is a concept that few, if any, observers of the local wine scene embrace. The effects of the COVID pandemic still touch every aspect of the trade from production, to tourism to how wines are marketed and sold, and the vagaries of weather and the impact of climate change continue to be on the minds of most every grower and winemaker. That said, the year just past was, by most standards a very good one with regards to consumer demand, the quality of new wines coming to market and, more significantly, in the success of the 2021 harvest which is being universally touted as the finest in recent memory.

While the disastrous wildfires that ravaged much of the state in 2020 had most everyone apprehensively wondering what might lie in store once late summer and fall would arrive, there was happily very little damage done in 2021. The big story for much of the year was the challenge presented by California's ongoing drought. The lack of seasonal rainfall did result in a markedly reduced crop up and down the coast with a small number of well-regarded vineyards yielding no grapes at all, yet the surprising upside was that the smaller clusters and berries produced by water-starved vines yielded wines of exceptional concentration and depth. Virtually all of the state's wine-growing districts were visited by milder weather, and harvest season was free of troublesome heat spikes thus allowing more time for the grapes to develop full maturity before being picked from the vine. And, on a positive note, starting in late October well after the harvest was in, the West Coast has seen a succession of powerful storms that, while not spelling an end to the drought, have certainly done much to mitigate the severity of the state's water woes and ease worries about vineyard health in 2022. Weather, of course, will be what it will be, but there are reasons for cautious optimism as the coming year unfolds.

Climate change remains a central concern for those who practice the winemaking art and will continue to be a major topic in wine reporting for many years ahead. Among all agricultural products, grapes are among the most sensitive crops to changes in temperature and precipitation – something akin to the canary in the mineshaft as far as predicting what lies ahead –and there is considerable discussion and research about what and where to plant as the current generation of growers and vintners looks to the future. Despite its deniers, climate change is real and ignoring it is sheer folly.

As for the present and the wines that have come our way this past year, we can only say that things are going quite well. Most every variety from the bountiful 2018 and 2019 vintages has impressed across that board, and there is no shortage of splendid examples of the state's important varietal bottlings currently available. Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay may still be the stars, but West Coast Pinot Noir can legitimately lay claim to vinous aristocracy as well, and both Syrah and Merlot have rebounded from the doldrums and are earning much deserved praise. Zinfandel is as good as it has ever been as its champions seem to be upping the bar of achievement each year. If not poised to become "the next big thing" in the market, various red and white Rhône varieties have steadily carved out a larger and larger niche and justifiably established themselves as significant members of the state's fine wine entourage, and, even though wines made from long-time local residents such as Chenin Blanc, Riesling, Gewürztraminer, Barbera and Petite Sirah rarely make the headlines, they have been kept alive by their undaunted advocates and are in no danger of disappearing.

While 2018 and 2019 are both proving their mettle as excellent vintages, we are not ready to make any hard and fast pronouncements about the wines from 2020. Most everyone with even a passing interest in fine California wines knows of trials and tribulations faced by so many of the state's winemakers in 2020 as they persevered in the face of horrendous wildfires, and a good many wineries elected to make no wine at all from a smoke-damaged crop. The specter of smoke taint is less-discussed than it was a year back, and, though we have seen no evidence to date of smoke taint in any of the 2020s we have tasted, those wines have mostly all been white, made from varieties harvested before the fires began. We will get a better sense of the impact that smoke may or may not have had on red wines as more make their appearance at our tasting table this year. In truth, most of the red wine ruined by smoke – and there was a considerable amount – made its way into inexpensive bulk blends, and though we are not all that apprehensive about how the better, late-ripening, later-released reds will fare, the one thing for sure is that there will be far fewer fine bottles of 2020 Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Merlot and Zinfandel to go around than is the norm.

As we say goodbye to 2021, we would close by remembering several unforgettable figures in the evolution of California wines who passed away last year. Dr. David Bruce, a visionary pioneer of winemaking in the Santa Cruz Mountains and the uncompromising Jim Clendenen, the self-

titled "mind behind" Au Bon Climat, who was instrumental in elevating Santa Barbara County wines to world-class status, are no longer with us, but each leaves an enduring and indelible mark on California's vinous history. We also bid a heartfelt farewell to one of Great Britain's most esteemed wine professionals, Steven Spurrier, who, as a young wine merchant, staged the so-called "Judgment of Paris" in 1976 that famously signaled the arrival of California as a producer of world-class wines when a Cabernet Sauvignon and a Chardonnay from the Golden State were awarded top honors over their counterparts from Bordeaux and Burgundy by an all-French panel of critics. Place and terroir are important, and great wines may start in start in the vineyard, but the culture of fine wine depends just as much on the people who make them and teach us to appreciate them: people like Messrs. Bruce, Clendenen and Spurrier.

Best Wines of the Year 2021

2021 was yet another year of ups and downs, of high points and lows. The notion of "normal" has, for most of us, become illusory at best, when looking back over the past couple of years, but what has remained a constant is that there is a bounty of exciting local wines that make life a bit brighter even in the most challenging times. With this issue, we begin our first report on what will be thousands of new wines coming our way in 2022 with unbridled optimism, but, as we welcome the new year, Stephen, Charlie and Lynne take a moment to revisit their favorites of the past twelve months and offer their respective picks of the bunch from what has been a very good year at our tasting table.

Winemaking Family of the Year:

PISONI

It is the tradition of Connoisseurs' Guide to, each January, honor a single winery as the outstanding producer of the past year, but this time around we have chosen to break with custom and recognize the many achievements of the Pisoni family. The inimitable Gary Pisoni has long been justifiably regarded as a seminal figure in putting Santa Lucia Highlands on the map of world-class wine districts, and, with sons Mark and Jeff now respectively overseeing vineyard management and winemaking, the many Pisoni family labels – including Pisoni, Lucia and Lucy – account for a long list of multiple-star-winning Pinot Noirs, Syrahs and Chardonnays in these pages as well as one of the tastiest Rosés to be found. Jeff Pisoni, by the way, is also the winemaker at the helm of Fort Ross Winery on the Sonoma Coast as well as partnering with his wife, Bibiana González Rave of Cattleya – a highly accomplished winemaker in her own right – in producing the altogether extraordinary Shared Notes Sauvignon Blancs.

Red Wines of the Year:

DIAMOND CREEK Gravelly Meadow Cabernet Sauvignon 2018, LAIL J. Daniel Cuvée Cabernet Sauvignon 2018, J. DAVIES Jamie Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 and JEFF COHN Buffalo Hill Syrah 2018

Just as was the case last January, the roster of outstanding red wines tasted in the previous year was so crowded with worthies that selecting one as the best of 2021 is, once again, an entirely impossible task. Perennial honoree, Diamond Creek, makes yet another appearance for its Gravelly Meadow Cabernet from 2018 and is joined this time around by Lail's J. Daniel Cuvée from the same vintage as well as the J. Davies Jamie 2017, which is, in our minds, the best-ever offering from this esteemed Diamond Mountain producer. And, reprising its success of 2017, the 2018 Jeff Cohn Buffalo Hill Syrah completes this year's quartet of not-to-be-missed collectibles.

White Wine of the Year:

KISTLER Laguna Ridge Vineyard Chardonnay 2018

The Kistler contingent of Chardonnays tasted this year was nothing less than remarkable, but one stood out as not only the best of an astonishingly good lot but, as it did in its 2016 incarnation, as the finest, most memorable white wine we tasted all year. Over the next five to ten years, when special dinners for more than a few call for a truly great Chardonnay and a single bottle simply will not do, we can think of no better rendition to pour than this one, which was bottled solely in the 1.5 liter magnum format.

Winery to Watch:

STRINGER CELLARS

Stringer Cellars is a family owned and operated winery on Atlas Peak that made its inaugural appearance in these pages with the 2017 vintage. As taken as we were with its wines then, we are even more impressed by its roster of 2018s, especially its eminently collectible, single-site Cabernet Sauvignons which, while not coming with three-digit price tags easily rank with those that do, and its Ballard Canyon Syrah stands with the best values around. Every one of the baker's dozen Stringer wines we have tasted to date have earned starred recommendation, and we are eagerly looking forward to what the winery has in store this coming year.

Best Wines of the Year 2021

STEPHEN ELIOT'S Best of the ✿✿✿ Wines

BEEKEEPER Secret Stones Zinfandel 2018
DIAMOND CREEK Gravelly Meadow Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
LAIL J. Daniel Cuvée Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
J. DAVIES Jamie Cabernet Sauvignon 2017
JEFF COHN Buffalo Hill Syrah 2018
MUMM DVX Rosé Sparkling Wine 2016
ONCE & FUTURE Old Hill Ranch Zinfandel 2019
STOLPMAN Ruben's Block Syrah 2014
TALLEY The Adobe Pinot Noir 2018
TESTAROSSA Diana's Chardonnay 2019

Best of the ✿✿ Wines

CATTLEYA Cuveé Number One Pinot Noir 2019
COPIA The Cure Grenache 2018
DAOU Micho Merlot/Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
DARIOUSH Viognier 2019
DESIRE LINES Cole Ranch Riesling 2020
GRIEVE Family Estate Sauvignon Blanc 2018
R by RUNQUIST Cooper Vineyard Barbera 2019
TERRA VALENTINE K Block Cabernet Sauvignon 2017
TOR Palisades Vineyard Petite Sirah 2018
TREFETHEN The Cowgirl and the Pilot Merlot 2018

CHARLES OLKEN'S Best of the ✿✿✿ Wines

BETZ La Côte Patriarche Syrah 2018
CATTLEYA Belly of the Whale Pinot Noir 2019
DIAMOND CREEK Gravelly Meadow Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
JEFF COHN Buffalo Hill Syrah 2018
KISTLER Laguna Ridge Vineyard Chardonnay 2018
KISTLER Hudson Vineyard Chardonnay 2017
PAUL HOBBS Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
ROEDERER ESTATE L'Ermitage Rose Sparkling Wine 2013
TALLEY The Adobe Pinot Noir 2018
TREFETHEN Hālo Cabernet Sauvignon 2017

Best of the ✿✿ Wines

ARROW & BRANCH Right Bank Blend 2017
DRAGONETTE Grimm's Bluff Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc 2019
MARIMAR Earthquake Block Pinot Noir 2017
LUCIA Susan's Hill Syrah 2019
LYNMAR Susanna's Vineyard Chardonnay 2018
RIDGE Monte Bello Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
RON NOBLE Richard Dinner Vineyard Chardonnay 2019
VON STRASSER Vineyard 2131 Cabernet Sauvignon 2017
WILLIAMS SELYEM Estate Vineyard Pinot Noir 2018
THE FARM Touchy-Feely Grenache 2017

LYNNE BENNETT 'S Best of the ✿✿✿ Wines

BETZ La Côte Patriarche Syrah 2018
CATTLEYA Belly of the Whale Pinot Noir 2019
DIAMOND CREEK Gravelly Meadow Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
J. DAVIES Jamie Cabernet Sauvignon 2017
J.O. SULLIVAN Founder's Reserve Merlot 2018
KISTLER Laguna Ridge Vineyard Chardonnay 2018
LAIL J. Daniel Cuvée Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
MUMM DVX Sparkling Wine 2014
RIDGE Geyserville Zinfandel 2019
TIERRA ROJA Cabernet Sauvignon 2018

Best of the ✿✿ Wines

LIMERICK LANE Estate Cuvée Zinfandel 2018
LYNMAR Adam's Vineyard Chardonnay 2018
LUCIA Soberanes Vineyard Pinot Noir 2019
MERRY EDWARDS Late Harvest Sauvignon Blanc 2018
NOCETO Linsteadt Barbera 2017
RIDGE Botticelli Vineyard Zinfandel 2019
ROEDERER ESTATE L'Ermitage Brut Sparkling Wine 2015
SCHRAMSBERG Brut Rosé Sparkling Wine 2018
STRINGER Ballard Canyon Syrah 2018
THREE STICKS One Sky Chardonnay 2019

Best Buys in the Market

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

It may be true that finding bargains in Cabernet Sauvignon is a more daunting task than with other red varieties, but, accepting that fine value is relative, good buys await for both serious Cabernet collectors and those on the hunt for affordable, well-made examples that can be enjoyed without breaking the bank. While neither is cheap, both the ✿✿ **RODNEY STRONG Reserve Knights Valley 2018** ($55.00) and its year-older mate, the ✿✿ **RODNEY STRONG Reserve Sonoma County 2017** ($55.00) are deep, wonderfully well-crafted examples of marvelous richness and range that are absolute standouts when compared to not only their comparably priced cousins but to Cabernets costing two and, in many cases, three times as much, and the solidly built, incisively varietal ✿✿ **TERRA VALENTINE Napa Valley 2018** ($40.00) remains high on our list of Best Buy Cabernets from the 2018 vintage. The ✿ 90-point **FERRARI-CARANO Sonoma County 2018** ($45.00) gets the nod for its depth, its richness and its accessibility and joins the previously recommended, similarly scored trio of the ✿ **TRUCHARD Carneros Napa Valley 2018** ($40.00), the ✿ **GLUNZ Reserve Paso Robles 2018** ($38.00) and the ✿ **BLUE ROCK Baby Blue Sonoma County 2018** ($30.00) in reminding that fine Cabernet need not come with a three-digit price. Keep an eye out as well for the neatly tailored, varietally vocal ✿ **LA STORIA Alexander Valley 2019** ($38.00) from Trentadue, and those with a taste for rich, fully ripened examples that will keep but are very accessible right now should definitely consider the ✿ **OPOLO Paso Robles 2019** ($34.00), while the neatly balanced ✿ **CASTORO Estate Grown Paso Robles 2019** ($20.00) hits the mark for its varietal honesty. Finally, though they check just short of full one-star rating, the **KENWOOD 51% Sonoma County/49% Mendocino County 2018** ($12.00) and the **CLOS LA CHANCE Estate Vineyards Santa Clara Valley 2019** ($17.00) are clean, comfortably balanced and affably fruity 86-point efforts that happily remind that it is possible to find likeable Cabernets with legitimate varietal credentials for less than twenty dollars.

SPARKLING WINES

We may only review new sparkling wine releases once a year, but we enjoy a good glass of fizz from the first day of the New Year until the eve of the next, and we continue to be amazed at the affordability and wide availability of so many local offerings made by the time-consuming Méthode Champenoise. At the top of this month's roster of high-achievers that deliver the goods at a more-than-fair price, the deep, very complex ✿✿ **SCHRAMSBERG Brut Rosé North Coast 2018** ($47.00) and the rich, yet remarkably graceful ✿✿ **SCHRAMSBERG Blanc de Noirs Brut North Coast 2017** ($47.00) are a masterful, not-to-be missed pair from an iconic producer that set a new standard for California sparklers more than fifty years back and is still at the top of the game. Two 90-point efforts from Mendocino, the creamy and composed ✿ **SCHARFFENBERGER Brut Excellence Black Label Mendocino County** ($25.00) and its nicely autolyzed, finely bubbled companion, the ✿ **SCHARFFENBERGER Brut Excellence Mendocino County** ($23.00) are joined by the energetic ✿ 90-point **MUMM Brut Rosé Napa County** ($24.00), a lovely, compulsively sippable wine that seamlessly teams fresh cherry fruit with nicely stated yeast. Give a look, too, at the ✿ **MUMM Brut Prestige Napa County** ($24.00) a lively, lightly lemony, crispy finished bubbly perfectly suited to aperitif sipping, while both the mildly cherryish, very well-balanced ✿ **CHANDON Blanc de Pinot Noir California** ($24.50) and the fine and foamy, properly dry ✿ **CHANDON Brut California** ($24.50) are, like the above-listed pairs from Scharffenberger and Mumm, satisfying sparklers priced to enjoy on a regular basis. And, when speaking of easy-to-find sparkling wines that come at a most user-friendly price, it is hard to go wrong with either the ✿ **GRUET Brut American** ($15.00) from, of all places, New Mexico or the ever reliable ✿ **KORBEL Natural Russian River Valley 2018** ($17.00).

Connoisseurs' Series

Created by the California Wine Club exclusively for Connoisseurs' Guide readers, and featuring only our two-star and three-star selections, the CONNOISSEURS' SERIES wine-of-the month club makes hard-to-get wines available for you. Featured this month are: ✿✿ **TREFETHEN Merlot The Cowgirl and the Pilot Oak Knoll District 2018,** ✿✿ **MARIMAR ESTATE Pinot Noir Don Miguel Vineyard, Russian River Valley 2017,** ✿✿ **DESIRE LINES Syrah Shake Ridge Ranch Sierra Foothills 2019** and ✿✿ **JEFF COHN Zinfandel Rossi Ranch Vineyard Sonoma Valley 2018.**

For more information about CONNOISSEURS' SERIES, please call the California Wine Club at 1-800-777-4443 or visit **www.cawineclub.com/connseries**

ZINFANDEL

95	BEEKEEPER Montecillo Vineyard	2018	
92	BELLA Barrel 32 Dry Creek Valley	2018	
91	BELLA Florence Dry Creek Valley	2018	
89	BELLA Westphall Vineyard Rockpile	2018	
86	CABANA Old Vine Lodi	2020	
91	CAROL SHELTON Rockpile Reserve	2019	
GV 90	CAROL SHELTON Oakley Zin Old Vine	2019	
89	CAROL SHELTON Wally Zin	2019	
88	CAROL SHELTON Monga Zin Old Vine	2019	
GV 87	CAROL SHELTON Wild Thing Old Vine	2019	
87	CAROL SHELTON Pizzaz Zin Old Vine	2020	
85	CLOSE CALL Lodi	2018	
86	CRISS CROSS Old Vine Lodi	2019	
87	CROOKED PATH Paso Robles	2017	
85	DEAVER Big Brix Amador County	2017	
85	DEAVER Deaver's Red Amador Co	----	
85	DEERFIELD Ivy Glen Vineyard Reserve	2014	
87	DRY CREEK VINEYARD Old Vine	2019	
90	DUTCHER CROSSING Maple Vineyard	2019	
90	DUTCHER CROSSING Bacigalupi Vyd	2019	
90	EASTON D'Agostini Brothers Vineyard	2017	
GV 90	EASTON "E" Fiddletown	2017	
87	EASTON Rinaldi Vineyard Old Vine	2017	
87	EASTON Amador County	2019	
85	EASTON Zinster Lot 1852 Fiddletown	2020	
92	FRANK FAMILY Reserve Napa Valley	2018	
89	FRANK FAMILY Napa Valley	2019	
90	FRITZ Estate Reserve Dry Creek Valley	2019	
87	FRITZ Estate Dry Creek Valley	2019	
89	GREEN & RED Tip Top Vineyard	2016	
87	GREEN & RED Chiles Mill Vineyard	2017	
87	GROSSO KRESSER Paso Robles	2016	
89	HARNEY LANE Home Ranch	2019	
88	HARNEY LANE Scottsdale Vineyard	2019	
87	HARNEY LANE Lizzy James Vineyard	2019	
89	J. DUSI Dante Dusi Vineyard	2019	
92	JEFF COHN St. Peter's Church Vyd	2019	
91	JEFF COHN Isabel Sweetwater Springs	2019	
90	JEFF COHN Iron Hill Vineyard	2019	
90	JEFF COHN Rinaldi Vineyard	2019	
87	KENWOOD Jack London Vineyard	2018	
GV 86	KENWOOD 75% Sonoma Co	2019	
87	KLINKER BRICK Old Ghost Old Vine	2018	
87	KLINKER BRICK Old Vine Lodi	2018	
86	KLINKER BRICK Brickmason Lodi	2018	
85	KNOTTY VINES Red Blend California	2018	
GV 86	LAPIS LUNA North Coast	2020	
GV 86	McMANIS Lodi	2020	
89	MEADOWCROFT Speedy Creek Vyd	2018	
87	METTLER Epicenter Old Vine Lodi	2019	
89	OPOLO Reserve Remo Belli Vineyard	2019	
88	OPOLO Reserve Paso Robles	2019	
89	PAPER STREET Paso Robles	2019	
92	PEACHY CANYON Willow	2019	
91	PEACHY CANYON Nancy's View	2019	
89	PEACHY CANYON Especial	2019	
88	PEACHY CANYON Bailey	2019	
GV 88	PEDRONCELLI Mother Clone	2019	
87	PEDRONCELLI Bushnell Vineyard	2019	
82	PEDRONCELLI Courage Faloni Vyd	2018	
89	R BY RUNQUIST Esola Vineyard	2019	
88	R BY RUNQUIST Cooper Vineyard	2019	
87	R BY RUNQUIST Nostro Vino Vineyard	2019	
86	R BY RUNQUIST Peroni Ranch	2019	
95	RIDGE Lytton Springs Dry Creek Vly	2019	
91	RIDGE Pagani Ranch Sonoma Valley	2019	
90	RIDGE Mazzoni Home Ranch	2018	
89	RIDGE Guadagni Dry Creek Valley	2019	
88	RIDGE Benito Dusi Paso Robles	2019	
88	RIDGE Hooker Creek Sonoma Valley	2018	
90	SEAWOLF Battaglini Vineyard	2019	
90	SEAWOLF Red Triangle	2019	
94	SIMONCINI Estate Dry Creek Valley	2017	
91	SIMONCINI St. Peter's Church Vyd	2017	
90	SIMONCINI Florence Vineyard	2017	
87	ST. AMANT Lodi Native	2019	
87	ST. AMANT Marian's Vineyard Lodi	2019	
86	ST. AMANT Mohr-Fry Ranch	2019	
93	STORYBOOK MTN Estate Reserve	2018	
91	STORYBOOK MTN Eastern Exposures	2018	
85	TRAILHEAD Paso Robles	2018	
88	TRES SABORES Perspective Rutherford	2019	
86	TRUTH AND VALOR Paso Robles	2019	
87	VICTOR HUGO Templeton Gap	2018	
91	V. SATTUI Pilgrim Vineyard Old Vine	2019	
90	V. SATTUI Crow Ridge Vyd Block 7	2018	
89	V. SATTUI Black Sears Vineyard	2018	
90	WONDERMENT Pritchett Peaks Vyd	2019	
89	WONDERMENT Bacigalupi Vineyard	2019	
86	Z BY RUNQUIST Massoni Ranch	2020	
87	ZINNIA Napa Valley	2018	

SAUVIGNON BLANC

85	1858 60% Solano Co/40% Napa Co	2020	
GV 87	ANGELINE Reserve Sonoma County	2020	
87	ATHENAEUM Napa Valley	2020	
GV 86	BOGLE California	2020	
GV 85	CASTLE ROCK California	2020	
GV 87	CHARLES KRUG Napa Valley	2020	
GV 87	CRAFTWORK Monterey County	2020	
88	DAVIS BYNUM Virginia's Block	2020	
85	DEAVER Amador County	2020	
85	DEERFIELD Peterson Vineyard	2020	
87	DUTTON ESTATE Kylie's Cuvée	2020	
GV 88	EASTON Natoma Sierra Foothills	2020	
88	FRITZ Native Dry Creek Valley	2020	
GV 90	GREEN & RED Catacula Vineyard	2020	
GV 88	HONIG 66% Napa Co/34% Lake Co	2021	
86	KENDALL-JACKSON Vintner's Reserve	2020	
GV 87	KENWOOD 74% Lake County	2020	
GV 87	KING ESTATE Oregon	2020	
GV 88	KOKOMO Timber Creek Vineyard	2020	
85	KUNDE Magnolia Lane Sonoma Co	2020	
86	MAIN & GEARY Central Coast	2019	
GV 88	MARKHAM Napa Valley	2020	
GV 87	MUIRWOOD Arroyo Seco	2020	
86	NAVIGATOR Napa Valley	2019	
88	PEJU Legacy Collection Napa Valley	2020	
86	RAYMOND North Coast	2020	
86	RODNEY STRONG Charlotte's Home	2020	
GV 88	RUSACK Estate Ballard Canyon	2019	
87	RYDER ESTATE Central Coast	2019	
87	SAMUEL CHARLES High Valley	2020	
86	SAND POINT California	2020	
85	SEAGLASS Central Coast	2020	
89	STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS Aveta	2020	
87	TAFT STREET Russian River Valley	2020	
87	TRAILHEAD Napa Valley	2020	
88	TRES SABORES Sonoma Mountain	2020	
86	UNRULY California	2020	
89	URGENCY Lake County	2019	
87	WONDERMENT Hyde Vineyard	2020	

FORTIFIED WINES

89	AMPHORA Port LPR Dry Creek Valley	——
89	CLIF FAMILY Arriva Petite Sirah	——
91	DAOU Dessert Wine Adelaida District	2018
91	DEAVER Angelica 15 Year	——
90	DEAVER Golden Nectar Port 15 Year	——
89	DEAVER Petite Sirah Port	——
88	DEAVER Port California	——
88	DEAVER Tawny Port 15 Year	——
90	FORTUNATI Dessert Wine Oak Knoll	2017
92	GLUNZ Angelica California	——
89	HARNEY LANE Lizzy James Old Vine Zin	——
89	HAWK AND HORSE Latigo	2014
85	MIDNIGHT Gemini Port	——
89	PATLAND D'Oro Red Dessert Wine	2016
91	PEACHY CANYON Zinfandel Port XVII	——
GV 90	PEDRONCELLI Four Grapes Vintage Port	2015
88	SCOTT HARVEY Forté	2014
88	SUMMIT LAKE Clair Riley's Pirate Rsv	2007
90	TRENTADUE Zinfandel Port	2019
95	V. SATTUI 20-Year-Old Port California	——