

# Wine Spectator



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## ANTHONY BOURDAIN

**BAD-BOY CHEF BECOMES  
TELEVISION STAR:  
THE INSIDE STORY**

**BORDEAUX 2012:  
MORE THAN 750 RATED**

**THE BEST OF  
CALIFORNIA'S RHÔNES**

**CHARLIE HEBDO  
WINE LABELS**

**CRUISE SHIPS  
EMBRACE WINE**



**PHOTOGRAPH BY  
SUZANNE KANTAK**

PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE  
LIBRARY BAR IN THE HUDSON  
HOTEL, NEW YORK

California Rhône-style wines have seen  
impressive gains in recent years, achieving  
high quality in a diversity of styles.

**CALIFORNIA RHÔNES**

**COME ON  
STRONG**

## Recommended Rhône-Style Reds From California

Nearly 375 Rhône-style reds were reviewed for this report. A free alphabetical list is available at [www.winespectator.com/033115](http://www.winespectator.com/033115). WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

### TOP WINES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
<b>PRUETT</b> Syrah Sierra Foothills Championship Cuvée 2012 An amazing wine that exhibits a tight, dense core of black licorice, blackberry, mocha, espresso, cedar and road tar.	96	\$100
<b>ALBAN</b> Syrah Edna Valley Lorraine Alban Estate 2010 Pure, rich and delicious, with gobs of blackberry, raspberry and blueberry all folding together in a graceful, engaging style.	95	\$145
<b>LEWIS</b> Syrah Napa Valley 2012 This gorgeous Syrah is rich and polished, offering a dense, tightly focused core of blackberry and wild berry flavors.	95	\$70
<b>PRUETT</b> Syrah Sierra Foothills Taylor's Reserve 2012 A remarkable display of blackberry, black licorice and espresso, delivering enormous richness, depth, density and persistence.	95	\$46
<b>DUMOL</b> Syrah Russian River Valley 2012 Pure, rich and layered, with dense, mocha-laced blackberry, black licorice, dill, anise and cedar notes that keep unraveling.	94	\$55
<b>COLGIN</b> Syrah Napa Valley IX Estate 2011 This elegant red offers beautifully rich dark berry fruit definition, with pure flavors framed by cedary oak and floral scents.	94	\$250
<b>LAW</b> The Nines Paso Robles 2011 Deliciously rich, firm, complex and layered, with tiers of dusty dark berry, mocha, raspberry and spicy, toasty oak. Grenache.	94	\$85
<b>PLUMJACK</b> Syrah Napa Valley 2012 Blackberry, black licorice, tar, mocha-laced wood, cedar and plum give this an enticingly complex mix of flavors that glide along.	94	\$54
<b>PROSPECT 772</b> Syrah California The Instigator 2012 Generous spicy, toasty, mocha-laced oak is the entry to firm, vivid blackberry, espresso, cedar and tobacco flavors.	94	\$36
<b>SHAFER</b> Relentless Napa Valley 2011 This big red brims with dark, rich, chunky blackberry and wild berry fruit, showing fine balance. Syrah and Petite Sirah.	94	\$80
<b>TENSLEY</b> Syrah Santa Barbara County OGT 2013 A riveting wine, firm, structured and graceful, with juicy blackberry and wild berry fruit that's sharply focused. Gains depth.	94	\$90
<b>BOOKER</b> Syrah Paso Robles Fracture 24 2012 Creamy, mocha-scented oak makes the initial aromas alluring, with dense dark berry, cedar, black licorice and herb shadings.	93	\$70
<b>PAUL HOBBS</b> Syrah Sonoma County Kick Ranch Vineyard 2012 Pure and complex, exhibiting vivid blackberry, wild berry and dark plum flavors that show spicy, peppery, floral scents.	93	\$50
<b>KEPLINGER</b> Lithic Amador County 2012 Offers a mix of ripe blackberry flavors, with floral, licorice, raspberry jam, loamy earth and gravel details. Grenache blend.	93	\$60
<b>SAXUM</b> Booker Vineyard Paso Robles 2012 This presents a massive core of earth- and dark berry-driven flavors, ending with a sturdy wall of tannins. Syrah and Mourvèdre.	93	\$98
<b>TORRIN</b> The Haven Torrinn Vineyard Paso Robles 2011 Pure, rich and vivid blackberry and wild berry fruit forms the core of this dense, dark beauty. Grenache and Syrah.	93	\$62

### TOP VALUES

WINE	SCORE	PRICE
<b>TENSHEN</b> Santa Barbara County 2013 Offers a lively array of flavors, from ripe, juicy plum and black cherry to subtle tar, rose petal and dried herb. Syrah blend.	92	\$25
<b>ANDREW MURRAY</b> Espérance Central Coast 2012 A zesty red, showing smoky black cherry and cracked pepper aromas, with sleek raspberry and toasted sage flavors. Grenache blend.	91	\$25
<b>DI BRUNO</b> Vino Rosso Santa Barbara County 2008 Pure, rich and layered, with blackberry, raspberry and wild berry flavors, shaded by spice, anise and light oak. Grenache blend.	89	\$17
<b>BARREL 27</b> Grenache Central Coast Rock And A Hard Place 2011 Firm dark berry, smoke, spice, pepper, cedar and loamy earth notes add up to a chewy, easy-to-enjoy style.	88	\$18
<b>CASEY FLAT RANCH</b> Open Range California 2010 Features dark berry, black licorice, crushed rock and loamy earth notes, ending with graphite and cedar nuances. Syrah blend.	88	\$18
<b>EPIPHANY</b> Gypsy Santa Barbara County 2010 Offers plenty of smoked game aromas, with racy flavors of plum, grilled herb and cracked pepper. Grenache blend.	88	\$25
<b>MORGAN</b> Cotes du Crow's Monterey 2012 Zesty and easy to sip, with lively raspberry, cracked pepper and toasted herb flavors. Grenache and Syrah.	88	\$18
<b>ANDREW MURRAY</b> Syrah Santa Ynez Valley Tous les Jours 2013 Zesty and racy, if rather chunky, with boysenberry and smoky spice aromas and dense blueberry, roasted herb and espresso flavors.	88	\$16
<b>NOVY</b> Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands 2011 Offers lots of fruit and a bit of muscle, showing boysenberry and toasty mocha aromas, with zesty plum and roasted herb flavors.	88	\$22
<b>SLO DOWN WINES</b> Sexual Chocolate California 2012 Smooth, plush and layered, with enticing mocha, dark berry, chocolate-covered cherry, cedar and licorice flavors. Syrah blend.	88	\$25
<b>ZACA MESA</b> Syrah Santa Ynez Valley 2010 Appealing, with wild berry and toasted herb aromas that lead to zesty, well-layered flavors of plum, roasted anise and pepper.	88	\$25
<b>BARREL 27</b> Syrah Central Coast Right Hand Man 2011 This features a light mix of savory dried herb, saffra, dark berry, licorice and cedary oak notes, with good guts and chewy tannins.	87	\$18
<b>BECKMEN</b> Cuvée Le Bec Santa Ynez Valley 2012 Black raspberry and peppery caramel aromas lead to zesty but straightforward flavors of cherry and herb. Grenache blend.	87	\$18
<b>DOMAINE DE LA TERRE ROUGE</b> Syrah California Côtes De L'Ouest 2012 Solidly built if still quite tannic, with jammy black raspberry and pepper aromas and dense flavors of plum, loam and herb.	87	\$20
<b>GREG NORMAN CALIFORNIA ESTATES</b> Shark Red Central Coast 2012 Zesty and appealing for its boysenberry and licorice aromas and rustic flavors of raspberry, cedar and roasted herb. Syrah blend.	87	\$15
<b>TABLAS CREEK</b> Patelin de Tablas Paso Robles 2012 An easy-to-approach style, with much to admire, this offers ripe plum, dark berry and floral notes. Syrah blend.	87	\$20

Farming practices can be a bit laid back in the foothills, but Keplinger sets a Napa-like high standard—and it's obvious in her wines. The Keplinger Syrah Fair Play Diamond Bar 2012 is bold and layered, with firm tannins cloaked over juicy blackberry and wild berry fruit, while the Caldera El Dorado and aforementioned Lithic Amador County are each distinctive Rhône-style blends offering a complex mix of flavors. All three rate 93 points (\$60).

A few mountain ridges over, in Auburn, Calif., professional race car driver Scott Pruett is finding equal success in the winemaking world. His 3-acre vineyard of Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon sits at an elevation of 1,000 feet above the American River. The Pruett Syrah Sierra Foothills Taylor's Reserve 2012 (95, \$46) shows enormous richness, with a remarkable display of powerful blackberry, black licorice and espresso flavors.

Though the foothills remains a sleepy wine community, the region seems ready for a higher profile. "There are a lot of young, creative and talented winemakers looking to the foothills to do interesting things," Keplinger says.

## SONOMA

Mike Officer of Carlisle Winery says that the 2012 growing season in Sonoma was "about as perfect as one could hope for." From tasting the grapes in the vineyard, Officer expected the 2012s to be up-front reds and full of fruit, but that's not how they turned out. "I was surprised initially by the amount of tannin in the '12s and how unwieldy and ageworthy they were," he says. "But now the fruit is coming more to the forefront." An excellent example is the Carlisle Syrah Russian River Valley Papa's Block 2012 (91, \$43), a firm, potent red with notes of dark berry, mocha and cigar box.

The 2012s also showcase the stylistic evolution the Carlisle Syrahs have undergone in recent years, shifting away from the big, jammy style of Australian Shiraz. "My approach has changed as I've gotten older and my palate has changed," Officer says. "I now favor a more savory Syrah, and we've transitioned to new vineyards that allow me to do that."

Senior editors James Laube and Tim Fish reviewed the wines for this report.

# WHITES

Grenache Blanc challenges Viognier for star allure

BY MARYANN WOROBIEC

Aromatic Rhône-style white wines from California have been gradually increasing their presence in recent years, led by Viognier. But now an emerging star—Grenache Blanc—and a growing trend of blended wines are bolstering this category of whites, which also include Marsanne, Roussanne and Picpoul Blanc.

California Viognier has been touted as the "next Chardonnay" for decades. "I've been making Viognier since 1994," says Bonterra winemaker Bob Blue. "It was always thought, 'This is the next big thing.'" Yet the variety's hold on Rhône-style whites seems to be slipping. Although Viognier still dominates in both acreage and visibility (there is more Viognier planted in California than the other four grapes combined), a quarter of the more than 100 Rhône-style whites reviewed this year are Grenache Blanc, and another third are blends. This growing diversity, along with some new producers and bottlings, has given the category new life.

The big story is the emergence of Grenache Blanc, a grape that can produce wines that are both high in acidity and alcohol. Only available in California since 1999, the first bottlings of Grenache Blanc were odd—either overblown and high in alcohol or searingly

## RATING VINTAGES OF CALIFORNIA RHÔNE-STYLE REDS

	Napa	Sonoma*	Paso Robles	Santa Barbara**		
2012	91-94	91-94	91-94	86-89	Record-sized crop with firmly tannic wines and some real beauties; should reward time in the cellar	NYR
2011	87	87	87	87	A damp, cool year led to mixed results. Off the pace of best years, yet there are pockets of success; early drinkers	Drink or hold
2010	93	93	97	87	A cool, late harvest, but amazingly ripe and full-bodied wines	Drink or hold
2009	92	93	95	92	Fabulous wines throughout despite a challenging season; the ripeness is there, even if it came late	Drink or hold
2008	91	91	98	91	A tough start ended with glorious wines statewide, rivaling 2007 for complexity, depth and finesse	Drink or hold
2007	95	92	96	95	Tremendous quality and uncommon complexity statewide; the best on record, along with 2006 and 2009	Drink or hold
2006	93	95	92	94	A golden vintage, fabulous across all regions, offering great diversity of styles	Drink or hold
2005	92	87	86	89	Intense, structured, high quality wines	Drink or hold

\*Sonoma includes Alexander Valley, Dry Creek Valley, Russian River Valley, Sonoma Valley and Sonoma Coast AVAs

\*\*Santa Barbara includes Santa Barbara, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Maria Valley, Santa Ynez Valley and Edna Valley AVAs

A score range indicates preliminary analysis based on barrel samples and/or a limited sampling; many wines of the vintage not yet reviewed.

Vintage ratings: 95-100, classic; 90-94, outstanding; 85-89, very good; 80-84, good; 75-79, mediocre; 50-74, not recommended

Drinkability: "NYR" means not yet released; "drink" means most of the wines of the vintage are ready to drink; "hold" means most of the ageworthy wines have yet to fully mature.

## United States

CALIFORNIA  
Chardonnay

**92 Maldonado Chardonnay Napa Valley Los Olivos Vineyard 2012 \$42** This rich, full-blown Chardonnay packs in lots of flavor, yet maintains a measure of elegance and finesse, with supple, caressing green apple and pear flavors. Vanilla-scented oak notes impart a kiss of butterscotch on the finish. Drink now through 2021. 1,186 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Maldonado Chardonnay Napa Valley Los Olivos Vineyard Reserve 2012 \$75** Lightly aromatic, featuring honeysuckle, fig and pear flavors that are ripe and structured, ending clean and long, with a persistent finish. Drink now through 2020. 126 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Saxon Brown Chardonnay Napa Valley Carneros Hyde Vineyard 2012 \$58** An initial burst of ripe, juicy green apple, pear and honeydew melon tilts toward elegance and restraint, never losing a zesty fruit vitality. Ends with subtle vanilla and citrus notes. Drink now through 2020. 220 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Mueller Chardonnay Russian River Valley LB 2012 \$32** A beam of lemon-grapefruit citrus leads to green apple and tart pear notes, creating a mouthwatering burst of flavor. This ends gracefully, with a dash of toasty oak. Drink now through 2020. 505 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Chasseur Chardonnay Russian River Valley 2012 \$40** Clean, fresh and snappy, featuring citrus blossom scents and a pithiness to the texture, with green apple and grapefruit notes. Drink now through 2020. 298 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Roar Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2012 \$40** Offers a rich, leesy, rustic presentation, with cedary oak, ripe fig and melon hints. Edgy wood flavors stray into vanilla and butterscotch details. Drink now through 2020. 119 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Roar Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Sierra Mar Vineyard 2012 \$40** Offers a briny, crushed seashell aroma, with rich pear, fig and honeydew melon notes that are full-bodied and fan out across the palate. Maintains focus and persistence. Drink now through 2020. 193 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Talley Chardonnay Edna Valley Oliver's Vineyard 2012 \$36** Presents a rich, tangy, zesty style of Chardonnay, full-bodied, with a core of green apple, citrus, honeydew melon and subtle oak. Drink now through 2018. 409 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Testarossa Chardonnay Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard Single Vineyard Series 2012 \$45** Complex and well-directed toward a butterscotch-hued mix of baked apple, pear, spice and citrus flavors. Gains depth and length, showing a pithy, leesy texture. Drink now through 2020. 360 cases made.—J.L.

**88 Alexander Valley Vineyards Chardonnay Alexander Valley 2012 \$78** A delicate style, with subtle citrus, peach, pear and light creamy oak flavors that impart complexity and depth. Ends with a kiss of toasty oak. Drink now through 2018. 21,000 cases made.—J.L.

**88 Kendall-Jackson Chardonnay California Avant 2013 \$17** A nervy style, featuring vibrant acidity that envelopes the core of grapefruit and lemon-citrus flavors, ending long and clean, with a lemon peel bite. Drink now through 2019.—J.L.

**88 Robert Mondavi Chardonnay Napa Valley 2012 \$97** Pure and direct, with ripe pear, green apple, light cedar and vanilla-scented oak, followed by a clean, refreshing finish. Drink now through 2019. 48,438 cases made.—J.L.

**88 Saracina Chardonnay Mendocino County Unoked 2013 \$78** Delivers a rich, juicy mix of fig, apricot, peach, lemon-citrus and spice notes, with little or no oak evident. A pure expression of ripe Chardonnay, ending with a pithy edge. Drink now through 2018. 1,722 cases made.—J.L.

JOHN FETZER  
Co-owner

**88 Slo Down Wines Chardonnay California Broken Dreams 2013 \$19** Vanilla, pear, peach and honeysuckle aromas show a touch of lemon peel, rendering a sleek, focused delivery that ends with a touch of cedary oak. Drink now through 2019. 3,000 cases made.—J.L.

**88 Taken Chardonnay Sonoma County Complicated 2013 \$78** Clean, simple and direct, with the emphasis on citrus-laced green apple and melon flavors, ending pure and snappy. Drink now: 7,000 cases made.—J.L.

CALIFORNIA  
Grenache & Blends

**94 Law The Nines Paso Robles 2011 \$85** Deliciously rich, firm, complex and layered, with tiers of dusty dark berry, mocha, raspberry and spicy, toasty oak. All the elements fold together, showing appropriate tightness, density and focus, with a long, persistent finish. Grenache. Drink now through 2027. 120 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Jemrose Grenache Bennett Valley Foggy Knoll Vineyard 2012 \$48** Combines rich, dense blackberry and wild berry notes with black licorice, savory herb and cedary oak accents, presented on a firmly tannic foundation. Though the tannins give the flavors traction, they extend the finish, ending with a crushed rock minerality. Drink now through 2028. 71 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Keplinger Lithic Amador County 2012 \$60** Offers a wonderful mix of ripe blackberry flavors, with floral, black licorice, raspberry jam, loamy earth and gravel details. Gains depth and holds focus on the long, intricate aftertaste, where subtle wood and espresso notes add dimension. Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah. Drink now through 2028. 295 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Law Beguiling Paso Robles 2011 \$67** Very tight, rich and layered, with a core of dense dark berry, mocha, crushed rock and cedary oak. The flavors fold together well and linger on the finish, where the tannins hold them in place. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2026. 439 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Torrin The Maven Torrin Vineyard Paso Robles 2011 \$62** Pure, rich and vivid blackberry and wild berry fruit forms the core of this dense, dark beauty. Firm at points, supple at others, this shows both muscle and finesse, finishing with a layer of mocha and black licorice. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2028. 178 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Saxum James Berry Vineyard Paso Robles 2012 \$98** Fresh and snappy, with a gritty tannic edge to the current, raspberry, black licorice and fresh-turned earth notes, lending this a perfumed aroma. Presents a tough-edged tannic side that needs cellaring. Grenache, Mourvèdre, Syrah and Counoise. Best from 2016 through 2028. 1,587 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Ampelos Grenache Sta. Rita Hills Delta: The Difference 2010 \$35** Focused and loaded with peppery notes, with classic raspberry and smoky cinnamon aromas and zesty, vibrant cherry and toasted sage flavors that balance generous fruit and lively acidity. Drink now through 2023. 168 cases made.—T.F.

**91 Epoch Grenache Paso Robles Sensibility 2012 \$65** Firm and dense, with a rich core of black licorice-laced berry and dusty-cedary oak. Taut, gripping tannins give the flavors traction, leaving a gravelly, road tar-inflected sensation. Drink now through 2028. 274 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Epoch Veracity Paso Robles 2012 \$65** Combines power and tannins with a dense core of raspberry, blackberry and wild berry notes, showing hints of gravelly earth and black licorice woven among the waves of flavor. Needs time. Grenache, Mourvèdre and Syrah. Best from 2016 through 2028. 920 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Andrew Murray Espérance Central Coast 2012 \$25** This zesty red offers smoky black cherry and cracked pepper aromas. Sleek flavors of raspberry and toasted sage pick up tannins on the finish. Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2021. 1,000 cases made.—T.F.

ANDREW MURRAY  
Owner & Winemaker

**91 Nicora GSM Paso Robles 2012 \$48** Plush yet well-structured, with jammy raspberry and spicy grilled herb aromas that lead to rich, appealingly ripe flavors of boysenberry, loamy earth and cracked pepper. Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2023. 125 cases made.—T.F.

**91 Sans Liege Grenache Santa Barbara County En Gedi Santa Barbara Highlands Vineyard 2011 \$40** Loaded with personality and bold fruit, this features smoky black raspberry aromas and rich, complex flavors of dark plum, mocha and black pepper. Drink now through 2023. 330 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Denner Grenache Paso Robles 2012 \$60** Rich and well-built, with smoky pepper beef and raspberry aromas and sleek, jammy flavors of plum, pie spice and licorice. Drink now through 2024. 500 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Eric Kent Grenache Russian River Valley The Barrel Climber 2011 \$42** Fresh and spicy, with prominent peppery scents amid the plum, raspberry and strawberry notes. Firm yet graceful, with a clean, snappy finish. Drink now through 2023. 157 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Gallica Suzuri Series Shake Ridge Ranch Amador County 2012 \$50** Dense and rich, with tiers of spicy, earth-laced blackberry, sage, cedar and black licorice notes. Holds focus and gains depth and persistence, firming on the finish where the flavors reverberate. Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Viognier. Drink now through 2028. 256 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Terry Hoage Grenache Paso Robles Skins 2012 \$60** Trim and cedary, this taut, well-built red is marked by earth-laced red berry, currant and crushed rock notes. Most interesting on the finish, where the flavors stay lively. Drink now through 2025. 200 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Terry Hoage Grenache-Syrah Paso Robles The 46 2012 \$55** Strikes a balance between lightly toasty cedary oak and firm, trim red berry flavors. Fans out on the finish, showing a lively core of cherry and red plum. Ends with firm tannins. Drink now through 2025. 280 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Prospect 772 The Brat Sierra Foothills 2012 \$36** Well-structured, with firm acidity and tannins, presenting graceful notes of spicy dried berry and herb, sage, underbrush and sandalwood. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2026. 175 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Prospect 772 The Truant Sierra Foothills 2012 \$36** Firm, dense and focused, with vibrant wild berry, anise, crushed rock and cedar notes. Tight and structured, while offering a solid middle. Grenache, Syrah and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2025. 100 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Sans Liege Grenache Paso Robles Pick-pocket 2011 \$40** Bold and full of fruit, with aromas of black raspberry and chunky chocolate and full-bodied, jammy flavors of baked cherry and blueberry, accented by licorice and smoked pepper. Drink now through 2022. 265 cases made.—T.F.

**89 Adobe Road Grenache Dry Creek Valley Kemp Vineyard 2012 \$38** Sleek in structure, with floral raspberry and blueberry aromas, plus notes of smoky cracked pepper, dried sage and grilled anise. Drink now through 2021. 170 cases made.—T.F.

**89 Kaena Grenache Ballard Canyon Larner Vineyard 2012 \$48** Pure, fresh and snappy, with fresh-crushed grape, raspberry, cranberry and spice evident throughout. Drink now through 2024. 175 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Kaena Grenache Ballard Canyon Tierra Alta Vineyard 2012 \$42** Presents a tasty mix of raspberry, black cherry and spice-scented fruit, supported by ripe, gripping tannins that end with a cleansing sensation. Drink now through 2024. 175 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Margerum M5 Reserve Santa Barbara County 2012 \$38** Compact and well-structured, with floral blueberry and fresh earth aromas, leading to layered flavors of black cherry, mineral and smoky pepper. The tannins are big but balanced. Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Counoise and Counoise. Best from 2016 through 2024. 268 cases made.—T.F.

**88 Morgan Cotes du Crow's Monterey 2012 \$78** Zesty and easy to sip, with lively raspberry, cracked pepper and toasted herb flavors. Shows a hint of tannins on the finish. Grenache and Syrah. Drink now through 2021. 3,430 cases made.—T.F.

CALIFORNIA  
Grenache Blanc & Blends

**91 Tablas Creek Patelin de Tablas Blanc Paso Robles 2013 \$20** See Smart Buys, page 97.

**90 Sans Liege Call to Arms Alta Colina Vineyard Paso Robles 2012 \$30** Rich, smooth flavors of pear, Asian pear and melon show toasted spice and citrus zest accents, accented by a whiff of honeysuckle. Complex and balanced, with plenty of acidity weaving in and out. Grenache Blanc and Roussanne. Drink now: 240 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Bonny Doon Le Cigare Blanc En Bonbonne Beeswax Vineyard Reserve Arroyo Seco 2011 \$45** Features a mix of refreshing lemon and green apple notes, with a strong mineral streak and fresh green tea flavors. Features crunchy acidity and an appealingly firm almond skin note. Grenache Blanc and Roussanne. Drink now: 480 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Culton Grenache Blanc Paso Robles Glenrose Vineyard 2012 \$40** Offers floral, honeysuckle and peach notes up front, set on a medium body, with buttery brioche accents. Delivers plenty of melon, yellow apple and pear flavors, showing lemon zest details and a spicy, juicy finish. Drink now: 105 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Prospect 772 Grenache Blanc Santa Barbara County Stepping Stones 2013 \$27** Lip-smacking and refreshing, with citrus, apple and pear flavors that manage to be light-bodied but very intense. Floral, spice and chamomile details echo in the background, finishing with bright acidity. Drink now: 150 cases made.—M.W.

**88 Groundwork Grenache Blanc Paso Robles 2013 \$76** Bright and crisp, with plenty of pure grapefruit and grapefruit zest flavors up front, balanced by mineral, floral and yellow raisin details. Drink now: 900 cases made.—M.W.

CALIFORNIA  
Pinot Noir

**93 Auteur Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2012 \$50** Offers a generous array of rich, pure, deep plum, blackberry and blueberry notes, supported by firm, ripe tannins. The impressive finish gushes with flavors that run deep and persistent. Drink now through 2023. 72 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Siduri Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Parsons' Vineyard 2012 \$48** Big yet deftly balanced, presenting rich blackberry, blueberry and raspberry notes, with toasty and smoky oak, ending with a fistful of chewy tannins. The flavors push past the tannic finish. Should reward short-term cellaring. Drink now through 2023. 258 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Auteur Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2012 \$42** This presents a savory, dried herb side of Pinot, with rich dark berry, licorice and spicy floral scents. The texture begins fleshy and gains traction, lending depth and complexity. Drink now through 2023. 362 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Siduri Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Ewald Vineyard 2012 \$48** Pure, rich and layered, showing vibrant raspberry, blueberry and wild berry notes, with touches of stem-laced tannins and savory floral and dusty berry scents. Ends with firm, gripping tannins and good length. Drink now through 2023. 258 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Siduri Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Sonatera Vineyard 2012 \$48** Focused on pure, rich and firm blackberry, spice, cedar and crushed rock notes, this is a vibrant, structured Pinot, with firm tannins and excellent length. The acidity and tannins give this backbone and structure. Drink now through 2023. 368 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Three Sticks Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Durrell Vineyard 2011 \$65** A very seductive style, with gorgeous smoky oak and berry scents. Rich yet elegant on the palate, with touches of raspberry, red plum and cherry. Both delicate and detailed, ending with fine-grained tannins and excellent length. Drink now through 2022. 170 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Siduri Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Lingenfelder Vineyard 2012 \$48** Delivers spice and pure, ripe, savory plum and raspberry notes in a focused, delicate style, lingering on the finish, where the medley of berry flavors commingle. The tannins are firm and pleasantly earthy. Drink now through 2022. 211 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Attune Pinot Noir Carneros-Sonoma County 2011 \$48** Offers a dusty, savory dried herb edge, complex and pleasing, with snappy wild berry and strawberry notes. Tight and focused, this ends with ripe, vibrant tannins. Drink now through 2022. 274 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Chasseur Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2012 \$40** Delicate and silky, with subtle dried herb, caraway seed and sour cherry flavors. Presents fine-grained tannins along a mineral edge that slowly gains traction. Drink now through 2022. 434 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Davies Vineyards Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Nobles Vineyard 2012 \$55** Shows off a delicate, herb-laced mix of sour cherry, fresh earth and floral scents. Firm, gripping tannins hold the flavors in check. Drink now through 2023. 550 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Lachini Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast La Cruz Vineyard 2012 \$50** Offers rich and smoky toasty oak nuances, balanced by a mix of plum and cherry fruit. A complete, full-bodied, layered wine that ends with complex tiers of flavor and good length. Drink now through 2023. 126 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Rhys Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Bearwallow Vineyard 2011 \$59** A dusty mix of dried herb and savory berry is at the core of this balanced effort. Turns

dry, with persistent savory-graphite-crushed rock minerality, lending this a juicy aftertaste. Drink now through 2022.—J.L.

**89 Domaine Carneros Pinot Noir Carneros 2012 \$35** Presents crisp, ripe, snappy red berry flavors, with touches of anise and black licorice, ending with pebbled tannins that give this a mouthwatering aftertaste. Drink now through 2024. 9,600 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Domaine Carneros Pinot Noir Carneros The Famous Gate 2012 \$75** Fresh and ripe, with pure cherry and huckleberry notes, featuring a savory edge and dried herb, black tea and spice details. Firms and turns more elegant on the finish, where the tannins provide solid grip. Drink now through 2024. 1,200 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Rhys Pinot Noir San Mateo County Family Farm Vineyard 2011 \$59** Aromas of damp clay and wet earth join dried herb and savory dried berry notes in this taut, distinctive wine. The tannins are earth-laced and gritty, so this may be best after a few years in the cellar. Best after 2016.—J.L.

**89 Rhys Pinot Noir San Mateo County Home Vineyard 2011 \$79** A distinct, savory style, showing rich loamy earth, dried herb and berry flavors, accented by a crushed rock layer of tannins that provides a solid foundation, maintaining the fresh earth personality. Drink now through 2023.—J.L.

**89 Siduri Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2012 \$32** Cobs of rich, juicy blackberry and red berry fruit are front and center, shaded by creamy oak and deceptively firm tannins. Offers immediate appeal, with room for cellaring. Drink now through 2020. 2,212 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Talley Pinot Noir Arroyo Grande Valley 2012 \$36** A deceptively subtle style that entices with smoky anise and black licorice notes amid a firm core of wild blackberry. Ends with gripping tannins and fine length. Drink now through 2023. 4,530 cases made.—J.L.

**88 La Follette Pinot Noir North Coast 2012 \$20** Well-crafted, with vibrant raspberry, wild berry, plum and rose petal scents, firming midpalate, where the fine-grained tannins offer a mix of gravel and dried spice. Ends with a long, gripping finish. Drink now through 2023. 6,300 cases made.—J.L.

**88 Layer Cake Pinot Noir Central Coast 2013 \$15** Fresh and vibrant, with dense berry, toasty oak, dried herb and loamy forest floor notes. Very complete and full through the finish. Drink now: 22,000 cases made.—J.L.

**87 Cherry Pie Pinot Noir Monterey-Sonoma-Santa Barbara Counties Cherry Tart 2013 \$20** Intense and concentrated, with dark berry, earth, grapefruit and cedar pushing in several directions. Fans out and gains tannic muscle on the finish. Drink now through 2025. 18,000 cases made.—J.L.

CALIFORNIA  
Roussanne & Blends

**91 Jada XCV Paso Robles 2013 \$35** Intense, fragrant and very bold, with a honeysuckle note weaving in and out of the pear, peach and melon flavors, showing spice accents and a touch of butterscotch. Ripe and rich, graced by very refreshing acidity. Roussanne, Grenache Blanc and Viognier. Drink now: 412 cases made.—M.W.

**90 Quivira Roussanne-Viognier Dry Creek Valley 2012 \$32** Smooth and very juicy, this offers a blend of mango, papaya and ripe peach flavors, accented by a squirt of Meyer lemon juice. The spice, honeysuckle and green apple notes crescendo on the finish. Powerful and refreshing. Drink now: 253 cases made.—M.W.

**90 Tablas Creek Roussanne Paso Robles 2012 \$35** Intriguing, aromatic, smooth, fresh and refreshing, with lemon and peach flavors that feature an appealing roasted, almost savory quality. Features thyme, lemon verbena and celery leaf details, and a crunchy sea salt note on the finish. Drink now through 2020. 650 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Elyse L'Ingénue Naggiari Vineyard Sierra Foothills 2012 \$32** Appealing, offering a mix of ripe peach, apple and pineapple juice accents, with a broad body and a refreshing acidity, revealing floral, spice and green tea accents on the finish. Roussanne, Marsanne, Viognier and Grenache Blanc. Drink now. 541 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Tablas Creek Esprit de Tablas Blanc Paso Robles 2012 \$45** Offers ripe peach, green apple and nectarine flavors, with succulent acidity, a supple body and pretty white flower, mineral, chamomile and orange zest details on the finish. Roussanne, Grenache Blanc and Picpoul Blanc. Drink now. 2,365 cases made.—M.W.

## CALIFORNIA Syrah & Blends

**96 Pruet Syrah Sierra Foothills Championship Cuvée 2012 \$100** Exhibits a dense core of black licorice, blackberry, mocha, espresso, cedar and road tar notes, taking in a wide range of flavors and delivering them in a tightly focused package. Drink now through 2028. 50 cases made.—J.L.

**94 Prospect 772 Syrah California The Instigator 2012 \$36** Generous spicy, toasty, mocha-laced oak is the entry to firm, vivid black licorice-tinged blackberry, espresso, cedar and tobacco flavors. Gains and holds focus on the finish, with firm, gripping tannins. Drink now through 2026. 95 cases made.—J.L.

**94 Tensley Syrah Santa Barbara County OGT 2013 \$90/1.5L** A riveting wine, firm, structured and graceful, with juicy blackberry and wild berry fruit that's sharply focused. Gains depth, revealing hints of pomegranate and huckleberry that sing in harmony on the finish. Drink now through 2028. 250 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Booker Syrah Paso Robles Fracture 24 2012 \$70** Seductive, creamy, mocha-scented oak makes the initial aromas alluring, with dense dark berry, cedar, black licorice and subtle herb shadings, aided by a long, lingering finish. Drink now through 2026. 512 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Paul Hobbs Syrah Sonoma County Kick Ranch Vineyard 2012 \$50** Pure and complex, with vivid blackberry, wild berry and dark plum flavors, accented by peppery floral scents and firm, gripping tannins that hold the flavors on the palate. Ends with a splash of smoky mocha nuances. Drink now through 2024. 290 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Keplinger Syrah Fair Play Diamond Bar 2012 \$60** Bold, rich and layered, with firm tannins cloaking the juicy blackberry and wild berry notes, accented by touches of berry jam, anise and cedar. Gains depth and amplitude, revealing subtle berry and spice hints. Ends with gripping tannins. Drink now through 2027. 80 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Prospect 772 The Brawler Sierra Foothills 2012 \$36** A big, rich, powerful style that packs in loads of dark berry, pencil lead, graphite and loamy earth notes. Brawny, yet with finesse and grace. Ends with white pepper details and gritty tannins. Syrah and Viognier. Drink now through 2026. 120 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Pruet Syrah Sierra Foothills CSP 2012 \$36** Remarkably fresh and vibrant, with a solid core of graphite-laced blackberry, black licorice, gravelly earth, tobacco,

mocha and espresso notes. The flavors grow and linger, supported by chewy tannins that add to the textural nuances. Drink now through 2028. 150 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Saxum Booker Vineyard Paso Robles 2012 \$98** Presents a massive core of earth- and dark berry-driven flavors, with dense mineral, graphite, crushed berry and rock, mocha and raspberry accents. Ends with a sturdy wall of tannins. Syrah and Mourvèdre. Best from 2016 through 2028. 389 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Araujo Syrah Napa Valley Eisele Vineyard 2011 \$145** An exciting, vibrant Syrah, intense and deeply flavored, offering rich dark berry, spice, roasted herb and hot stone sensations that are sharply focused but also quite tannic and chewy. Best from 2016 through 2028. 475 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Booker Vertigo 24 Paso Robles 2012 \$65** Firm, dense and chewy, with gripping tannins wrapped around a tight core of dark berry, mocha, mineral and espresso. Sails along on the finish, gaining depth and nuance. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache. Drink now through 2026. 569 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Epoch Authenticity Paderewski Vineyard Paso Robles 2012 \$65** A big, robust style, with tiers of dense, dark, chewy fruit, built around blackberry, cedar, road tar and graphite notes. Ends with a wall of tannins, cloaked around the dark berry and chocolate flavors. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Viognier. Best from 2016 through 2028. 571 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Epoch Estate Blend Paso Robles 2012 \$50** A powerful expression of dark fruit, fresh earth, herb and cedar flavors. The core of blackberry, dusty-loamy earth, fresh-cut cedar and commanding tannins doesn't let up, staying powerful, deep and persistent throughout. Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Tempranillo. Best from 2016 through 2027. 1,349 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Epoch Syrah Paso Robles Block B Paderewski Vineyard 2012 \$70** Ripe, plump and generous, with a smooth entry introducing rich graphite and mineral-driven blackberry notes. Maintains focus and structure amid the long, persistent finish, echoing the core flavors. Drink now through 2028. 353 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Eric Kent Syrah Carneros Las Madres Vineyard 2011 \$42** Delivers a streamlined mix of fresh, snappy red berry and blackberry notes, with touches of pepper, spice and red licorice. Firms nicely on the finish. The tannins give the flavors traction and length. Drink now through 2024. 95 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Eric Kent Syrah Sonoma County Kalen's Big Boy Blend 2011 \$42** A robust style, brimming with dark berry, black cherry and plum flavors. Firmly tannic, yet with a measure of finesse and grace, ending with complex tiers of cedar, dark berry, spice and nutmeg. Drink now through 2024. 259 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Favia Rompecabezas Amador County 2012 \$75** A bit rustic, this offers plenty of moving parts, from rich, earthy blackberry flavors to cedar, spice and tobacco leaf hints, ending with gripping tannins. New elements emerge with every sip. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache. Drink now through 2026. 485 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Terry Hoage Syrah Paso Robles The Hedge 2012 \$60** Shows a creamy, toasty, mocha-scented edge, leading to dried herb and berry, black licorice, espresso and savory notes. Ends long, gaining depth, with friendly tannins. Drink now through 2024. 340 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Jonata Syrah Santa Ynez Valley La Sangre de Jonata 2011 \$125** A potent, delicious effort, with a wide range of flavors. Dark and dense, with aromas of blackberry, thubarb, pepper, tar, tobacco leaf and cedar. Eases up a bit, showing a suppleness mid-palate on. Ends with a mix of anise and licorice notes. Drink now through 2028. 510 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Lagier Meredith Syrah Mount Veeder 2012 \$48** A dense, muscular Syrah, intensely tannic and chewy, with a tight core of beefy, peppery wild berry, dried herb and savory flavors that are vibrant and compelling. This is very tight and closed, ending with chewy tannins. Best from 2018 through 2028. 425 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Relic Syrah Napa Valley Scarpa 2012 \$55** A big and rich, yet graceful, expression of Syrah, offering a mix of espresso, wild berry, blackberry, toasty oak, anise, black licorice and mineral notes that sail along on the finish despite the gripping tannins. Best from 2016 through 2028. 84 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Roar Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2012 \$40** Offers a ripe, juicy, elegant mix of dark berry, cedar, spice and licorice, showing impressive focus and purity of flavor. Graceful finish. Drink now through 2026. 121 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Saxum Broken Stones Paso Robles 2012 \$98** A tour de force that's dense, powerful and chunky, with a rich, extracted core of dark berry, graphite, crushed rock, tar and cedar notes. Gripping but engaging on the finish. Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, Mourvèdre and Roussanne. Best from 2016 through 2028. 1,112 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Torrín Tsunderer Torrín Vineyard Paso Robles 2011 \$62** Delightfully complex, with a mix of subtle flavor nuances supported by rich, chewy tannins. The mocha, dark berry, espresso, tobacco and cedar notes all fold together gracefully. Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Tannat and Grenache. Best from 2016 through 2027. 198 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Westerly Côte Blonde Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara 2012 \$45** Shows ample power and finesse. Racy aromas of currant, licorice and smoke open to concentrated flavors of boysenberry, cedar and pencil lead, finishing with ripe but firm tannins. Syrah and Viognier. Best from 2017 through 2022. 589 cases made.—T.F.

**92 Wrath Syrah Monterey San Saba Vineyard 2012 \$39** A great structure and a plush texture combine in this powerful yet sleek red. Aromas of wild game and raspberry open to flavors of plum, fig and roasted herbs. The tannins are firm but ripe. Drink now through 2025. 145 cases made.—T.F.



MICHAEL THOMAS  
Co-owner

**91 Behrens Family Resurrection California 2012 \$70** Delivers a laser beam of tight, rich, vibrant blackberry, nutmeg, wild berry, mocha and cedar notes, ending fresh and lively, with ripe, chewy tannins and excellent length. Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2026. 92 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Denner The Dirt Worshipper Central Coast 2012 \$65** A depth charge of dark, dense fruit built around a core of ripe but firm mineral-tinged tannins, offering notes of blueberry, tobacco, game and cracked pepper. Hands-off for now. Syrah, Viognier and Roussanne. Best from 2017 through 2024. 1,050 cases made.—T.F.

**91 Favia Syrah Amador County Quarzo 2012 \$75** Firm and chewy, with gripping tannins and a tasty core of blackberry, crushed rock, cedar and graphite. Ends with a nice pulse of blackberry and licorice notes. Drink now through 2027. 284 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Law Sagacious Paso Robles 2011 \$67** Offers a generous mix of blackberry and cherry flavors, with spice, cedar and fresh earth notes. Firm, ripe tannins show on the long finish. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache. Drink now through 2027. 593 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Roar Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Rosella's Vineyard 2012 \$40** Brimming with ripe, zesty wild berry and blackberry fruit that shows a spicy side, this is firmly tannic without being weighty, maintaining a core of fruitiness and ending with a long, full finish. Drink now through 2026. 48 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Saxum Heart Stone Vineyard Paso Robles 2012 \$98** Offers a potent expression of loamy earth-infused dark berry, sage, bay leaf, espresso, black tea and black licorice flavors, all deep and persistent, cloaked in chewy tannins. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Best from 2016 through 2028. 410 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Saxum Syrah Paso Robles Bone Rock James Berry Vineyard 2012 \$98** Exhibits a powerful core of rich dark berry, graphite, chocolate, dusty earth and tobacco flavors. Slowly unfolds to reveal more nuances, suggesting that this may develop for some time. Prominent tannins. Best from 2016 through 2029. 462 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Saxum Terry Hoage Vineyard Paso Robles 2012 \$98** Generous blackberry, black licorice, anise and sage notes give this a deep, intense core of flavor, matched by chewy, gripping tannins. Syrah, Grenache and Mourvèdre. Best from 2016 through 2028. 338 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Wrath Syrah Monterey Ex Anima 2012 \$25** Plush and savory, with boysenberry and smoky sage aromas, balanced by rich, layered flavors of blueberry, espresso and roasted herb. The long finish leads to big and ripe tannins. Drink now through 2022. 168 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Ampelos Syrah Sta. Rita Hills Gamma: The Complex 2010 \$35** Dense and appealingly racy, with floral blueberry and violet aromas, featuring layered flavors of raspberry, pepper and grilled herb. Tannins sneak in on the finish. Drink now through 2022. 408 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Cypher Kiler Canyon Vineyard Paso Robles 2010 \$57** Rich and sleek, with floral blueberry and smoked meat aromas, this features ripe but well-structured flavors of boysenberry, espresso and pepper. Syrah and Mourvèdre. Drink now through 2022. 249 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Denner Syrah Paso Robles 2012 \$60** Densely packed but vibrant, with a blend of intriguing blackberry, smoky sage and loamy mineral notes that are wrapped around ripe yet firm tannins. Drink now through 2023. 800 cases made.—T.F.

**90 DuMOL Syrah Russian River Valley Eddie's Patch 2012 \$79** Rich and potent, with taut, vivid, dense blackberry, kirsch, cedar and licorice notes, ending with gripping tannins that let the flavors slide through. Drink now through 2028. 396 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Eric Kent Syrah Russian River Valley The Barrel Climber 2012 \$40** An intensely grapey and extracted red, featuring pure, chunky blackberry, wild berry, black licorice, smoke, graphite and cedary oak notes. Ends with a dense, chewy aftertaste. Best from 2016 through 2028. 156 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Hudson Vineyards Syrah Napa Valley Carneros 2012 \$90** Dense but polished, with aromas of rose petal, game and wild berry and deep, layered flavors of boysenberry, dried sage and cracked pepper. Drink now through 2022. 60 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Jemrose Syrah Bennett Valley Cardiac Hill Vineyard 2012 \$48** Packs a potent mix of taut dark berry, graphite, crushed rock and mineral notes, showing plenty of torque. Ends with a chewy, tannic mix of extracted berry and fresh-turned earth, with good length. Needs time. Best from 2016 through 2028. 106 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Kaena Syrah Ballard Canyon Tierra Alta Vineyard 2012 \$55** Dark and intense, with rich blackberry and huckleberry notes that are snappy and firmly tannic. Yet the tannins are ripe, allowing this to gain a measure of suppleness mid-palate on. Drink now through 2026. 100 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Law Intrepid Paso Robles 2011 \$67** Firm, rich, dense and gutsy, with a muscular mix of tannins and notes of dark berry, loamy earth, crushed rock and savory. Ends with tannic grip. Syrah. Drink now through 2027. 537 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Linne Calodo Nemesis Paso Robles 2012 \$78** Savory and ripe, with racy boysenberry and smoky cracked pepper aromas and dense but fleshy flavors of plum, licorice and subtle tobacco. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache. Drink now through 2021. 370 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Lucia Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2012 \$50** Dense and well-built, firmly tannic and chewy, with a core of blackberry, mineral, cedar and graphite. Despite the tightness, there's an allure and persistence to the flavors, with spicy, peppery notes on the finish. Best from 2016 through 2027. 174 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Lucia Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Soberanes Vineyard 2012 \$50** Very precise, dense and focused, with a laser beam of blackberry, wild berry, spice and herb flavors. The structure is so perfect that it overshadows the ultratight core. Tannic and cleansing on the finish. Best from 2016 through 2026. 83 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Lucia Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Susan's Hill 2012 \$50** Intensely flavored, with lots of firm, juicy blackberry and wild berry flavors. Subtle dusty cedary notes turn to black licorice, ending with firm tannins. Best from 2016 through 2028. 226 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Margerum Syrah Santa Barbara County Über 2012 \$50** Broodingly intense, with floral aromas of violet and blueberry and complex but still tightly wound flavors of blackberry, mineral and smoked pepper beef. Drink now through 2025. 158 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Pruet Lucky Lauren Red Sierra Foothills 2012 \$29** Combines muscle with power, featuring a dense, chewy, tannic mix of grapes. The core features currant, blackberry, cedar, dusty oak and loamy earth notes. Ends with mouthcoating tannins. Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Best from 2016 through 2028. 125 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Ramey Syrah Sonoma Coast 2012 \$40** Rich, with vivid dark berry, raspberry and crushed rock accents to the firm tannins. This captures the density of the grape yet remains light-footed, graceful and refined, ending with a clean, snappy finish. Drink now through 2023. 885 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Sanguis Syrah Central Coast Bossman 2011 \$75** A big, vibrant style, with gutsy tannins and a wealth of dense dark berry fruit, unfolding to offer crushed rock, black licorice, cedar and dried herb notes. Drink now through 2024. 1,620 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Skinner Syrah El Dorado 2010 \$52** Shows good depth and focus, with floral huckleberry aromas and deep flavors of plum, smoky herb and mineral. The tannins are big and ripe. Drink now through 2022. 90 cases made.—T.F.

**90 Torrín James Berry Vineyard Paso Robles 2011 \$62** A rich, potent, dense effort, with a chewy core of blackberry, wild berry, crushed rock and graphite. The power is evident. This wine will best be served by cellaring short term. Syrah and Grenache. Drink now through 2028. 91 cases made.—J.L.

# WineFAQs

From your friends at Wine Spectator magazine and WineSpectator.com

How much wine should I pour into a glass?

A wineglass should be no more than a third of a glass full. If you're a vigorous swirler, you want plenty of room to do your thing without spilling the wine everywhere.



I'm having a get-together with friends. How much wine do we need?

Start with a formula of about 2 to 3 drinks per person, which is about half a bottle of wine per guest. If your event is going longer than 2 or 3 hours, you could also figure a drink per person per hour, more or less. That's just a baseline—you may have a better idea if your guests are more of a sipping crowd or heavier drinkers.

What is the best type of opener to use for an older bottle of wine?

Use a two-pronged wine opener, known as an "Ah-So." Starting with the longer of the two prongs, slowly slide the prongs into the tight space between the cork and the bottle. Rock the opener back and forth until the top of the Ah-So is resting on the top of the cork. Then twist the cork while gently pulling it up. Take your time, and you'll remove the cork in one piece.



Do you have more questions? Visit WineSpectator.com and we'll help you enjoy every sip!

**90 Torrin Syrah Paso Robles Akasha Torrin Vineyard 2011 \$62** A rich, gutsy Syrah, with a potent mix of dark berry, fresh and dusty earth, licorice, crushed rock and subtle mocha, all moving in the same direction and unfolding gracefully on the finish. Drink now through 2028. 196 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Beckmen Syrah Ballard Canyon Purisima Mountain Vineyard 2012 \$32** Dense and tightly wound, with lots of intriguing notes mixed in. Aromas of currant, tobacco and pencil lead lead to concentrated flavors of blueberry, tar and licorice. Hands off for now. Best from 2017 through 2025. 1,600 cases made.—T.F.

**89 Behrens Family Sainte Fumée California 2012 \$60** Tastes reduced and gamy, but the core dark berry, anise, licorice, cedar and espresso flavors are deep, focused and persistent, ending with chewy tannins. Syrah, Cinsault, Cabernet Sauvignon and Grenache. Drink now through 2027. 352 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Brave & Maiden Syrah Santa Ynez Valley Limited 2011 \$65** Shows good structure and balance, featuring notes of smoky raspberry, grilled pepper beef and licorice. Drink now through 2024. 24 cases made.—T.F.

**89 Domaine de la Terre Rouge Syrah Shenandoah Valley Sentinel Oak Vineyard Pyramid Block 2012 \$40** Appealing aromas of huckleberry, smoky herb and mocha lead to dense yet racy flavors of plum, dried herb and loamy white pepper. Needs time. Best from 2017 through 2024. 400 cases made.—T.F.

**89 Epoch Ingenuity Paso Robles 2012 \$65** Offers a potent mix of tannin-faced blackberry, wild berry, cedar, tar, porcino, tobacco and sage notes, tilting toward drier savory accents on the finish. Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2028. 1,330 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Krupp Brothers Veraison Napa Valley 2009 \$55** Very dense and tannic, with a rich, chewy core of espresso, dried dark berry, chicory, nutmeg and savory dried berry flavors that lend this a rustic scent and texture. Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Malbec, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. Drink now through 2028. 2,135 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Novy Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Garys' Vineyard 2011 \$32** This tightly wound red shows some lovely boysenberry, toasty mocha and game flavors inside. Hands-off for now. Best from 2017 through 2022. 148 cases made.—T.F.



DIANNA & ADAM LEE  
Owners & Winemakers

**89 Novy Syrah Santa Lucia Highlands Susan's Hill Vineyard 2011 \$34** Racy and full of layered fruit. Aromas of smoky boysenberry and anise lead to rich, zesty blueberry and roasted spice flavors that linger. Drink now through 2020. 198 cases made.—T.F.

**89 Villa Creek Avenger Paso Robles 2012 \$50** Offers a dense, powerful core of extracted tannins and blackberry, with shades of cedar, graphite and mineral, gaining depth, length and persistence, and ending with a pleasant tobacco edge. Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache. Best from 2016 through 2028. 500 cases made.—J.L.

**88 Andrew Murray Syrah Santa Ynez Valley Tous les Jours 2013 \$16** Zesty and racy, if rather chunky, with appealing boysenberry and smoky spice aromas and dense flavors of blueberry, roasted herb and espresso. Drink now through 2021. 10,000 cases made.—T.F.

**87 Juxtapoz North Coast 2012 \$25** A zesty and appealing red, with notes of blackberry, smoky sage and tar. Syrah, Zinfandel, Petite Sirah, Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon. Drink now through 2019. 12,000 cases made.—T.F.

**87 Greg Norman California Estates Shark Red Central Coast 2012 \$15** Boysenberry and licorice aromas lead to rustic flavors of raspberry, cedar and roasted herb, with dry tannins emerging on the finish. Syrah, Petite Sirah, Grenache, Mourvèdre and Zinfandel. Drink now through 2020. 10,000 cases made.—T.F.

## CALIFORNIA Viognier & Blends

**92 Caliza Kissin' Cousins Paso Robles 2012 \$28** Stylish, with peach, pear and yellow apple flavors show spice accents, with a luxurious, full, silky body. Chamomile and floral notes linger on the long finish, as does a dried apricot hint. Viognier, Grenache Blanc and Roussanne. Drink now. 230 cases made.—M.W.

**91 Skipstone Viognier Alexander Valley 2012 \$48** Offers a smooth, lush mouthful of apricot, pear and peach flavors, with honeyed accents and details of orange blossom, lemon verbena and yellow apple. A juicy acidity weaves in and out on the long, elegant finish. Drink now. 200 cases made.—M.W.

**90 Jeff Cohn Viognier Napa Valley 2 Guys 2 Barrels Stagecoach Vineyard 2012 \$58** Peach, pear and yellow apple flavors are ripe and rich, with a soft acidity and accents of coconut water and baking spices imparting warmth. This is appealing for the smooth texture and peach cobbler-accented finish. Drink now. 160 cases made.—M.W.

**90 Ferguson Crest Viognier Santa Barbara County 2012 \$28** Balanced and pure, with rich, lush pear, peach and yellow raisin flavors that are smooth and creamy, showing floral and spice overtones and a refreshing acidity on the long, spicy finish. Drink now. 210 cases made.—M.W.

**90 Jemrose Viognier Bennett Valley Egret Pond Vineyard 2012 \$32** Peach, apricot and yellow apple flavors are ripe and lush, with almond skin details and just the right amount of acidity. Features plenty of spice, with toasty accents on the finish. Drink now. 200 cases made.—M.W.

**90 Novy Viognier Russian River Valley Sunny View Vineyard 2013 \$25** Ripe, juicy and appealing, with peach, yellow apple and pear flavors that feature a succulent note and hints of melon and honeysuckle. Focused and long, with a refreshing finish. Drink now. 195 cases made.—M.W.

**90 Roar Viognier Santa Lucia Highlands Sierra Mar Vineyard 2012 \$40** A rich and complex white, with flavors of peach cobbler, warm baking spices, honeysuckle and dried apricot that are rich, smooth and round, finishing with juicy acidity and an appealing note of citrus pith. Complex and persistent. Drink now. 71 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Adobe Road Viognier Dry Creek Valley Kemp Vineyard 2013 \$38** A distinctive white, packed with flavor, this offers a complex range of orange marmalade, dried apricot, honeysuckle and melon flavors alongside ripe, sweet-tasting peach notes. For all the richness here, this finishes on a crisp, refreshing accent. Drink now. 210 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Epiphany Inspiration Santa Barbara County 2012 \$25** Ripe peach, nectarine and apricot flavors are fresh, ripe and fleshy, with an appealing touch of marmalade, spice and toasted coconut on the juicy finish. Viognier, Grenache Blanc, Marsanne and Roussanne. Drink now. 125 cases made.—M.W.

**88 Robert Hall Viognier Paso Robles 2013 \$20** Yellow apple and pear flavors have a distinctive apple blossom and ripe cantaloupe edge. Hints of fennel and jasmine impart an aromatic lift, accented by juicy acidity. Drink now. 1,000 cases made.—M.W.

**87 Novy Four Mile Creek White North Coast 2013 \$15** Juicy and bright, with a refreshing note of acidity that runs through the lemongrass, melon, citrus and green apple flavors, featuring plenty of appealing herbal accents on the finish. Viognier, Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Gris. Drink now. 1,605 cases made.—M.W.

**87 Zaca Mesa Viognier Santa Ynez Valley 2013 \$16** Juicy and bright, with nice intensity to the Meyer lemon, green pear and nectarine flavors, highlighted by refreshing acidity. Drink now. 6,826 cases made.—M.W.

**85 McManis Viognier River Junction 2013 \$11** Honeyed peach and candied citrus flavors feature a note of chamomile and fresh hay, with a smooth body and a juicy core. Drink now. 17,000 cases made.—M.W.

## CALIFORNIA Other

**94 Keplinger SUMO Amador County 2012 \$60** A big, rich, hearty style that packs lots of dense dark berry, sage, dried herb and savory flavors, with chicory, coffee and underbrush notes in the background. Despite the size, tannic muscle and torque on display, there's a gracefulness to the texture and mouthfeel. Petite Sirah, Syrah and Viognier. Drink now through 2026. 200 cases made.—J.L.

**93 Keplinger Caldera El Dorado 2012 \$60** A distinctive wine that packs a wallop, with dense notes of metal, graphite and charcoal amid mineral and dark berry flavors, framed by chewy, gutsy tannins and ending with hints of game meat, creosote and pencil lead. Mourvèdre, Grenache and Crouse. Drink now through 2028. 140 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Iron Horse Brut Green Valley of Russian River Valley LD 2004 \$196/1.5L** Nicely mature, but still young at heart. Aromas of toasty crème brûlée and ginger, with a hint of rubber, open to rich and luscious flavors of baked apple, cinnamon bread and hazelnut. Drink now through 2016. 50 cases made.—T.F.

**92 Law Audacious Paso Robles 2011 \$67** Creamy mocha-faced oak wraps around a dense, chewy core of espresso, dried berry, licorice and tobacco. Long and tannic on the finish. Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Grenache and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2025. 579 cases made.—J.L.

**92 Relic Ritual Napa Valley 2012 \$50** Rich and rustic, with a graceful mouthfeel and texture, letting the juicy dark berry, black licorice, tar and roasted coffee flavors push through with ease, even amid the chewy tannins. Mourvèdre, Grenache, Syrah, Carignane and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2028. 525 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Iron Horse Brut Green Valley of Russian River Valley Classic Vintage 2009 \$40** A festive wine, perfectly focused and complex. Floral raspberry and creamy brioche aromas open to layered baked apple, fresh ginger and cinnamon spice flavors. Drink now. 2,400 cases made.—T.F.

**91 Iron Horse Brut Green Valley of Russian River Valley X 2009 \$50** Harmoonious and sleekly structured, yet subtly builds power, with Meyer lemon and floral raspberry aromas leading to complex flavors of green apple, fresh ginger and brioche. Drink now through 2015. 500 cases made.—T.F.

**91 Iron Horse Wedding Cuvée Green Valley of Russian River Valley 2010 \$42** Lively floral raspberry and peach aromas open to layered, full-bodied flavors of lemon, roasted almond and nutmeg. Serious but fun. Drink now through 2015. 4,150 cases made.—T.F.

**91 Lagier Meredith Mondeuse Mount Veeder 2012 \$42** Pleasantly wild and rustic, with ripe, chunky dark berry, dried herb, crushed rock, dried herb and savory notes that are firmly tannic and end with gritty charcoal and tarry accents. Drink now through 2024. 97 cases made.—J.L.

**91 Relic The Archive Old Vines Napa Valley 2012 \$30** Pure, rich, juicy and vivid, with a potent core of blackberry, wild berry, black licorice and crushed rock notes, gliding along on the finish despite the gritty tannins. Carignane and Petite Sirah. Drink now through 2028. 72 cases made.—J.L.

**90 Jeff Cohn Carignane California Broken Compass Old Vine 2012 \$42** Fresh and snappy, with vibrant raspberry, black cherry, anise and spice notes, ending with a touch of loamy earth and black licorice. Drink now through 2023. 120 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Derencourt Cabernet Franc Howell Mountain 2010 \$145** Dense and meaty, with a rich core of dark berry, loamy earth, dried herb and cedar notes that end with a push of flavor. This is wrapped in firm tannins, and needs time. Best from 2016 through 2026. 126 cases made.—J.L.

**89 Inlenook Blancaneaux Rutherford 2012 \$68** Crisp and flinty up front, with an intriguing mix of dried pineapple, lemon, grapefruit and nectarine flavors that are delicate and light, yet intense and powerful at the same time. The components really come into focus on the finish, where an appealing yellow raisin accent kicks in. Marsanne, Roussanne and Viognier. Drink now. 1,000 cases made.—M.W.

**89 Iron Horse Russian Cuvée Green Valley of Russian River Valley 2009 \$40** Rich and crisp, with a succulent hint of honey. Aromas of yeasty cinnamon roll and baked apple lead to plush flavors of raspberry, spice and cinnamon. Drink now. 800 cases made.—T.F.

**89 Taken Napa Valley 2012 \$30** Firm, tight and dense, with a chewy core of red berry, blackberry, cedar oak, loamy earth and dried herb nuances. Fills out nicely on the finish. Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Best from 2016 through 2026. 2,500 cases made.—J.L.

**87 Korbel Brut California Made with organically grown grapes NV \$14** Crisp and lively, with easy-going flavors of lemon, tropical fruit and creamy spice. Drink now. 14,000 cases made.—T.F.

## WASHINGTON Red

**94 Native Sun Cabernet Sauvignon Red Mountain 2010 \$65** Focused, refined and expressive, showering the palate with red berry, currant, clove and lemon meringue flavors. Earthy and savory spice notes weave through the fine tannins on the long finish. Dynamic. Drink now through 2022. 128 cases made.—H.S.

**92 Sparkman Syrah Red Mountain Ruckus 2012 \$48** Taut, focused, generous and expressive, layering the plum and currant fruit with earthy, spicy, peppery notes. Comes together harmoniously on the long finish. Best from 2016 through 2022. 417 cases made.—H.S.

**92 Sparkman Syrah Yakima Valley Darkness 2012 \$62** This has density and juicy balance, with layers of plum, currant, cinnamon and pepper flavors that pick up meaty nuances as the finish lingers. Maintains breadth and a soft touch without losing momentum. Drink now through 2022. 321 cases made.—H.S.

**91 Gramercy Syrah Walla Walla Valley 2011 \$50** Starts off quietly, but by the finish this is flashing ripe plum and thubarb flavors, shaded by hints of green tea and floral overtones. Persists, displaying intensity and finesse. Drink now through 2019. 470 cases made.—H.S.

**91 Sparkman Ruby Leigh Yakima Valley 2011 \$48** Open-textured and expressive, showing licorice accents to the black cherry and pepper flavors, wrapped in fine tannins as the finish lingers with intensity. Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec. Best from 2016 through 2020. 235 cases made.—H.S.

**91 Tamarack Taptell Vineyard Reserve Red Mountain 2010 \$50** Crunchy tannins surround a generous core of black cherry, orange peel and green olive flavors that come together smoothly on the expressive finish. Needs time for the tannins to resolve. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2016 through 2020. 84 cases made.—H.S.

**90 Brian Carter Byzance Columbia Valley 2010 \$34** Sleek and polished, with an earthy edge to the rose petal-accented black fruit flavors, finishing with intensity and grace on a medium frame. Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre, Crouse and Cinsault. Drink now through 2017. 725 cases made.—H.S.

**90 Tempus Syrah Yakima Valley 2011 \$28** Satiny, supple and expressive, with a balsamic edge to the plum and berry flavors, lingering gently against polished tannins. Drink now through 2019. 139 cases made.—H.S.



JOE FOREST  
Owner & Winemaker

**89 Doyenne Syrah Red Mountain Signature 2011 \$45** Gritty tannins underlie spicy, green tea-accented red berry flavors in this solid Syrah. Needs time for the texture to soften. Best after 2016. 1,050 cases made.—H.S.

## OTHER U.S.

**90 Sokol Blosser Evolution Red 3rd Edition America NV \$15** See Smart Buys, page 97.

**88 Gruet Blanc de Blancs American Sauvage NV \$18** Appealing, with aromas of baked apple and cinnamon that lead to zesty flavors of dusty lemon, hazelnut and spice. Drink now. 6,000 cases made.—T.F.

**88 House Wine Sauvignon Blanc America Fish House 2013 \$10** Light and frisky, with deft darts of green apple and celery pointing toward the zippy finish. Drink now. 3,600 cases made.—H.S.

**88 Sokol Blosser Evolution White 18th Edition America NV \$15** Light and silky, this off-dry, delicate style offers pretty floral and spice overtones to the modest pear flavors. Semillon, Riesling, Müller-Thurgau, Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer, Muscat and Chardonnay. Drink now. 53,000 cases made.—H.S.

**86 Sokol Blosser Evolution Sparkling America NV \$22** Off-dry, fresh and zingy, with spicy, floral, peppery overtones to the pineapple and tangerine flavors, lingering on the fruit-centered finish. Semillon, Riesling, Müller-Thurgau, Pinot Gris, Gewürztraminer, Muscat and Chardonnay. Drink now. 6,000 cases made.—H.S.

## CORRECTIONS

The correct price for the Castello d'Albora Chianti Classico 2011, from the Feb. 28 edition of the Savvy Shopper, is \$19. The correct label for the Los Haroldos Cabernet Sauvignon 2011, a Best Value in the Dec. 31 - Jan. 15 issue, appears below.



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