

2017 VINTAGE NOTES

BY WINEMAKER MATT COURTNEY

The 2017 growing season started with ample winter rains which effectively ended a four-year drought. As a result, canopies across the North Coast looked healthier and more filled out than they had in years. The steady winter rains washed through the soil profile giving the entire root system access to much needed water and nutrients.

A mild spring characterized by good weather during bloom across most regions resulted in very good set and average crop loads pretty much across the board. We saw many vineyards, in both Pinot noir and Chardonnay, carrying crops with compact, filled out clusters with very small berries. This resulted in wines with great concentration of flavor and aroma as well as good color.

The second half of the season was characterized by a series of extended hot periods. The vines seemed to weather the heat well, probably due in large part to the abundance of water in the soil profile. The heat returned once again as harvest kicked off in both the Russian River Valley and the Anderson Valley with record highs in many locations. This compressed the beginning of harvest as ripening accelerated and vineyard managers struggled to keep up and find additional picking crews.

The 2017 wines reflect these growing conditions to a T. The combination of sun and ample ground water led to dark, juicy, concentrated wines. For me, the vintage is reminiscent of 2014: the wines are dark, layered, and concentrated with moderate tannins. With great purity of fruit, the wines are eminently charming and approachable now, and should keep getting even better over the next several years.

We cannot write about the 2017 vintage without mentioning that the vintage of 2017 will certainly be remembered for the devastating fires that swept through Napa and Sonoma County in mid-October. While all of us in the North Coast community were deeply affected by this event, we at Arista are grateful that our vineyards and wines made it through untouched by this disaster. Thankfully, all of our wines had long since been safely put to bed in the cellar by the time the fires hit.





2017 BANFIELD VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

The Chardonnay blocks in Banfield Vineyard are some of the coolest sites we work with. These forty-year-old vines, planted to the Old Wente selection of Chardonnay, reside in a protected pocket of the Russian River Valley that collects cool night air, and warms up slowly only when the mid-morning sun peeks over the surrounding hills.

Aromas of lime zest, fresh mandarin, wet granite, lavender, and grilled bread emanate from the glass. The wine has firm texture, mid-weight density, and an oyster shell minerality with notes of Asian pear, quince, grilled peach, lime curd, wet stones, and candied lemon peel that build in intensity through the mid-palate and carry the long, vibrant finish.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2031



2017 PERLI VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

The Perli Vineyard Chardonnay is a new addition to the Arista portfolio. After making Pinot Noir from this cool, hillside site in the Mendocino Ridge appellation for many years, it became clear that Chardonnay from this vineyard could be very special as well. The 2017 vintage bottling proves the point, showcasing pretty aromatics of lemongrass, lemon zest, pie crust, shortbread cookie, rosemary, and white flowers. The palate offers notes of bright citrus fruits and panna cotta, framed by refreshing acidity, effortless balance, and great drinkability.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2026



2017 RITCHIE VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

Ritchie Vineyard is a magical place for Chardonnay. Home to one of the oldest plantings of Chardonnay in the Russian River Valley, this south-facing site has become famous for producing wines that simultaneously possess both wonderful richness and a lifted freshness.

The 2017 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay is a particularly ethereal example of that. Perfectly transparent, and pale gold in color, the wine is quiet and elegant at first but then builds as it opens up in the glass. A nose of panna cotta and yellow flowers is paired with flavors of white peach nectar, toasted hazelnut, grilled pineapple, and lemon curd. The palate is silky and seamless with a steely minerality adding texture to the finish.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2028.



2017 U.V. EL DIABLO VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

The 2017 U.V. El Diablo Vineyard Chardonnay was crafted from grapes grown by the esteemed vineyard manager Ulises Valdez. Ulises planted our two favorite clones of Chardonnay, "Montrachet" and "Old Wente", on the eastern banks of the Russian River. Notes of Key lime, white stone fruit, sweet cream, lemon curd, mint, brioche, cut hay, and panna cotta marry bright acidity and refreshing minerality.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2030





2017 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY PINOT NOIR

The 2017 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir is a fresh, vibrant example of wines from the appellation in a great vintage. With a beautiful dark, translucent, garnet color, the wine invites the taster in. One is greeted by a nose of cool blue fruits, Herbes de Provence, black olive, spiced candy, and damp forest floor. A modest 20% new French oak frames a core of crunchy red fruit on the palate. The wine possesses great length with tangy acidity, and finishes with an herbal note and grippy tannins that marry pleasantly with the fruit and help carry the long finish.

Peak drinking window: 2019 through 2026



2017 SONOMA COAST PINOT NOIR

With an abundance of ripe red and blue fruit, the 2017 Sonoma Coast Pinot noir is open, accessible, and delicious. On the nose, notes of spiced plums, cola, dried flowers, and grilled meat add complexity to the core of crushed berries. On the palate, the wine is broad and rich with notes of rhubarb, and tart cherries rounding out the mid-palate. A modicum of toasted oak complements the dark-fruited core with lively mineral-laced tannins supporting a juicy, medium-length finish.

Peak drinking window: 2019 through 2025



2017 FERRINGTON VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The garnet-hued 2017 Ferrington Vineyard Pinot noir is a distinctive expression of Anderson Valley Pinot noir that blends power and freshness in the same glass. Explosive aromatics of crushed pomegranate seeds, dried lavender, plum, and graphite are hallmarks of Ferrington Vineyard and are present in abundance. The intensely floral nose is accompanied by flavors of bright red raspberry, black pepper, toasted herbs, and tart Bing cherries. A tangy, persistent acid backbone blends with almost effervescent tannins to give the wine a firm and energetic finish.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2030



2017 MONONI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The prodigious 2017 Mononi Vineyard Pinot noir displays all of the density and complexity of the spectacular 2017 growing season. The appearance of the wine is mesmerizing, with a dark purple, almost totally opaque core fading into a vibrant violet rim at the wine's edge. Copious amounts of blue and red fruits along with cola, blackberry purée, and grilled herbs are present in abundance on both the nose and the palate. Supporting notes of wild cherry, graham cracker, rose petals, and crushed granite come in waves as the wine opens up in the glass. Chewy tannins and tangy acidity add seriousness to the juicy mid-palate; and while it's delicious in its youth, this edition of Mononi should age beautifully for the next decade or more.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2030



2017 PERLI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The 2017 Perli Vineyard Pinot noir boasts an exotic nose of forest floor, black plum, pine needle, and wild raspberry. Firm, mouth-filling tannins and tangy acidity typical of this remote site on the Mendocino Coast provide ample structure for flavors of black currant, graphite, tangy cherry, cool blue fruits, and Asian spice. There is a coppery acidity and mineral-driven intensity on the palate which carries the minute-long finish.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2030



2017 TOBONI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The 2017 Toboni Vineyard Pinot noir is deep, voluptuous, and mouth-filling - classic Russian River Valley. The nose is full of brown sugar, sweet spice, cola, and raspberry aromas. Notes of cocoa powder, ginger, fresh raspberries, and graphite come in waves as this layered and complex wine opens up in the glass. Aromas of raspberry coulis, turned earth, black tea, and violets begin to develop with exposure to air. The finish is long and persistent with tangy acidity providing structure, freshness, and lift.

Peak drinking window: 2019 through 2026



2017 U.V. LUCKY WELL VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

Lucky Well Vineyard is perched at the very top of Stoetz Ridge, the land mass that divides the true Sonoma Coast from the Russian River Valley. As such, the wine made from this site always expresses qualities from both regions: the high-toned wild berry fruit and earthiness of the Coast, and the power, richness, and complexity of the Russian River Valley. A captivating nose of rose water, blue and black fruits, Asian spice, and wild blackberries fills the glass. The palate is a fusion of salted caramel, blueberry, wild strawberry, and just-ripe black plum. The wine possesses effortless balance, with bright but well-integrated acidity that matches perfectly with the fruit profile. The flavors expand on the palate and are carried by a firm, mineral-laden backbone for a minute or more.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2030



2017 HARPER'S REST ESTATE VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The Harper's Rest Estate bottling always stands out as one of the flagship wines of our portfolio. The 2017 Harper's Rest Pinot Noir is no exception. With a vibrant, dark garnet color, and bouquet of crushed cherries, fresh porcini mushrooms, pencil shavings, and puréed blackberries, this estate wine is a classic example of Russian River Valley richness, density, and finesse.

Harper's Rest is a two-acre block planted on an ancient, gravelly, alluvial deposit on our Westside Road estate. This soil imbues the wine with a power, minerality, and concentration that is unparalleled in our line-up. While the wine is delicious right out of the bottle, it improves with air, releasing a cascade of flavors and aromas: black tea, raspberry compote, graphite powder, sour black cherry, sandalwood, and black plum are all present in this prodigious wine. Tangy acidity, firm tannins, and a wet-gravel minerality carry the intensity for a minute-long finish.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2030



2017 TWO BIRDS ESTATE VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The saturated, deep ruby color of the 2017 Two Birds Pinot Noir is a signature of this block on our Westside Road estate. Planted in 2006 to three heritage selections of Pinot Noir - Pommard, Swan, and Vosne-Romanée - this site seems to produce more complex and complete wines with every passing year. The nose is captivating, with an explosive core of red and blue fruits wrapped in a blanket of turned earth and warm spice notes. This is a wine that seems to reveal yet another layer, another nuance, with every passing minute. One minute, wild raspberries and ripe red cherries are complemented by notes of damp forest floor and dried roses; the next, fresh mint and crushed bay leaf appear. A wave of blue fruits is complemented and heightened by a subtle note of barrel char with more time in the glass. On the palate, a rich grippy expression of black plum, ripe raspberry, and candied rose petals greets the taster. Fine-grained tannins are present and provide structure but are polished and never drying or astringent. Cool blue and red fruits are ever-present as the fingerprint of our Middle Reach property.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2030