

2019 VINTAGE NOTES

BY WINEMAKER MATT COURTNEY

It is hard to know where to start with a vintage this good! I have been so infatuated with the 2018s for the past few months, that when I began to turn my attention back to the 2019s for the first time a few weeks ago, I was shocked by how well they have settled in since bottling.

Comparing two excellent vintages like 2018 and 2019 is extremely gratifying. I think of both as relatively cool vintages: they have become part of a post-drought block of years that have some commonalities. If the period of 2012 through 2017 can be considered the drought years, we can see a trend in those wines of ever-increasing concentration and power. Then beginning with the 2018 vintage, we saw a dramatic shift. Normal rainfall levels have returned to the Russian River Valley over the past several growing seasons, and the summers have been more moderate culminating two mild growing season in 2018 - 2019. 2019 was had a slightly warmer summer than 2018 - but 2018 was probably the coldest summer we have had in decades.

This climatic change is reflected perfectly in the wines. 2018 is a vintage of sublime, ethereal wines - so nuanced and airy on the palate yet packed with layers of flavor and aroma. 2019 is in the same vein - elegant and poised - but with the intensity turned up a notch. The result is a spectrum of wines with incredible balance and aging potential.




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U.V. - Lucky Well Vineyard

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In many ways, the 2018 / 2019 comparison reminds me of the 2012 / 2013 pairing. 2012 being a vintage of dark, fruity, charming wines with great drinkability, which was followed by 2013, a vintage with a similar fruit profile, but with the added element of a shade more structure and "grip." The 2019s seem just slightly more serious than the 2018s, and potentially a bit more age-worthy. Time will tell.



Certainly, our comfort level in the new winery production building has grown over the past months (2019 was the second vintage fermented in the new building), and the wines continue to benefit as we settle in. And as our winemaking evolves, as it always will, in small ways to eke out more and more finesse and excellence out of our wonderful portfolio vineyards, the wine quality will continue to elevate.

But it is not just skill in the cellar that produces a lineup like these 2019s - it takes a very rare and special vintage. For me, 2019 represents an incredible confluence of the next evolution in our winemaking, a new facility that allows us to fully realize that vision, and one of the best vintages I have seen in my lifetime.

I hope you enjoy the wines as much as I do.

Cheers!
Matt Courtney



2019 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY CHARDONNAY



The 2019 Russian River Valley Chardonnay is a blend of barrels from five Russian River Valley vineyards: Flora Marie, El Diablo, Ritchie, Banfield, and our Westside Road Estate. It's always an exceptional introduction to the character of Russian River Valley Chardonnay from the vintage. With contributions from some of the finest Chardonnay vineyards in the appellation and made with slightly less new oak than our vineyard designates, this cuvée offers the highest level of early drinkability in our portfolio while maintaining an extraordinary degree of quality.

2019 follows in the footsteps of 2018 as a relatively cool vintage, evidenced in the glass by a lively and mouth-watering acid profile. Notes of lemon curd, melon, and white flowers are joined by a faint note of warm baking spice and caramelized sugar.

Peak drinking window: 2022 through 2027

2019 BANFIELD VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



Banfield Vineyard is one of the oldest vineyards in Sonoma County, and the entire state of California. The Chardonnay block were planted around 1980 and the 40-year-old vines continue to produce a tiny crop of the most intensely flavored and aromatic Chardonnay that we work with.

The 2019 edition of the Banfield Vineyard Chardonnay boasts a complex bouquet that seems to continually evolve over time, constantly shifting between sweet, fruit-derived notes and savory, mineral notes: candied lime peel, gum drop, lemon-lime soda, and grilled pineapple mingle with notes of cut hay, melted rocks, oyster shell, pie crust, and burnt sugar. Texturally, the wine shows firm acidity with a pleasant amount of tannic nuance, both of which indicate well a long life in the cellar.

Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2030



2019 PERLI VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

A rare departure from our Russian River Valley offerings, the Perli Vineyard Chardonnay from the Mendocino Ridge appellation is worth the detour. The raciest Chardonnay in the Arista portfolio, Perli Vineyard Chardonnay is made from grapes grown on steep slopes above 1,000 feet within sight of the Pacific Ocean. Candied citrus and saline minerality form the centerpiece of the palate. Firm yet integrated acidity drives the crystalline finish.

Peak drinking window: 2022 through 2032.



2019 RITCHIE VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

The 2019 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay is easily the most graceful edition of this wine we have ever made. With its south-facing aspect in the center of the Russian River Valley appellation, Ritchie Vineyard is known for producing broad, expansive, wildly expressive wines. By capturing and controlling that natural tendency of the vineyard, we can achieve the best of both worlds: a wine with intrinsic richness but also freshness and balance.

Reticent at first, the wine opens up to reveal classic Chardonnay notes of toasted brioche, vanilla, sweet cream, and lemon candy. The incredible mouthfeel is a trademark of Ritchie vineyard, and the 2019 vintage is totally on-brand: This wine builds in intensity on the palate over the course of a minute-long finish, culminating in a silky amalgamation of toasted almond, caramelized sugar, and poached peach.

Peak drinking window: 2022 through 2032.



2019 U.V. EL DIABLO VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



The U.V. (Ulises Valdez) El Diablo Vineyard is a steep, east-facing site in the eastern reaches of the Russian River Valley appellation. This orientation means that the vines benefit from the warming rays of the morning sun but are protected from the direct impact of mid-summer afternoon heat. The result is a wine made from grapes that are fully ripe, but never lacking in tension or acidity. In fact, the El Diablo Vineyard bottling is consistently one of our most focused and linear Chardonnays.

The 2019 vintage is particularly pure, with an emphasis on fresh, white stone fruit. Asian pear and white peach come immediately to mind. A firm beam of acidity provides a pleasant contrast to the fleshy mid-palate. The contribution of the “Old Wente” selection of Chardonnay in the vineyard becomes apparent as subtle notes of white pepper and caramelized sugar emerge. The “Montrachet” selection, on the other hand, gives the wine its finesse and levity on the palate. These two exceptional selections of Chardonnay are perfectly matched to the climate of the Russian River Valley and, when planted on such an ideal site, can’t help but give rise to a wine that seems to reach new levels of quality in every successive vintage.

Peak drinking window: 2022 through 2032.

2019 ESTATE CHARDONNAY



In 2011, we planted a one-acre parcel of Montrachet Selection Chardonnay on our Westside Road estate under the guidance of our former vineyard manager Ulises Valdez. Over the ensuing years, we made wine with these grapes, watching the vineyard mature. As the vineyard got older, we kept hoping that the wine would continue to improve and eventually merit a vineyard-designate bottling of its own. That day came ten years later in the spring of 2021. It became apparent while tasting the 2019 vintage in the cellar that this wine had undeniably arrived and was worthy of a place in our portfolio next to our Estate Pinot Noir.

Possibly the grandest in pure scale compared to our other Chardonnay offerings, the 2019 Estate Chardonnay possesses a wide spectrum of citrus and juicy stone fruit notes. Grilled Meyer lemon, ripe yellow peach, caramelized sugar, butterscotch, and white tea notes are all present. While broad, the wine has a pleasantly firm texture, and is the rare Chardonnay that will benefit from decanting during its youth.

Peak drinking window: 2023 - 2030.

2019 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY PINOT NOIR



The Russian River Valley Pinot Noir bottling is a wonderful introduction to the Arista portfolio for 2019. The wine really captures the essence of the vintage. Blue and red fruits predominate on the nose, but the presence of a lavender inflected floral component is unmistakable. There is great tension and texture on the palate, with fine grained tannins supporting flavors of fresh pomegranate and tangy wild blackberry. A hint of cola on the long finish speaks to the quality of this vintage, where warm sunny days and cool nights gave rise to perfect ripeness balanced by a gentle yet refreshing acidity.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2026

2019 SONOMA COAST PINOT NOIR



With an abundance of ripe red and blue fruit, the 2019 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir is open, accessible, and delicious. On the nose, notes of spiced plums, cola, dried flowers, and grilled ribeye add complexity to a 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: 2021 through 2025.



2019 FERRINGTON VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

Ferrington Vineyard rests on a gently sloping bench overlooking the town of Boonville in the heart of Anderson Valley in Mendocino County. One of the earliest sites to be planted in this historic appellation, Ferrington boasts some of the oldest Pinot Noir vines in the region. These old vines produce wines with wonderful complexity and effortless balance. The Anderson Valley in general, and Ferrington in particular, is famous for marrying depth and density with electric acidity, and the 2019 Ferrington Vineyard Pinot Noir is a perfect example of this. Tangy blue fruit, tart cherry, elderberry, cranberry, and pomegranate notes all contribute to a medley of fruit impressions that evolve slowly in the glass. Notes of black pepper, struck match, and copper penny minerality add complexity.

Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2032



2019 KANZLER VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

Kanzler Vineyard is new to the Arista portfolio for 2019, and we feel extremely fortunate to finally be working with this fruit. Another jewel of the Russian River Valley AVA, Kanzler is the standout site in the Sebastopol Hills neighborhood of our appellation. At nearly 30 years old, these are some of the oldest Pinot noir vines that we work with.

This is also one of the coolest sites that we work with. The 2019 Kanzler Vineyard bottling is easily the most "Burgundian" Pinot noir from the vintage. The wine is tightly wound and built for the cellar. Notes of orange peel, spiced hard candy, just ripe raspberry, and tart cherry speak to the cool growing conditions in this southern edge of the Russian River Valley appellation. With its firm tannins and bright acidity, this wine will reward patience in the cellar - or at the bare minimum some time in the decanter if patience isn't an option.

Peak drinking window: 2025 through 2035



2019 MONONI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

Mononi Vineyard is one of the original Russian River Valley vineyard relationships that has been a part of the Arista portfolio since the beginning. Paul Mononi grew up within a few hundred yards of this vineyard off of Olivet Lane and has been a grape grower his entire life. This 3-acre plot of Pinot Noir which surrounds his current home is the culmination of a lifetime spent as a vigneron, and we are honored to be the sole recipient of the fruit.

Planted in 1998, these mature vines produce a wine that is remarkable in its consistency vintage to vintage. Concentrated cherry and blueberry flavors are ever-present hallmarks of Mononi Vineyard, and in 2019 these are present in abundance. The wine has impressive density for its modest alcohol level. Notes of black pepper, wet slate, and candied violets add an extra dimension to the juicy, blue-fruited core of the mid-palate. Super-polished and silky on the finish, the wine is extremely drinkable now, but should gain complexity with time in the cellar.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2028



2019 PERLI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

Perched high above the Pacific Ocean on the Mendocino Coast at an elevation of 1800 feet, Perli Vineyard is easily the most visually spectacular site that we work with. The steep, 60% slopes face south and provide expansive views of the Sonoma Coast just a couple of miles in the distance. This proximity to the famous vineyards that dot the ridge tops just over the Mendocino/Sonoma county line is immediately evident in the glass. The exotic notes of forest floor, blue fruits, and wild berries in the 2019 Perli Vineyard Pinot noir are hallmarks of these coastal vineyards; yet the firm tannins and mouth-watering acidity speak to the slightly cooler climate of this more northerly site. Pine needle, tart red plum, just ripe blueberry combines to form a super fresh bouquet. Stick this one in the back of the cellar: this wine is going to age beautifully.

Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2035



2019 TOBONI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The 2019 Toboni Vineyard Pinot Noir is the last vintage Arista produced. It is located in the northwestern corner of the Santa Rosa Plain, just east of the Laguna Ridge. Planted to four clones of Pinot noir - 667, 777, 115, and Pommard - this gently rolling vineyard produces complex wines with classic Russian River Valley qualities. In 2019, the Toboni Vineyard Pinot noir possesses impressive concentration of just-ripe raspberry, sugared cranberries, cola, and black plum. There is great mid-palate density with grilled ribeye, graphite, and savory mineral notes complimenting the dense fruit core.

Peak drinking window: 2022 through 2027



2019 UV 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.

This 2019 edition may be the most seamlessly balanced Lucky Well in our history with the vineyard, with perfect acidity and just the right tannin profile to carry the ultra-precise, medium-weight finish. Sapid blue and red fruits mingle with black plum and cola on the palate. Aromas of dried roses and lavender speak to the elegant nature of the vintage. Tightly wound at the moment, the 2019 Lucky Well Vineyard Pinot noir should age gracefully for a decade or more.

Peak drinking window: 2023-2033



2019 UV VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

We are ecstatic about this debut release, UV Vineyard Pinot Noir, a brand new Russian River Valley Pinot Noir vineyard designate! A saturated yet vibrant garnet hints at the intensity of flavor on the palate. Crushed red and blue berry notes, strawberry pie filling, and hard candy are accompanied by aromas of violets and turned earth. The wine has impeccable precision, with perfectly judged acid and firm but polished tannins supporting a persistent, mineral-laced finish.

Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2030



2019 HARPER'S REST ESTATE VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

Harper's Rest is one of the two Pinot noir blocks on our Westside Road estate that gets its own separate bottling. Planted in 2006 to two heritage selections of the Pommard clone of Pinot noir, this site is a well-draining, gently sloping patch of alluvial gravel. The 2019 Harper's Rest Estate bottling is once again at the top of the Arista Pinot Noir hierarchy in 2019.

Firm tannins and a lively acidity bolster the trademark blue fruit, tea leaf, and soil-borne minerality that have come to characterize this vineyard. This is undoubtedly the most serious wine of the vintage, and some cellar time will be necessary to allow the wine to fully unwind. But its notes of perfectly ripe red and blue fruit, black cherry, orange zest, mint, and cola offer a glimpse of what this wine will become in a few years' time.

Peak drinking window: 2024 through 2034



2019 TWO BIRDS ESTATE VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The Two Birds block on our Westside Road estate is quickly becoming an iconic site for Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. Planted in 2006 by Ulises Valdez, this three-acre block is now well into its window of peak maturity, and the wines seem to keep getting better year after year. Three heritage selections of Pinot Noir were chosen to plant this site, the low-yielding vines lend this cuvée its hallmark complexity and nuance on the palate.

The Russian River Valley was graced by a very mild growing season in 2019, and this cuvée reflects the cool growing conditions exquisitely. Crunchy red fruit, plum, cola, and iron fill out a medium-bodied mid-palate. The mouthfeel is firm, with pronounced but polished tannins supporting an intense and mineral-laced, raspberry infused finish. Here is another edition of Two Birds that will age gracefully for years to come. Put this one in the back of your cellar.

Peak drinking window: 2024 through 2034