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WINE News

We just returned from a trip to California's Central Coast, where we found dozens of fabulous new releases that you'll want to try. Pinot and Chardonnay are just the beginning. The Central Coast has something for every wine lover.



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A Quick Jaunt to Santa Barbara Wine Country!

By Clyde "Trey" Beffa III

Recently, members of K&L's domestic team from each of our stores (Redwood City, Hollywood and San Francisco) headed to Santa Barbara wine country. It may have been midwinter, but it felt and looked like late summer. The temps in Los Olivos were in the mid- to high-70s every day. There was no fog to be found in Lompoc. The ground was parched and the hills were brown—not a hint of green from vineyards or fields to be seen.

The drought in California is definitely taking its toll on our wine-growing regions. The vines are confused about what time of year it is and are desperately in need of water. The 2014 vintage is a big question mark at this point, and we are all hoping for some good February and March rain storms. The good news for most wineries is that we've just had two solid back-to-back vintages, 2012 and 2013, and the wines are in the cellars waiting to be released.

This trip we focused primarily on the Sta. Rita Hills and Santa Ynez appellations. The majority of our tastings were in and around Lompoc, which is home to the series of tasting rooms and winemaking spaces known as "The Wine Ghetto." This meant we tasted primarily Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. This area continues to boom, and the wines we tasted prove that, 10 years after the release of *Sideways*, this region is more than just a flash in the pan.

Brewer-Clifton

One of our favorite visits this trip was with Steve and Chrystal Clifton at Brewer-Clifton (and Palmina). For those of you who do not know, Brewer-Clifton is a partnership between Steve Clifton and Greg Brewer, who is also the winemaker at Melville Winery. Together their goal is to create wines that "deliver the essence of each vineyard." Brewer-Clifton exclusively farms and manages five vineyards in the region and sources fruit from many others.

2010 Brewer-Clifton Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$24.99) The Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay is a selection of lots from Mount

Carmel, 3-D, Gnesa, Sea Smoke and Zotovich. This wine is crisp, bright and fresh, with hints of kiwi, lemon and minerals that linger in the mouth. Great acidity and balance! 92 points ST; 91 points RP.

2011 Brewer-Clifton Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$34.99) This bottling is comprised of 100% estate Pinot Noir from the Mount Carmel, 3-D and Machado vineyards. It is a more balanced and restrained style of Pinot, with hints of earth, bright red fruits and spice. This wine is fresh and lively and will pair well with a wide range of appetizers and main dishes. 92 points ST and RP.

2011 Brewer-Clifton "Machado Vineyard" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$69.99) The Machado Vineyard lies adjacent to Clos Pepe, on the western side of the appellation. Brewer-Clifton began working with it in 2008 and farm the site exclusively. On our trip, we had the pleasure of having lunch right next to the vineyard, which is surrounded by nothing but other vineyards and cattle. The 2011 Machado is a gorgeous wine that shows lots of fruit and spice that jumps into your nose from the glass. Its high-toned red fruits are balanced by hints of mocha, earth and black tea flavors. 94 points AG, RP and ST.

DRAGONETTE *Distinctive Whites & Reds*

John and Steve Dragonette formed Dragonette Cellars with their close friend Brandon Sparks-Gillis in order to follow their dream of crafting wines of the highest quality possible, wines that would display the purity of fruit and sense of place of some of Santa Barbara County and the Central Coast's top vineyards. This idea of illustrating a sense of place is gaining steam as Santa Barbara and the Central Coast grows beyond their adolescence into a mature wine-growing region that recognizes its strengths and weaknesses and is able to focus on the clearest path to success.

We recently sat down with the folks from Dragonette to try their current releases, starting with a trio of Sauvignon Blancs that blew me away! We currently carry two. The first is the **2012 Dragonette Cellars Happy Canyon Sauvignon Blanc (\$24.99)**. It displays a dazzling nose of white flowers, crushed rocks and citrus notes, with a palate of white fruit, iodine, pit fruit and zesty citrus flavors. The wine is layered and complex with delineated fruit notes that continue onto the long, supple finish. The **2012 Dragonette Cellars "Grassini Vineyard" Happy Canyon Sauvignon Blanc (\$34.99)** takes it up a notch, serving up a copious amount of fruit. This wine just gushes with aromas of white flowers, lemon peel, honeydew melon, lychee and spice notes. It floods the palate with iodine, kiwi fruit, nectarine, lime blossom and various other citrus fruits. The wine has tremendous length and mouthfeel with plenty left on the pleasing finish. Easily one of the best

Sauvignon Blancs I've tasted from the area! 91 points ST.

Not to be outdone by the whites were three reds that were equally exciting and distinctive in their own right. The **2012 Dragonette Cellars Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$39.99)**, which is scheduled to be released mid-spring, is a stunner with tons of dark berry fruit on both the nose and the palate along with hints of spice and a full, broad mouthfeel. This wine is dense and packed with lush, delicious black cherry and raspberry fruit as well as hints of dried herbs and mineral notes. This wine feels like a dead-ringer for a French Pommard with a tad more fruit and a more open palate. The wine that was the most surprising was the **2011 Dragonette Cellars Central Coast Grenache (\$36.99)**, from four vineyards in Santa Barbara County. This wine is medium-red in color with aromas of white pepper, cranberry, plum and red licorice notes, while the palate is a suave blend of cherry, plum, pomegranate and citrus flavors nicely framed against racy dried herbs and mineral notes. Lastly, we had the **2011 Dragonette Cellars "Seven" Central Coast Rhône Blend (\$37.99)**. This wine is one sexy beast! Aromas of blackberry jam, black currant and black licorice jump from the glass, while the palate is a sleek and supple mix of various dark berry fruit flavors along with licorice and dried herbs. The wine has excellent structure and length with a finish that echoes the multi-faceted palate. 92 points ST.

—Alex Pross

PALMINA *Vino Italiano from Santa Barbara County*

Much is made of the Pinot Noir and Chardonnay coming from Santa Barbara County, but there are several champions of "other varietals," and nobody is a better spokesperson than Steve Clifton of Palmina. Founded in 1995, Palmina focuses on Italian varietals.

Growers have long agreed that Nebbiolo is one of the most difficult varieties to handle outside of Northern Italy, and Sangiovese rarely seems to reach greatness outside of Tuscany, so why would anyone bother? The Cliftons' aim is to express the best qualities of these grapes outside their native regions. Over the years, Steve and his wife Chrystal have persevered; they've worked with great producers in Italy, sought their advice and sought out the best areas in Santa Barbara to plant these grapes. Their winemaking style is unobtrusive. They use no new wood, all wines are fermented with native yeasts and minimal sulfur additions are made only at bottling. With this combination of great sites and winemaking they've proven the naysayers wrong, capturing the inherent Italian nature of the grapes while making wines that are all Santa Barbara!

The **2012 Palmina Santa Barbara County Pinot Grigio (\$15.99)** is easily the best made Pinot Grigio in the state of California, paying homage to some of the best Friuli has to offer. Harvested from cool climate sites, this helps the grapes retain their natural acidity and allows them to show their minerality. Notes of pear, lemon peel and persimmon accentuate the flavor profile of the wine. Pristine stuff.

The fruit for the **2012 Palmina "Honea Vineyard" Santa Ynez Valley Tocai Friulano (\$23.99)** hails from the Honea Vineyard, a 40-acre property planted to 10 different Italian varieties, including Nebbiolo, Sangiovese, Lagrein and Dolcetto, as well as Tocai Friulano. This site has a vein of limestone running through it, which is perfect for many of these grapes. The wine itself is 90% whole cluster fermented and 10% is reserved on the skins for 30 days to impart more texture and phenolics. It has flavors of orange rind, Asian pear and almond skin. More full-bodied in texture, it falls somewhere between a Chardonnay and Chenin Blanc in its weight. 91 points ST; 90 points AG.

The **2011 Palmina Santa Barbara County Malvasia Bianca (\$26.99)** is intoxicatingly exotic. Jasmine and lime blossom aromas explode from the glass, while citrus and quince flavors emerge on the palate. This Malvasia is ultra-pleasing and can be paired with shellfish of all kinds. They also do an "orange" version that sees extended skin contact that's not for the faint of heart. 91 points ST and RP.

The red I always fall in love with is their Barbera. It is bright and fresh, with loads of tart cherry fruit, violets and Asian spices. The **2011 Palmina Santa Barbara County Barbera (\$24.99)** is aged in a 7,000-liter neutral wood *Botte*, which is a classic tool in Piemontese winemaking. This is perfect food wine that is extremely versatile. Serve it with wood-fired pizzas or an oxtail ragu. 90 points ST and RP.

—Keith Mabry



Stolpman Vineyard. Photo courtesy of the winery.

STOLPMAN *Ballard Canyon's Gem*

Stolpman Vineyards is located in the recently established Ballard Canyon AVA in the Santa Ynez Valley, and this nearly 25-year-old estate really shines. Peter Stolpman took over day-to-day operations of the estate from his parents, Tom and Marilyn, in 2009. With the help of winemaker Sashi Moorman (Sandhi Wines, Domaine de la Côte and Piedrasassi), Peter has been able to offer superb values in Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc and Rhône style blends. Vineyard management is a high priority here. Since 1994 Ruben Solorzano has been overseeing the growing of the grapes and vines. He actually lives on the estate in a home the Stolpmans built for him and his family. The team here is truly dedicated to producing unadulterated and expressive wines. Their commitment is evident in the vineyard and the final product. All of their wines are also proudly dry-farmed, organic and estate-grown on limestone soil.

The **2013 Stolpman Vineyards Santa Ynez Sauvignon Blanc (\$16.99)** was fermented in stainless steel and exhibits fresh lemon and grapefruit aromas on the nose. The acidity is vibrant, with mouthwatering and bright flavors of lime zest and pear. This is an easy-drinking, crisp, refreshing white that would be great for starting a meal or cocktail party.

The **2010 Stolpman Vineyards "L'Avion" Estate Santa Ynez Valley White (\$29.99)** is a delicious, medium-bodied Roussanne. It was aged on its lees in new French oak for 12 months and then received three months of aging in stainless steel tanks before bottling. Textural richness from the lees and oak is harmoniously combined with fine acidity, giving the wine good lift. Ripe peach, honeysuckle and vanilla flavors mingle with some notes of toasty oak. L'Avion has the depth of flavor and complexity to last for a few more years, but it is showing really well right now. Forget Chardonnay and Viognier and give this beauty a try! 92-94 points RP and 90 points WE.

The **2012 Stolpman Vineyards "La Cuadrilla" Santa Ynez Red Blend (\$19.99)** consists of 60% Syrah, 20% Sangiovese, 15% Grenache and 5% Petite Sirah. The vineyard workers at Stolpman go by the name "La Cuadrilla," which means "the crew" in Spanish.

This bottling is special to them because profits from the wine are given directly to them at the end of the year as a bonus. Each year the workers are encouraged to maintain specific acre blocks on the estate that go straight into this wine, along with other blocks of winemaker Sashi Moorman's choice. Not every bottling is vintage dated, but 2012 was an exceptional year that merited it. For \$20, it is a steal. La Cuadrilla is lush and brimming with notes of dark fruit, cherries, violets and savory spice. Big and full-bodied, La Cuadrilla is prime for pairing with lamb, pork or barbecue. Peter Stolpman also had us try this wine with chocolate cake, and it even paired perfectly with that. This is a rich, indulgent red made to fill anyone with delight.

—Patrick Cu

KALINDA'S *Don't Miss Value Sauv Blanc*



It took Alex and I three months and 60 samples to finally find a great-tasting Sauvignon Blanc for our Kalinda label. It came from one of our favorite regions in California: the Santa Ynez Valley, more specifically Los Olivos. The **2012 Kalinda Santa Ynez Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$12.99)** is so delicious right now. Don't over-chill it or you'll miss this wine's wonderful, fruity melon aromas mixed with citrus and white flowers. While the wine is medium-bodied, it has great acidity that brings it all into harmony. Rich on the entry with the fine acidity at the back end. Fruity and melony, yes, but in fine balance with lime and mineral undertones. Some sole, or crab or even lobster matches this well, and it will be great as a poolside sipper, too. And with the way our California weather has been, you might even be sitting poolside right now.

—Clyde Beffa Jr.

K&L STAFF REVIEWS *Central Coast Faves*

Clyde "Trey" Beffa III's Picks

2012 Alta Maria Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay (\$23.99) The Alta Maria Chardonnay is primarily sourced from older vines in the Bien Nacido Vineyard. Some of these vines are nearly 40 years old at this point. They are combined with a small percentage of fruit sourced from younger vines in the Presqu'ile Vineyard. The Alta Maria Chardonnay shows a crisp, fresh, mineral-driven flavor profile that I love. The wine sees no new oak, which allows flavors of green apple, citrus and fruit spice to carry the wine through to the finish.

2012 Farmers Jane "Field White" Santa Barbara County White Blend (\$22.99) Farmers Jane is a new, small production label that was founded by Angela Osborne and Faith Armstrong. The 2012 White is a blend of 50% Grenache Blanc, 25% Marsanne and 25% Roussanne. The goal for the Farmers Jane wines is to produce wines with balance and freshness. This delivers. The wine is bright and fresh with hints of wet stone, mineral and lemon cream that linger on the finish.

2012 Farmers Jane "Field Red" Mendocino County Red Blend (\$24.99) Not entirely from the Central Coast, but worth mentioning. The 2012 Farmers Jane Red is a blend of 78% Carignan from Mendocino and 22% Grenache from the Santa Ynez Valley. The Carignan adds a crunchy, fresh, bright cranberry fruit quality that just jumps from the glass. It shows hints of spice upfront and the finish is pure and seamless. Really delicious wine!

2011 Hilliard Bruce Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$44.99) Hilliard Bruce makes 100% estate wine from vineyards they planted in 2004. Production is tiny, but with the construction of a new winemaking facility and more vines coming online, production should grow a bit over the next few years. Their Sta. Rita Chardonnay is a rich, golden-colored wine that shows a more decadent side of the Sta. Rita Hills. While the texture and mouthfeel are rich and creamy, there is still plenty of acidity to balance out the intense fruit. 92 points ST and RP.

2010 Hilliard Bruce "Sun" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$54.99) Hilliard Bruce is currently making four Pinot Noirs. On our recent trip, this was my favorite. Its seductive and intriguing aromas lead to a lush, mouth-coating palate that is both seamless and pure. This is a juicy wine, but I did not find it heavy-handed or over the top. One of my favorites from the trip! 93 points ST and 91 points RP.

2012 Sandhi Santa Barbara County Chardonnay (\$32.99) Sandhi is a partnership between winemaker Sashi Moorman (Stolpman), investor Charles Banks and sommelier Rajat Parr. The Santa Barbara Chardonnay bursts with hints of lemon crème, figs, melon and sweet herbs. The mouthfeel is round and soft, and it is followed by a pleasantly long and spicy finish.

2012 Andrew Murray "Espérance" Central Coast Rhône Blend (\$18.99) This wine definitely over-delivers for the price! Tons of juicy black cherry fruit explodes in the mouth from this delicious blend of 60% Grenache, 25% Syrah and 15% Mourvèdre. The wine is quite dark in the glass, and swirling inspires a burst of spicy, smoky aromas. The wine is concentrated and rich, with a pleasant freshness that lingers on the finish. Great buy for the money!

2012 Liquid Farm "White Hill" Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$37.99) The White Hill Chardonnay is about as Chablis-like as you can get in California. Only neutral barrels are used, supplemented by 18% stainless steel. This is a crisp, bright, lively wine that shows lots of wet stone, lemon crème and spice that seem to dance across the palate. 91 points ST.

2012 Liquid Farm "Golden Slope" Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$46.99) The Golden Slope from Liquid Farm is the richer, more intense of their two main Chardonnay bottlings. This wine sees 15% new oak, along with native yeast fermentation. While being richer and broader in the mouth, there is still that signature Liquid Farm acidity and freshness that carries through to the finish. This is really an excellent wine that is made to pair with a variety of foods.

2012 Melville "Estate" Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$23.99) As with all Melville wines, only neutral barrels are used during the fermentation and aging process because winemaker Greg Brewer, also a partner in Brewer-Clifton, always tries to create wines that are pure reflections of the vineyards. The 2012 Estate shows flavors of honeydew, lemon zest and minerals that are tightly-wound and focused. The acidity is bright and the finish is long and fresh. 91 points ST.

2011 Melville "Estate" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$29.99) The 2011 Estate Pinot Noir uses 40% whole clusters in its fermentation, which adds an extra layer of structure and grip to the wine. This Pinot Noir shows lots of earthy, farmyard-like undertones, which are pleasantly dominated by a bright core of black cherry fruit. Hints of peppercorn, cinnamon and other spices linger on the finish. A good wine from a difficult vintage! 92 points ST and 91 points RP.

Keith Mabry's Picks

2011 Foley Sta. Rita Hills Chardonnay (\$19.99) Tropical notes of papaya, mango and pineapple lift the nose of this clean and expressive Chardonnay. It also has a rich texture but enough bright acidity to keep it focused, plus it has toasty notes that are in no way overdone. This is the "just right" expression of Central Coast Chardonnay and a pleasure to drink.

2011 Foley Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$24.99) Loaded with raspberry and cherry fruit and a lovely spicebox quality. Notes of cinnamon and clove as well. This is clean and fresh Pinot Noir that says, "I am from the Sta. Rita Hills and proud of it." Nicely balanced and delightful with food. Pair it with some duck legs braised in wine and cherries. Yum!

Patrick Cu's Pick

2012 Lea (Tensley) Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$26.99) For lovers of the fruit-forward, ripe and jammy style of Pinot Noir, here is one for you. The 2012 Lea from Tensley is lush and loaded with ripe raspberries, a touch of spice and gentle acidity. No need to wait, this is drinkable now. 92 points RP and 90 points ST.



K&L'S CO-BRANDED SERIES *Central Coast Exclusives*

In the beginning of 2013 we approached wineries and winemakers we love and asked them to work with us to create exclusive wines to our specifications. We debuted these wines at the end of 2013, referring to them in-house as the “Co-Branded” series. We hope that you think that these wines offer a tremendous value as well as a slightly different expression from wineries that you are already familiar with.

2012 Au Bon Climat/K&L Wine Merchants “Bien Nacido Vineyard” Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (\$24.99) There are few winemakers in the world of Pinot Noir that we wanted to work with more than Jim Clendenen, because few have made as consistently good Pinot as Jim has over the last 30+ years. To our delight Jim was interested in working with us, too. Last May I sat down to lunch with him and his General Manager Jim Adelman to put together this fantastic blend. Our bottling is 100% Bien Nacido Vineyard fruit from two blocks with numerous clones, a portion of which was whole cluster fermented. The bright red cherry, cassis, pastille, fresh lavender and subtle mint aromatics came together wonderfully that day with a juicy core of green, spiced blue fruits on the palate from the whole cluster portion of the wine. The earthen spice and black tea notes from the mid-palate were brought by the Mount Eden clone, which also added lovely weight and a bit of scope. This wine is really beginning to open up nicely and is drinking wonderfully right now. Thanks Jim and Jim for making this dream become a reality.

2012 Ancient Peaks/K&L Wine Merchants Paso Robles Zinfandel (\$19.99) Ancient Peaks burst on the scene a number of years ago with one of the highest-rated inexpensive Zinfandels to ever come out of California by *Wine Spectator's* standards. I was intrigued by the winery, wondering if they were just a tank farm somewhere down in Paso, or a legitimate producer that we needed to watch out for. In visiting them the following year I realized that they couldn't be more of the latter. Their sizable estate vineyard has to be seen to be believed, with its impeccable vineyard management, incredible diversity of soil types and a microclimate that betrays the notion of Paso Robles's intense heat. Our collaborative effort is sourced mainly from one block of Zinfandel, Block 32, raised in a blend of 75% old oak and 25% new, with 5% Syrah to round out the wine. I loved the bright clarity in the aromatics of the old-oak Zin, and while it was lighter in body it had all the Zin flavors I was looking for: briary fruit, white pepper, wild berry and a touch of baking spice. The new-oak Zin component added pitch and much more spice, in a confectionary way, adding ripeness of fruit and more of a bass tone to complement the sassy old oak fruitiness. The Syrah worked perfectly to add mid-palate weight and concentration, contributing a bit more “beef” in both flavor and texture, not to mention a touch of pretty floral complexity. I am so impressed with how this wine is already completely integrated in bottle and is ready to drink right away.

—Bryan Brick

MARGERUM *Doug's Passion*

It didn't take long on our visit to Margerum to figure out that Doug Margerum not only has a passion for winemaking but for food as well. Upon entering the informal winemaking facility you immediately walk through one of the best kitchen setups I've seen in a space like this. I think this definitely informs his winemaking style. On our visit, Doug led us through a very informative and educational blending tasting. The K&L crew got to play “winemakers for a day,” and we had a blast doing it. The results will be available in a few months, so keep an eye out for our Sauvignon Blanc and Bordeaux Blend. After the blending trials, we tasted the current lineup of wines. Here are some of the highlights.

2012 Margerum “Sybarite” Happy Canyon Sauvignon Blanc (\$18.99) Always a favorite California SB at our Hollywood store, this wine shows bright, crisp flavors of lemon, figs and slate. The mineral and citrus elements of this wine carry through to the finish. This sees mostly stainless steel fermenting, with only 9% of the wine fermented and aged in neutral wood. No new oak used. 91 points *ST*.

2012 Margerum “D” Happy Canyon Sauvignon Blanc (\$34.99) Made as a kind of tribute to the famous, late Pouilly-Fumé producer Didier Dagueneau, the D Sauvignon Blanc is made in a much

different style than the Sybarite. This wine is 100% barrel fermented and is put into 60% new 265-liter “cigar” barrels, which are something you don't see much in California. This wine shows a tremendous amount of richness, complexity and depth that comes from the fruit rather than the oak treatment. Plenty of backbone and acidity hold this wine together.

2012 Margerum “M5” Santa Barbara County Rhône Blend (\$21.99) A brand-new release, the 2012 M5 is mostly a blend of Grenache and Syrah. The wine is food-friendly, showing tons of dark plum and high-toned spicy red fruit, which no doubt comes from the Grenache.

2010 Margerum “Colson Canyon Vineyard” Santa Ynez Valley Syrah (\$34.99) Probably the darkest and most intense red we tasted at Margerum. The Colson Canyon Syrah is dark purple, and is packed with loads of ripe blackberry fruit, hints of grilled meats, pepper and dark mocha aromas and flavors that linger on the finish. We also had a chance to taste an older Colson Canyon Syrah from 2002, which showed great, so don't be afraid to age this wine for a few years.

—Clyde “Trey” Beffa III

Beckmen: One of the Central Coast's Rhône Legends

By Michael Jordan



Beckmen Vineyards was founded by the father-and-son team of Tom and Steve Beckmen.

Tom grew up on a ranch in Illinois, which helped him build a great appreciation for the land and farming. He was a traveling salesman and entrepreneur, founding the Roland Corporation, a pioneering electronic music company that helped bring about the merging of music and computer applications. This company and its products profoundly influenced the production of music worldwide. In 1994, a year after Tom sold his company, the Beckmens bought a piece of property in the Santa Ynez Valley and Beckmen Vineyards was born.

Steve, Tom's son, spent his early years working in his

family's garden in Southern California and building an appreciation for nature. This led Steve to join his father in opening Beckmen and to be the winery's first and long-time winemaker. Over the last 20 years, Beckmen has become one of the most respected wineries in the state. They were among the pioneers for growing Rhône varieties on the Central Coast and for the establishment of biodynamic farming practices, which they use on the 365-acre Purisima Mountain Vineyard. And they have spent many years helping to establish the Santa Ynez Valley as a premier wine-growing region.

We have been proud to sell these great wines for many years. Several of the K&L staff visited the winery on our recent trip to the Central Coast, and we tasted a number of current releases with Steve. He is a

very engaging and accommodating person with great knowledge of winemaking and farming. The following are wines we currently have in stock:

2010 Beckmen "Block 6" Santa Ynez Valley Syrah (\$49.99) They let us have a couple of cases of this small-production gem, which is usually only sold at the winery. This is from a block that marks one of the highest points in the Purisima Mountain Vineyard. This is a big, rich Syrah with incredible levels of flavor: coffee and smoked meat with hints of chocolate, spice and violet. Incredible structure balances out the ripeness, making for a great Syrah. 94 points RP: "...The 2010 Syrah Block 6 Purisima Mountain Vineyard is bigger, richer and more textured than the 2011. Showing base notes of smoke, chocolate, coffee and spring flowers, this big Syrah stays remarkably fresh and focused on the palate and is far from overdone or over the top. Drinking nicely now, it should continue to perfume well for another 7-8 years. Drink now-2020."

2011 Beckmen "Estate" Santa Ynez Valley Syrah (\$19.99) This is a bargain at \$19.99. A multi-layered Syrah with the heart of a California wine and the soul of a Northern Rhône. Packed with bright black and blue fruit with touches of spice, bacon fat, cedar and just a hint of minerality. This is the wine to drink while your Block 6 ages. 91 points RP.

2011 Beckmen "Cuvée Le Bec" Santa Ynez Valley Rhône Blend (\$16.99) An homage to Southern Rhône wines, this entry-level red is a beauty. Comprised of 46% Syrah, 36% Grenache, 11% Mourvèdre and 7% Counoise. An enjoyable glass of wine any day of the week; it will remind you of your last trip to Gigondas.

2012 Beckmen "Estate" Santa Ynez Valley Grenache (\$21.99) The 2012 is an unctuous, spicy Grenache with amazing extracted color and a very long finish. Aged entirely in neutral wood so the fruit comes in pure and silky. Fresh and light blue fruit, hints of red berry, rhubarb, white pepper and cinnamon. Grenache doesn't get much better than this.

"An enjoyable glass of wine any day of the week..."

2012 Beckmen "Estate" Santa Ynez Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$13.99) A bright, refreshing Sauvignon Blanc with crisp acidity backing a lovely blend of citrus, peach and a hint of grassiness. Wonderfully fresh and easy to drink.

2011 Beckmen "Cuvée Le Bec Blanc" Santa Ynez Valley White Rhône Blend (\$16.99) Le Bec Blanc is a blend of 42% Marsanne, 33% Roussanne, 19% Grenache Blanc and 6% Viognier that was aged 11 months in used wood. It is a rich white with lovely stone fruit and zippy acidity, with hints of honeysuckle and spice.

—Michael Jordan

BRANDER *Our First Central Coast Love*

The Brander Vineyard, one of the first vineyards planted in the Santa Ynez Valley, was one of the many stops on our recent trip to the Central Coast. This visit was extra special for us as Brander was the first Central Coast Sauvignon Blanc we sold, way back in 1977. It was around then that founder Fred Brander concluded that the Los Olivos climate was best suited to growing Bordeaux varietals. I believe it was this early decision to plant Bordeaux varietals that endeared him to our owner, Clyde Beffa Jr., from the get-go.

We had the good fortune of meeting and tasting with Fred Brander himself this visit. I have always been a fan of the Brander whites, and they are routinely served at my house, but the real eye-opener for me was how good the Brander reds are. Though not as well known as their white counterparts, the Brander reds showed much better than I ever remembered. Over the last few decades the folks at Brander have really allowed their grapes to express themselves. What we taste is a reflection of the soil and the unique Santa Ynez climate. In a region best known for Pinot Noir, Fred Brander has made us take a long, hard look at some other varietals. Here are my favorites:

2013 Brander Santa Ynez Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$13.99) The beat goes on with this old reliable. This wine can compare gold medals with anyone. The 2013 is Brander's 37th bottling of this wine; the nose begins with hints of honey, lemon and a subtle, fresh grassy note, while the wine finishes crisp and clean with good acidity. The perfect poolside sipper. Now I just need a pool or pond!

2013 Brander "Cuvée Natalie" Santa Ynez Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$15.99) This fun little white, named after Fred's daughter, is a blend of 50% Sauvignon Blanc, 25% Riesling and 25% Pinot Gris. Made in the Alsatian style, this wine has wonderful floral aromatics. Done entirely in stainless steel it has a fresh, clean crispness. The wine differs from the regular Sauvignon Blanc in that it has a bit more richness and complexity. Sourced from 100% estate fruit. Try this beauty with some stir-fry.

2011 Brander "F/Red" Santa Ynez Valley Red Blend (\$14.99) For me this was the discovery of the trip. If you are looking for an everyday wine at an affordable price, F/Red is for you. Made with 70% Merlot, 16% Cabernet and 14% Syrah, this wine is round and juicy. The key feature for me was the balance and acidity this wine showed. It is a real crowd-pleaser, ready to go when the cork is popped. Stock up on this little gem.

2010 Brander "Bouchet" Santa Ynez Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$44.99) Bouchet, a French term for Cab Franc, is a blend of 74% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Cabernet Franc and 9% Merlot. The 100% estate fruit comes from vineyards consisting of gravel and sandy loam over a clay subsoil, the same composition found in Bordeaux. This wine is very well integrated, with rich, dark fruit balanced by a nice structured backbone. Aged in mostly new French oak, this baby really shows you where Brander's passions lie. I'm off to make room for some in my cellar.

—Tom Martinez

PALI WINE CO. *California Values*



If there is any neighborhood in Los Angeles that I fantasize about living in, it's the charming and exclusive Pacific Palisades. Pali

Wine Company's owners reside in the Palisades, but they dreamed of making delicious California Pinot Noirs at everyday prices. The fruit is sourced from various vineyard sites throughout the Sonoma and Santa Barbara regions—prime Pinot real estate. The wines below are ridiculously yummy and stupendous for the price. And while I realize a couple of them don't fit with this month's Central Coast theme, they're too good not to mention.

The **2012 Pali Wine Co. "Charm Acres" Sonoma Coast Chardonnay (\$17.99)** is pale golden yellow in the glass, with aromas of white peach nectar and Fuji apple coming through. The palate is intense, with

loads of flavor and even a touch of baking spice. Bright acid balances this flavor-packed Chardonnay, which is as good as any \$30-\$40 Chardonnay on the rack. In a blind tasting I think this can beat some of your favorite big brand Chards. Absolutely awesome!

I recently tasted the **2012 Pali Wine Co. "Huntington" Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir (\$19.99)** and it's lights out! It has supremely ripe and luscious red and purple fruit, with a silky and polished mouthfeel that just makes you want more. It's balanced but sultry at the same time, a dead-ringer for baby Sea Smoke.

I'm also really excited about the **2012 Pali Wine Co. "Bluffs" Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$21.99)** because it is super-seductive and silky, with loads of dark cherry at its core and a mouthfeel that makes your palate feel like it's wrapped in velvet. This is absolutely amazing, gorgeous, distinctive, juicy and rich! Just trust me on this one guys; it will probably make you cheat on your other weeknight delight!

—Christie Cartwright

FIGUEROA MTN *Craft Brews*

After several days of wine tasting in and around Los Olivos and Lompoc, Patrick Cu and I were a little burned out. Doug and Mike at Margerum said they knew a brewer around the corner from them who made outstanding beers, and they suggested we stop by. Figueroa Mountain Brewing Company is hidden in an industrial park in Buellton that's said to be the next "wine ghetto." It was founded by father-and-son team Jim and Jaime Dietenhofer, and is led by brewer A.J. Stoll. Together these men are doing great things with beer.



Everybody at the brewery was very welcoming. We sat down and tasted through the beers in their range. Unfortunately, many are not available in bottle, but only at one of their three brewpubs: Buellton (45 Industrial Way), Santa Barbara (137 Anacapa St, Suite F) and soon in Los Olivos (2446 Alamo Pintado, Suite C). You can best experience the quality and greatness of these beers sitting in front of the taps, so when you are in the area, stop by. Until then, we picked the best in bottle for our stores. We have the following in stock:

Figueroa Mountain Brewing "Hurricane Deck" DIPA, California (22oz \$7.99) Brewed with three and a half pounds of hops per barrel, this massive DIPA is loaded with woody, herbal and pine-like hop flavor and aromas.

Figueroa Mountain Brewing "Hoppy Poppy" IPA (12oz \$1.75) Dry, citrusy and floral. Bright aromas of grapefruit, orange oil, lemon zest and pine needles abound. The flavor is mellow and smooth with a very moderate lingering bitterness.

Figueroa Mountain Brewing "Danish Red" Lager (12oz \$1.75) Crafted with seven kinds of specialty malts to produce layers of rich, caramel malt flavor and a full body.

Figueroa Mountain Brewing "Davy Brown" Ale (12oz \$1.75) This brew is loaded with chocolate and coffee pitted against citrus and stone fruit and a mellow bitterness. Rich and complicated.

—Michael Jordan

FOXEN'S *Fresh New Releases*

I'm so excited for all of our new 2012 California releases! If you have a palate like mine, and I'm assuming if you've read this newsletter that most of you do, you won't want to miss all the deliciousness that's coming to a K&L near you. I can't think of a better place to start than with some of the new releases from Foxen.

First up, the **2012 Foxen "Bien Nacido Vineyard Block UU" Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay (\$29.99)**, a wonderfully vibrant and bright Chard with loads of citrus and tropical undertones. The palate is balanced, yet it pops with flavors of ripe grapefruit, pineapple, stone fruits, limeade and textured acidity. Cool climate Chardonnay with all the bells and whistles and a real bang for your buck!

I also love the **2012 Foxen Santa Maria Valley Pinot Noir (\$34.99)**. It has an elegance and finesse about it that I found missing in a couple of prior vintages. It's bright and juicy, showcasing red and purple fruit, ripe strawberry seeds and candied raspberry, with a touch of black cherry in the core of the mid-palate. Although it's a fruit-forward style of Pinot, it has spice and pizzazz with the ideal amount of acid to balance out all that fruity yumminess! I'm wowed by how polished and seamless this is from start to finish.

—Christie Cartwright

FORM SOME *Good Habits*

2012 Habit "McGinley Vineyard" Happy Canyon Sauvignon Blanc (\$28.99) We believe 2012 is the best vintage of this wine yet. This gets extra dimension from being aged on its lees. At just under 13% alcohol, it is full and round in the mouth, with stone fruits, papaya, lemon hints and minerals that finish the wine off bright and fresh.

2012 Habit "La Encantada Vineyard" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$49.99) At 13.4% ABV, this Pinot is on the lower end of the alcohol spectrum for California. This is due to the fact that winemaker Jeff Fischer seeks balance and freshness rather than extraction and ultra-ripe fruit. This wine shows a fresh, lively texture along with flavors of black cherries, lavender, rose petals, spice and earthy aromas. Let this wine breath to really open up the flavors!

—Clyde "Trey" Beffa III

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