

WINE News

Staff Picks—Domestic.



OCTOBER 24, 2016 FEATURES

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The Vintage Wraps Up and the Holidays are Coming

By Trey Beffa

The holidays start early here at K&L! Hopefully you've had a chance to attend one of our Champagne Tent Event tastings this past week. At K&L, the Tent Events signal that the holidays are upon us. The days are shorter, the nights get colder—well, below 60 degrees here in LA, brrr—and our days get busier and busier.

The 2016 harvest has wrapped up throughout California, and early reports are very positive. I had a chance to visit a few properties in early October. They all spoke about how ideal the weather was in 2016: A bit of a heat spike toward the end of harvest and a couple of cool days, and even a few drops of rain, were not enough to damage this “normal,” very

consistent growing season. Looking back, grape growers in California have enjoyed an unprecedented string of very good to excellent vintages since 2012. The only difficult issue—more of a problem in the southern part of the state—has been the drought. It is a far cry from our friends in France, especially in the Burgundy region, who have had to deal with spring storms that brought hail and severe frost to their regions. We are pretty lucky in California, that is for sure. On the retail side, our warehouses are stocked to the ceiling and we are officially ready for your holiday business. In this issue, sales associates from our three retail stores offer their Staff Picks from our Domestic wine department.

2013 Joseph Phelps “Insignia” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$209.00) First produced in 1974, Insignia was the first proprietary Bordeaux-style blend produced in California. Insignia is now sourced entirely from estate-grown fruit. The 2013 is a classic Insignia. It is dense, powerful and shows lots of structure, nearly all of which is hidden beneath layers of fresh, ripe fruit. Hints of bittersweet chocolate, plums, vanilla bean and spice linger on the finish. A great effort on their fortieth anniversary! 96–100 points RP.



2014 Lewis Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99) Lewis Cabernet is made for fans of the full-throttle California style, and the 2014 does not disappoint. This is a big, rich and ripe wine that coats the palate with flavors of crushed blueberries, blackberries, cocoa and vanilla bean. It's surprisingly open for such an early age. If you like your wine with a little kick and a ton of fruit, you can enjoy this now with some decanting. Just make sure you fasten your seat belt!



2013 Araujo “Altagracia” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$119.99) This is 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 6% Petit Verdot and 4% Malbec. The majority of the fruit comes from eastern parcels of the Eisele Vineyard. The new owners have cut back a bit on the heavily toasted barrels and have switched to a lighter toast. In the 2013 the fruits are dark, spicy and rich. It shows a round, velvety texture, hints of cedar and minerals, and finishes with great freshness and focus. 95 points JS, 93 points RP.



Cover: In the wine cave at Eisele Vineyard.

Tip from Tinseltown: Roederer Estate for a Sparkling Season

By Mari Keilman

I always find myself in a bit of a quandary around this time of year.

I love celebrating the holidays with friends and family, and hosting a big dinner filled with gluttonous food and the latest and greatest Champagne producer that I just discovered, but sometimes my love of sharing boutique Champagne producers isn't always reciprocated. I'm sure you've found yourself in the very same position when you showed up to your coworker's New Year's party with an expensive bottle of some newly released '02 grower-producer Champagne in hand, only to find out that all the other party guests brought André and Korbel. So what do you do for the next party? My solution is simple: Roederer Estate sparkling wine.

Roederer Estate is the domestic little brother of France's Champagne Louis Roederer. In 1982, Jean-Claude Rouzaud, then president of Champagne Louis Roederer and fifth generation descendant of the founder, decided to purchase land in California's Anderson Valley for their domestic label, and the rest is history. Since then, Roederer Estate has been creating sparkling wines that rival its older brother, but at a fraction of the price. Even though Roederer Estate is made on domestic soil and doesn't hail from the holy motherland, their dedication to making sparkling wine with the same methods and traditions as those used in Champagne create a sparkling wine that is equally matched in both quality and taste.

After tasting the **Roederer Estate Anderson Valley Brut Sparkling Wine (\$21.99)**, it's hard to believe that it is a domestic sparkling and that it only costs \$21.99! What sets this domestic sparkling apart from the rest is how dry it tastes. I always have a problem with how high the dosage levels are in domestic sparkling wines, but not with the Roederer Estate brut. The nose is bright and lively with fresh pear, tangerine and fresh, doughy bread notes. And while the palate is friendly and accessible, with riper pome fruit and clean melon flavors, this domestic brut finishes precise and focused. 92 points *WE*.

In my humble opinion, the most underrated sparkling on the market is the **Roederer Estate Anderson Valley Brut Rosé Sparkling Wine (\$24.99)**. There's a touch more Chardonnay in the rosé than in the brut and the Chardonnay clearly shows itself in the soft, creamy texture and elegance of this cuvée. The Pinot Noir helps round out the rosé with a delicate berry fruitiness that is balanced with a zippy blood orange finish. And while this elegant and delicious rosé is the perfect sparkling wine to bring to any holiday occasion, be prepared to bring two, because it will go fast! 93 points *WE*.



On the Radar in Redwood City: Lesser-Known Pinot and Zin

By Stephanie Vidales

Being a California Pinot Noir fan, I always love finding new wines from smaller producers and vineyards, because that's where you can find intriguing, high-quality wines even at reasonable prices.

Field Recordings is a small winery in Paso Robles that was started by Andrew Jones, who began his wine journey as a nursery vine grower and has stepped foot in nearly all the vineyards on the Central Coast of California. All his vineyard expertise is translated into his bottled wine, Field Recordings and Wonderwall, and canned wine under the labels Alloy Wine Works and Fiction. Some may turn their nose up when they hear "canned wine," but let me tell you, these are great wines! Jones' Wonderwall label focuses on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir wines that are sourced from extreme Central Coast vineyards.

2015 Field Recordings "Wonderwall" Edna Valley Pinot Noir (\$19.99) is a juicy, easy, no-brainer wine right under \$20. Notes of blueberry, strawberry, wet leaves and subtle spice come through on the nose, while the palate is super smooth, with medium tannin and balanced acidity.

Another Pinot Noir to have on your radar is the **2014 Martin Ray "Coast Grade Vineyard" Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot Noir (\$34.99)**. Martin Ray's winemaker Bill Batchelor aims to create high-quality wines from small lots in the winery's state-of-the-art

Russian River Valley winery, and the quality just shines bright in this wine. Beautiful violets, baking spices and dried herbal notes show fabulously in this wine, while the palate is silky and medium in body. The elegance and complexity of this Pinot Noir pulls through and creates a deliciously balanced wine that is sure to please many palates. 95 points *WE*.

A winery I've recently discovered is Enkidu, a small Sonoma-based winery. Their **2013 Enkidu "Bedrock Vineyard" Sonoma Valley Zinfandel (\$34.99)** recently hit K&L shelves and was a favorite in a recent Domestic tasting. The fruit in this wine comes from the historic Bedrock Vineyard, which has vines that are over 150 years old. Compellingly savory and rustic, this Zinfandel had my attention. Not over-extracted as some Zinfandels, this wine shows flavors of curried meats, mustiness, black and red berries and dried herbs. The mouthfeel is medium in body with beautiful elegance and robust character, making this a great food wine for the upcoming holiday season.



We Can (Usually) Only Tell You How Good It is: Kalinda

By Bryan Brick

Kalinda can be a lot of things. It can be really good bulk wine that is available to us. It can be a wine that we help create from scratch, from a winery we have a great relationship with and wants to work with us. Or, in the case of the **NV Kalinda North Coast Pinot Noir (\$19.99)**, it can be from a famous and elusive winery that had some extra bits and barrels that they pieced together not because they didn't work for them, but because the recent vintages just didn't produce enough fruit to make them financially viable for this "secret" winery. Bottom line is that we all win. The winery gets to sell their juice to a trusted merchant, that merchant scores a tremendous wine for nickels on the dollar, and the customers that buy it get a tremendous value from one of the best Pinot Noir producers in the state.

Sadly, we can't tell you who made this wine for us, but we can tell you that it was the same producer that made our 2013 Kalinda "Cuvée 70" Sonoma Coast Pinot and the 2013 Kalinda Anderson Valley Pinot Noir from last year, and the blend is similar to those two wines but pieced together from 2014 and 2015, two very small-yielding vintages. The resulting wine is a stunner. Lightweight and ethereal, but not lacking in substance, this is very alluring on the nose with notes of cinnamon and rose water over blood orange flesh. With great clarity and drive and just the slightest bit of developing juiciness, this is both ripe and savory, fruit-driven but earthy at the same time, all wrapped up in its floral-laced finish. What a tremendous wine for \$20.

A good example of what we can do when a producer doesn't mind us using their name under the Kalinda moniker is the **2015 Kalinda Willamette Valley Pinot Noir (\$24.99)**. On our recent trip to the Willamette Valley we spread the word that we were looking for a 2015 Pinot Noir to bottle under our private label. We asked numerous wineries that we know and trust, and a lot of them sent us some really great wine. We already knew 2015 was shaping up to be an outstanding vintage—more on that some other time—but we felt that

the bottling we tasted from Chehalem was the best on the table. As we were putting the details of this wine together I asked if we could use their name in marketing the wine, and they agreed, which quite honestly makes our jobs a whole lot easier. Now all of us here at K&L can drop the allusions and hints and just tell you who the wine is from. Chehalem has long been one of our favorite wineries in the Willamette Valley. They make balanced, energetic and thoughtful wines from their numerous, noncontiguous estate vineyards. These vineyards are becoming extremely well known, if not almost household names, in the world of Willamette Valley vineyards. To be specific, this is a blend of four of their estate vineyards in the following proportions: 44% Ridgecrest, 21.5% Stoller, 17.5% Wind Ridge and 17% Corral Creek, aged in 20% new and 20% once-used French oak.



Black cherry, bergamot, spiced plum and a touch of cola combine in the compact yet slowly unraveling nose. Medium-weight, and yet with a sprightly feel, this is a young Pinot that is already quite delicious, but will grow in leaps in bounds over the next two to six months and then slowly develop over the next three to seven years. With warm red clay notes, cranberry tang, velvety boysenberry preserves and a candied licorice note, the palate comes off as inviting and bordering on plush. Finishing with a nice, lifted, red-fruited crunch surrounded by earthy-forestry richness, this is one special Pinot Noir and we couldn't thank the crew at Chehalem enough for making us such a great wine.

From the Backyard to the Backyard Barbecue

By Dave Genevro

My top three staff picks this year display balance, varietal purity, a sense of life, and character that is unique to their respective winemakers. The **2013 Kathryn Kennedy "Small Lot" Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon (\$34.99)** is a literal backyard blend of Cabernet that is tended and picked by the crew at Kathryn Kennedy Winery. The nose is filled with fresh pine, mountain raspberries, tobacco leaves and earth. With great color, the wine is generous with toasty oak notes, red and purple fruit, and has great grip, yet is not abrasive. I love the life and lift in this approachable, hometown AVA Cabernet Sauvignon.

My favorite producer in the Dundee Hills of Oregon is Arterberry Maresh, hands down! Their estate vineyard, planted in the early 1970s, produces the **2014 Arterberry Maresh "Maresh Vineyard" Dundee Hills Pinot Noir (\$61.99)**. These mature Pommard and Wädenswil

vines give concentration, richness and generosity to the wine, with hints of meats and salinity. On the palate: cranberry, black cherry, green olives and cola. This wine is serious, with layers and layers to discover—a true adventure in a bottle. 95 points RP.

Last, but certainly not least, the **2013 Adelaida "Viking Estate Vineyard" Adelaida District Bordeaux Blend (\$37.99)** packs some gorgeous, deep and dark blue-purple fruits, light herbs, tobacco, mint leaves and maraschino cherry juice. The fruit has depth, plumpness and great fleshiness. From a newer AVA (established in 2014) in the Paso Robles area, this is a serious Bordeaux-style blend that you can drink tonight—decant, or air it out, of course—and it shows no overly worked or off-putting characters in its youth. I love this wine and will enjoy this with some braised short ribs or alongside anything barbecued that's dead and bloody. 90 points CG. Enjoy!



Letter from San Francisco: Thoughts on the Staff Pick Spectrum

By Gary Norton

OK, the theme du jour is Staff Picks. That seems like a fairly straightforward topic. Right? Well, it isn't. Not within the spectrum of K&L Staff Picks, at least. Even now I find myself having a difficult time explaining to customers exactly what vetting process a wine goes through to make it a Staff Pick. In some instances it's a wine from a producer that our customers have known about and adored for decades. Say, Melville Winery, for instance. We have been carrying Ron and Chad Melville's wines for the greater portion of the past twenty years, and most of us know by now that they are perennial staff and customer favorites.

This year, a 95-pointer was dropped into our hands with the release of the **2014 Melville "Estate" Sta. Rita Hills Syrah (\$29.99)**. It's a robust, hearty Syrah packed with notes of smoked bacon, coppa, tapenade, capers, black plum and baking spices. Savory notes of red meat and cured pork take center stage here, with black fruits and white pepper coming in for support. This could be from St. Joseph and priced at sixty-plus dollars if I didn't know better. But I do, and it's criminally underpriced at thirty bucks, hence its Staff Pick worthiness—also 95 points RP. Another notable from our list of Staff Pick selections is the **2013 Melville "Estate" Sta. Rita Hills Pinot Noir (\$29.99)**. The wine is stunningly red-fruited and herbaceous. This year's estate bottling has plenty of structure and depth to offer and imparts delicate fragrances of wild strawberry, dried cranberry



and traces of dried rose petals. Back in 2015, Melville parted ways with their head winemaker Greg Brewer (of Brewer-Clifton and La Voix), so there are only a few more vintages with his legacy attached to it. Again, this offering is a quintessential Staff Pick. 93 points *WE*, 92 points *RP*.

But here is where it gets a little dicey. My final Staff Pick comes from a winery that's only been in production since 2001, and frankly, I hadn't paid a lot of attention to before I tasted the **2012 Hidden Ridge "55% Slope" Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.99)**. It's one heck of a wine for less than a hundred bucks. It's currently expressing notes of cassis, dark fruit, fresh salsa, dried herbs and licorice. It is the type of wine you have to buy in multiples. A few for now and a few more for the future. The wine is fairly tight at the moment and needs at least an hour of decanting before service, but it will withstand the test of time (and I'm talking about a decade-plus in the cellar). 94 points *RP*, 93 points *WE*, 91 points *WS*.

So there you have it. A Staff Pick may be Melville's current release Pinot Noir, a bottle that, for years you have made countless trips to K&L with the exclusive intention of buying. But on the flip side, a Staff Pick can consist of an outlier such as Hidden Ridge—a purchase hinging on your trust in us to provide you with the best wine at the best price.



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