

SONOMA MAGAZINE

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# sonoma

The Heart of Wine Country

## TOP 100 Wines

Tasting Notes, Dream-On Wines, Know Your Vintages, and more p.96



# Top 100 Wines

SONOMA CAN GROW JUST ABOUT ANY WINE GRAPE — AND DOES. WITH ITS INCOMPARABLE RANGE OF WINE TYPES AND STYLES, THERE'S NO REASON TO LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR A GREAT BOTTLE. HERE ARE OUR FAVORITES FROM 2015, EACH ONE SONOMA-GROWN.

— BY LINDA MURPHY WITH VIRGINIE BOONE —

**W**INE TASTING is no different than movie watching. Neither is based on science, but rather on individual taste, perception and emotion.

She enjoys romance flicks, he prefers action films. She likes Pinot Noirs with firm structure and earthiness, he goes for ripe, juicy, richly flavored Pinots. There's no right or wrong, just personal preference. Roger Ebert could love the same film that Gene Siskel trashed. It works that way with wine, too.

So by default, our selections for the Top 100 Wines of 2015 are subjective and experiential, yet also well-informed. We worked very hard to come up with 100 bottles that we stand behind for quality, price range and availability that will please most palates. Sure,

tasting wine is fun and convivial, but evaluating wine to be recommended to Sonoma magazine readers is serious stuff.

Don't see your favorite wine on the list? Then look for it on our coverage of world-class wines that have very limited — or no — availability. Which winemakers might you not know about, but should? They're here. Looking for a great vintage? Check.

Science might one day be able to tell consumers precisely what wine they will love before they taste it. Until then, we have humans with distinctly individual senses of smell, taste and vision, to do the work for us. One of wine's finest qualities is that it stimulates conversation. Our Top 100 Wines of 2015 list will likely do that. Let us know what you think.

## Top 100 Wines

### Methodology

It's a tough job. Really.



**W**ITH MORE THAN 400 Sonoma wineries producing thousands of different bottlings each year, how did we settle on 2015's best? It took lots of tasting, and retasting, and assistance from the judges at The Press Democrat 2015 North Coast Wine Challenge, to come up with 100 great wines sure to please all palates and pocketbooks.

Sonoma magazine managing editor Linda Murphy and magazine contributor Virginie Boone worked together to select the Top 100, taking into account their own tastings and

high-scoring wines from the North Coast Wine Challenge competition, held in April.

In addition to writing for Sonoma magazine and The Press Democrat, Boone is a contributing editor for New York-based Wine Enthusiast magazine, reviewing thousands of wines each year from Sonoma and Napa. Murphy, a two-time James Beard Award winner when she was the editor of the San Francisco Chronicle's wine section, tastes as many wines, with her comments appearing in Decanter magazine and WineReviewOnline.com, among other publications.

Their mission was to spotlight 100 outstanding wines produced in Sonoma, from Sonoma-grown grapes, with a broad diversity in price, style, growing region and producer. Wines scoring 94 points and higher at the 2015 North Coast Wine Challenge were given strong consideration. All recommended wines were released in 2015.

— LM

# Chardonnay

## **DELOACH VINEYARDS**

**2012 Ritchie Vineyard Middle Reach Russian River Valley Chardonnay**

**\$50**

This wine from one of Russian River Valley's star sites is rich and decadently creamy in vanilla and apple-crisp character, balanced by refreshing acidity and bright citrus and apple fruit. Oak plays a supporting role, adding depth and mouthfeel. (VB)

# Pinot Noir

## **BUENA VISTA WINERY**

**2012 Carneros Pinot Noir**

**\$25**

This wine is a steal at its price. It's silky and substantial, with lighter tones of pomegranate, cherry and cola, and sandalwood and mushroom subtlety. (VB)