

# 2020 VINTAGE NOTES

BY WINEMAKER MATT COURTNEY

2020 was a crazy year across the board, and the grape growing season in the Russian River Valley was no exception.

Fires notwithstanding, the season was glorious. The on-again off-again drought here on the west coast was back on after a relatively wet and cool 2018 and 2019, but conditions weren't severe. We had just enough water stress early in the season to limit crop size and keep berry size very small. This is a condition winemakers dream about since low crop size and small berry size typically leads to high concentrations of color, aroma, and flavor. Wines from this type of vintage are always exciting for their intensity and explosiveness.

Unfortunately, there was one flaw in this otherwise incredible growing season: a day in mid August when a heat spike combined with a lingering tropical storm. The lightning storm that resulted ignited hundreds of wildfires across the north coast. Fortunately for Arista, harvest was already well underway. As the fires grew in intensity and size over the coming days, we continued picking everything that was ready and had yet to be



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affected by the spreading smoke. However, while most of the Chardonnay made it into the cellar unscathed, the majority of our Pinot Noir crop, which is slightly later ripening, was lost to the damage inflicted by wildfire smoke and was simply not harvested.



The good news is that the surviving grapes from 2020 made incredible wines as we had hoped. The Chardonnay is once again brilliant coming on the heels of the spectacular 2019 vintage. And the Pinot Noir is wonderfully detailed and precise. Quantities are extremely limited, but we can celebrate the scarce and beautiful wines that survived 2020 as the silver lining from a tempestuous year.

Cheers!

Matt Courtney



## 2020 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY CHARDONNAY

An exceptional snapshot of the 2020 vintage in the Russian River, this release is a blend of barrels from five Russian River Valley sites: Flora Marie, El Diablo, Ritchie, Banfield, and our Westside Road Estate. 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. Notes of lemon curd, candied oranges, and white flowers are joined by notes of baking spices and caramelized sugar. A touch of flinty reduction and a citrus inflected acid backbone keep the finish fresh and lively.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 - 2028.*



## 2020 BANFIELD VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

The Chardonnay block of Banfield Vineyard was planted around 1980, giving this vineyard the status as one of the oldest Chardonnay vineyards in California. These 40-year-old vines continue to produce a tiny crop of the most intensely flavored and aromatic Chardonnay in Sonoma County.

The 2020 Banfield Vineyard Chardonnay is open and delicious directly out of the bottle. Classic Banfield notes of candied citrus and caramelized sugar are present in abundance. As the wine opens up, more exotic elements of kiwi and grilled pineapple become apparent. A citrus inflected minerality gives the finish a tangy lift and keeps things lively and balanced.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2030*



## 2020 EL DIABLO VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



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. In fact, the El Diablo Vineyard bottling is consistently one of our most focused Chardonnays.

Green apple, lemon oil, and white peach notes emerge on the nose, and form the core of the 2020 edition of the El Diablo Vineyard Chardonnay. Lemon-lime flavors are enhanced by notes of white pepper and a beam of bright acidity on the palate.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2030*

## 2020 RITCHIE VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



Ritchie Vineyard is without a doubt in the Grand Cru tier of Chardonnay sites in California. For nearly 50 years, Kent Ritchie has been farming this special slope in the heart of the Russian River Valley, and the resulting wines have become the subject of legend. We are very fortunate to work with the oldest and highest block of Chardonnay in the vineyard, which is one of the oldest plantings of Chardonnay in the Russian River Valley. These old vines produce a tiny crop of small-berried clusters every year, and the wines are consistently impressive for their balance and poise.

The 2020 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay is imbued with incredible richness and density, marked by flavors of grilled peach and yellow and white orchard fruits. Ritchie Vineyard is planted exclusively with Old Wente clone Chardonnay atop textbook Goldridge soils. The result is a wine with layers of citrus flavor buoyed by a persistent and refreshing acidity.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2032*

## 2020 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. One of the racier wines 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. Grilled yellow peach and saline minerality form the centerpiece of the palate. A rich and well-concentrated mid-palate is balanced by savory acidity driving a persistent, crystalline finish.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 - 2030.*



## 2020 ESTATE CHARDONNAY

In 2011, we planted a one-acre parcel of Montrachet Selection Chardonnay on our Westside Road Estate under the guidance of our vineyard manager Ulises Valdez. For ten years we watched these vines mature, made small lots of Chardonnay, and watched the young wines gain complexity and nuance each year as young, high-quality vineyards tend to do. We hoped that someday these vines would merit a bottling of their own. In 2021, that moment arrived: while tasting barrels of our 2019 Chardonnay, the wine announced itself with clarity and precision in the glass. We knew immediately it was time to add our Estate Chardonnay to the Arista portfolio, and are delighted to share our second-ever release of this wine.

The 2020 vintage is more poised and subtle than the exuberant 2019, and is beginning to show the sophistication of an older vineyard. The wine is pleasantly tart on the palate with notes of lemon curd, orange extract, and vanilla bean. A mouth-coating richness surrounds a firm core of bright yellow citrus and is balanced and cleansed by a steely, mineral-laced finish.

*Peak drinking window: 2025 - 2033.*





## 2020 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY PINOT NOIR

The 2020 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir bottling is a wonderful introduction to the Arista portfolio. Wild cherry and blackberry notes assert themselves before candied strawberry and white pepper notes emerge. Translucent yet deeply colored, the wine has a pleasant richness and weight. The blend of Pinot Noir vineyards in this bottling perfectly balances ripe fruitiness and an underlying sweet character. Chewy tannins and well-integrated acidity carry the persistent finish, which is full of ripe red and blue fruit.

*Peak drinking window: 2022 - 2027.*



## 2020 FERRINGTON PINOT NOIR

The Ferrington Vineyard lies on a gently sloping bench overlooking the town of Boonville in the heart of Anderson Valley. 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 Vineyard in particular, is famous for marrying depth and density with electric acidity, and the 2020 Ferrington Vineyard Pinot Noir is a perfect example of this. Tangy blue fruit, tart cherry, elderberry, cranberry, and pomegranate notes emerge in harmony and evolve slowly in the glass. Notes of black pepper, struck match, and copper penny minerality add complexity to the long finish.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 - 2035.*



## 2020 MONONI PINOT NOIR



Mononi Vineyard is one of the original Russian River Valley properties that has been a part of our portfolio since Al and Janis McWilliams founded Arista in 2002. Planted in 1998, these mature vines produce a wine that is remarkable in its consistency from vintage to vintage. The 2020 Mononi Vineyard Pinot Noir shows notes of crisp, just-picked red fruits including fresh raspberry and wild cherry - two hallmarks of this single-vineyard cuvée. With time in the glass, the wine reveals more detail: vibrant kirsch-like aromatics, and a fragrant, earthy black truffle note. Like all of the 2020 Pinots from Arista, the color is a brilliant, translucent garnet. The palate is full of energy, with bright acidity balancing fine-grained tannins in a mouth-filling yet weightless experience.

*Peak drinking window: 2022 - 2032.*

## 2020 JOSEPH SWAN TRENTON ESTATE PINOT NOIR



Arista has the special privilege of working with a small amount of Pinot Noir from this historic site, and the results have been extraordinary. The wines have an uncanny capacity to be some of the darkest and explosive in the entire cellar, while almost always also being among the most weightless and ethereal. Candied violets, just ripe wild raspberries, and super-extracted blue fruit aromas and flavors combine with a beautiful sous bois, forest floor element. The mouthfeel is exceptional, matching fine, silky tannins with a bright, vibrant feel. This is a prodigious wine, and a piece of California history to boot.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2030*



## 2020 UV VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The exceptional UV Vineyard sits at the top of a low lying ridge in the heart of the Russian River Valley, specifically the sub-appellation called Laguna Ridge. This narrow strip of vineyard land is home to some of the state's most famous Pinot Noir vineyards, but few if any are as renowned as the UV Vineyard. The wine announces itself with a beautiful floral bouquet and a vibrant garnet color. Flavors of fresh black plum, wild blackberry, blueberry, and marinated cherries unfold on the palate for minutes.

*Peak drinking window: 2024 through 2032*



## 2020 PERLI PINOT NOIR

Perched high above the Pacific Ocean on the Mendocino Coast at an elevation of 1,800 feet, the Perli Vineyard is easily the most visually spectacular site that we harvest. The steep, 60% slopes face south and provide expansive views of the Sonoma Coast. Its proximity to the famous vineyards that dot the ridgetops just over the county line is immediately evident on the glass: The exotic notes of forest floor, blue fruits, and wild berries in the 2020 Perli Vineyard Pinot Noir are hallmarks of these coastal vineyards; yet its firm tannins and crisp acidity speak to the slightly cooler climate of this more northerly, high-elevation site. Pine needle, tart red plum, and just ripe blueberry combine to form a super fresh bouquet.

*Peak drinking window: 2023 - 2035.*





## 2020 ESTATE PINOT NOIR



The Estate Pinot Noir bottling is the centerpiece of the Arista portfolio. This wine is made exclusively from vines on our Westside Road estate. This 10-acre vineyard in the heart of the Middle Reach of the Russian River Valley was planted in 2006 to 100% heritage selections of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir under the direction of famed vineyard manager Ulises Valdez.

Of all the neighborhoods of the Russian River Valley, the Middle Reach has risen to fame as host to the oldest vineyards in the appellation and also as the source of its most prodigious wines. The 2020 Estate Pinot Noir is a textbook example of what is possible in this celebrated appellation. Concentrated yet balanced, the wine melds aromas of boysenberry reduction, raspberry, black cherry, violets, and toasted brioche. The Middle Reach is known for fine-grained tannins, and the highly polished tannin profile of this Estate Pinot Noir is undiluted luxury on the palate. The 2020 Estate Pinot Noir represents the purest expression of our ethos as grape growers and winemakers at Arista.

*Peak drinking window: 2023-2032*