ARISTA
WINERY

2018 VINTAGE NOTES

BY WINEMAKER MATT COURTNEY

The relatively steady and cool 2018 growing season was a welcome shift back toward the traditional weather patterns that have made the Russian River Valley famous for Chardonnay and Pinot noir. The winter and early spring brought relatively normal amounts of rainfall which prepped the soils for bud break. Bloom and set unfolded with very mild weather conditions which resulted in an abundant and heathy crop on the vine. Midsummer weather was warm but not hot, and most importantly was relatively free of major heat spikes, allowing the first half of ripening to progress under ideal conditions.

Maybe most notable was the weather during the weeks leading up to harvest. We had a string of wonderfully cool weeks in August and September which allowed the final stages of ripening to occur quite gradually. When the grapes are given that extra time to ripen on the vine in the late fall in cool weather, we always see an extra layer of complexity in the wines from that vintage. 2018 is a vintage of amazing vibrancy and freshness matched with beautiful complexity.

For me, it's absolutely a contender for my favorite vintage of the last decade.



7015 Westside Road
Healdsburg, CA 95448
AristaWinery.com



2018 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY CHARDONNAY



The 2018 Russian River Valley Chardonnay is a blend of our four Russian River Valley Chardonnay vineyards: U.V. El Diablo Vineyard on Eastside Road, Banfield Vineyard on Martinelli Road, Ritchie Vineyard on Eastside Road, and the estate Chardonnay vineyard on our Westside Road property. The wine is made with a modest amount of new oak (~20%) to allow the terroir to take center stage. These appellation wines always offer great insight into the region as a whole for a given vintage. In 2018, notes of Asian pear, Meyer lemon, ginger, lemongrass, slate, dried white flowers and spun sugar are prominent on the nose. On the palate, the wine has a lemon inflected steeliness paired with mouth-watering acidity giving it exceptional liveliness and balance.

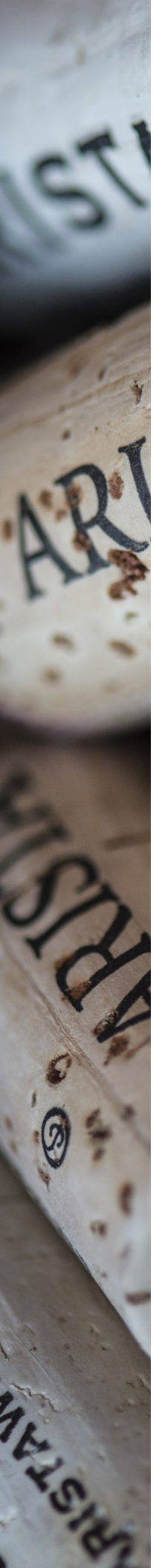
Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2027.

2018 BANFIELD VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



The Chardonnay blocks in Banfield Vineyard are some of the coolest sites we work with. These forty-year-old vines, planted to the Old Wente selection of Chardonnay, reside in a protected pocket of the Russian River Valley that collects cool night air and warms up slowly only when the mid-morning sun peeks over the surrounding hills. Aromas of lime zest, fresh mandarin, wet granite, lavender, and grilled bread emanate from the glass. The wine has firm texture, mid-weight density, and an oyster shell minerality with notes of Asian pear, quince, grilled peach, lime curd, wet stones, and candied lemon peel that build in intensity through the mid-palate and carry the long, vibrant finish.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2029.



2018 PERLI VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



Perli Vineyard is easily the most exotic site we work with. Perched high on the coastal ridge that divides Sonoma County from Mendocino County, this steep, west-facing site is the northern neighbor of the ridge-top vineyards that have made the Sonoma Coast so famous for Chardonnay and Pinot noir. That same elevation and ocean influence gives the Perli Vineyard Chardonnay a unique place in the Arista lineup.

The bright and lifted profile that we have come to expect from Perli is present in spades in the 2018 edition. This bottling is all about energy and intensity with its brilliantly clear golden color, electric acidity, and mouth-watering notes of white fleshed peach, candied lime zest, and briny minerality. White stone fruits on the mid palate evolve into notes of panna cotta, white pepper, clove, and lime on a persistent and lingering finish.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2029.

2018 RITCHIE VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



Ritchie Vineyard is without a doubt included in the Grand Cru tier of Chardonnay sites in California. For nearly 50 years, Kent Ritchie has been farming this special slope in the Russian River Valley, and the resulting wines have become the subject of legend. We are beyond fortunate to work with the oldest and highest block of Chardonnay in the vineyard - 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 2018 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay is driven by a lifted minerality. Notes of lemon zest, spiced apple, verbena, toasted brioche, and sweet cream play a supporting role. A beautiful tension carries the palate for a long, citrus-laced finished and bodes well for a decades-long potential for aging.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2031.



2018 U.V. EL DIABLO VINEYARD CHARDONNAY



The U.V. (Ulises Valdez) El Diablo is a vineyard we have been working with for the better part of a decade and seems to get better every year. This east-facing site benefits from the warming rays of the morning sun, while being well-protected from the peak of the afternoon heat. As a result, U.V. El Diablo perennially enjoys a perfect balance between the richness that has made the Russian River Valley famous for Chardonnay, and the detail, precision, and lift made possible by the soils and aspect of this special site.

2018 is a spectacular vintage for Chardonnay, and the U.V. El Diablo bottling reflects this with its broad spectrum of classic notes: lemon oil, cut kiwi, pine needle, and baking spices. The wine is beautifully translucent, and effortlessly silky. This is a wine that gives copious amounts of pleasure at this young stage, but it will also age gracefully for a decade or more.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2031

2018 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY PINOT NOIR



The Russian River Valley Pinot noir, an appellation wine, always offer great insight into the region as a whole for a given vintage. In 2018, the wine leads with a bouquet of lavender, crushed cherries, and notes of fresh blue and red fruit. Aged in a modest 20% new oak, only the faintest suggestion of toasted oak and graphite frames the rich cherry, raspberry, and ripe blueberry flavors on the palate. 2018 was a cool growing season, and as a consequence the wine has a vibrant freshness that complements its depth and density. Fine-grained tannins and tart acidity provide lift, structure, and balance.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2027.





2018 SONOMA COAST PINOT NOIR

With an abundance of ripe red and blue fruit, the 2018 Sonoma Coast Pinot noir is open, accessible, and delicious. On the nose, notes of spiced plums, cola, dried flowers, and grilled meat add complexity to the 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.

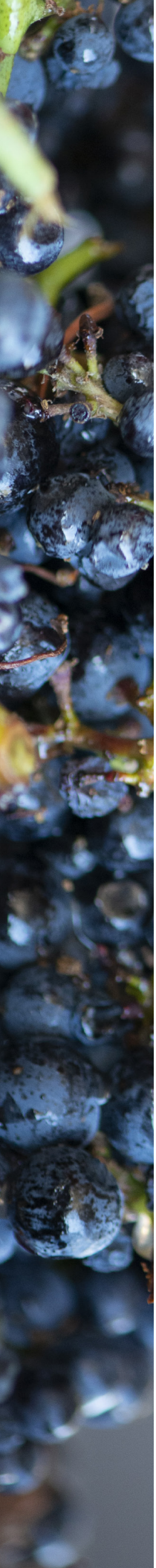
Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2026



2018 FERRINGTON VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The Ferrington Vineyard rests on a gently sloping bench in the heart of Anderson Valley. One of the earliest sites to be planted in this historic appellation, Ferrington 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 2018 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 gunmetal and garrigue, hallmarks of Ferrington vineyard, add complexity.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2031.



2018 JOSEPH SWAN VINEYARD PINOT NOIR



The vineyard source for this new wine we started making recently is the Trenton Estate Vineyard on the Joseph Swan Winery property near Trenton Road and Laguna Road in the heart of the Russian River Valley. The Swan Clone is the most famous Pinot Noir clone in California. In the 50 years that the wine has been planted at the Joseph Swan Trenton Estate Vineyard, no fruit has ever been sold or traded to an outside winery - until now! I believe this vineyard source is one of our top Pinot Noir wines in our cellar. It is dark, complex, age-worthy with the prime characteristics being explosive blue fruit notes.

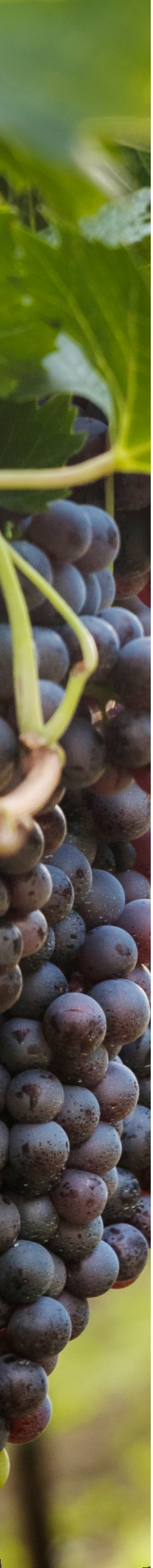
The recommended peak drinking window on this wine is 2022 through 2036.

2018 MONONI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR



Mononi Vineyard is a gently sloping three-acre parcel of Pinot noir planted in the heart of the Russian River Valley appellation. In 2018, this vineyard produced a classic Russian River Valley Pinot noir: dense with tart Bing cherry, crunchy red fruits, fresh raspberry, and minerals. The nose is at first brooding, with wood smoke and forest floor notes, but opens up once exposed to air to reveal layers of crushed cherries, mint, wild strawberries, cola, and white pepper. With a gem-like, bright ruby appearance, the wine is lifted and light on the finish which lasts for nearly a full minute.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2029.





2018 PERLI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The 2018 Perli Vineyard Pinot noir boasts an exotic nose of forest floor, black plum, cola, and candied strawberries. Firm, mouth-filling tannins and tangy acidity typical of this remote site on the Mendocino coast provide ample structure for flavors of black currant, graphite, tangy cherry, cool blue fruits, dissolved minerals, and pomegranate seeds. There is a coppery acidity and mineral-driven intensity on the palate which carries the minute-long finish.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2031.



2018 TOBONI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

The Toboni vineyard lies 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 2018, this wine is lifted and vibrant, reflecting the cool growing season. Notes of fresh red berries, hard candy, wildflowers, clove, and pencil shavings emanate from the glass. There is great mid-palate density with wild blackberry, graphite, and savory mineral notes predominating.

Peak drinking window: 2020 through 2027.



2018 U.V. LUCKY WELL 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. A nose of black plum, Asian spice, and wild blackberries fills the glass. The palate is a fusion of salted caramel, blueberry, wild strawberry, and black tea. The wine possesses effortless balance, with bright but well-integrated acidity that matches perfectly with the fruit profile. The flavors expand on the palate and are carried by a firm, mineral-laden acid backbone for a minute or more.

Peak drinking window: 2021 through 2029.

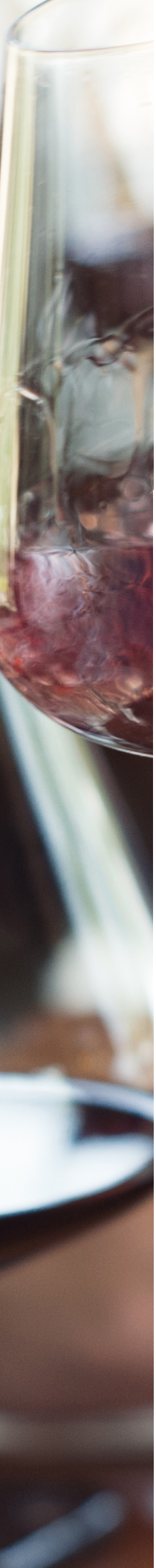
2018 HARPER'S REST ESTATE VINEYARD PINOT NOIR



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 Harper's Rest bottling is consistently the flagship wine in the Arista portfolio, exhibiting an unparalleled level of density, power, and concentration of blue and black fruits year in and year out.

The 2018 Harper's Rest Pinot noir is no exception. Even in a year where finesse is more common than power, Harper's Rest is loaded with wild berry reduction and black plum. Tangy acidity on the palate is joined by pleasantly grippy tannins and notes of pencil shavings, forest floor, Asian spices, wet slate, and candied orange peel. This is a particularly age-worthy example of Harper's Rest that will benefit from a bit of time in the cellar. It should give pleasure to the patient wine enthusiast for many years to come.

Peak drinking window: 2022-2032



2018 TWO BIRDS ESTATE VINEYARD PINOT NOIR



The Two Birds block on our Westside Road estate is quickly becoming nothing less than iconic in the realm of 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, and the resulting complexity from these low-yielding vines is always a hallmark of this cuvée.

Undoubtedly the freshest and most vibrant example of our Two Birds Pinot noir to date, the 2018 bottling boasts explosive aromatics of blue fruits, cedar, spring flowers, and crushed black cherry. The palate is almost effervescent with its highly textured, mineral-laced acidity and tangy plum and just-ripe wild raspberry flavors. This edition is one to lay down and will need time in the cellar (or at least in the decanter) to show its full potential.

Peak drinking window: 2023 through 2033.