

Wine Spectator's Insider Weekly

June 8, 2022

A First Look at Our Editors' Most Exciting New Wines

California

Pinot Noir

A Pinot Noir Spectrum

This week's Insider edition spotlights my recent California Pinot Noir tastings. The 2019 vintage—the Golden State's first true benchmark for Pinot Noir—is a green-light, must-buy for any lover of the grape. California's Pinot Noir producers are skilled at covering the full spectrum of styles, from rich and plush to lean and racy. Sonoma Coast, now further delineated with the recently approved West Sonoma Coast AVA, continues to be ground zero for the new quality surge. But don't sleep on Southern California's wineries. Santa Barbara's Sta. Rita Hills appellation is the source for some head-turning wines as well. And that's a good thing, since with the smoke-taint issues of California's 2020 crop, success from up north will be limited.

Here's a selection of 39 new releases from 2020 and 2019, covering the northern and southern ends of California's leading Pinot Noir-producing areas. For reviews of nearly 600 wines and a full analysis of the category, stay tuned for our annual Pinot Noir report in *Wine Spectator's* Sept. 30, 2022, issue.—*James Molesworth*



Pinot Noir is the focus for many Sonoma wineries, including DeHlinger (Santa Sanger)



RIVERS-MARIE

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Platt Vineyard
2019

95 points | \$80 | 68 cases made | Red

This sports a deep well of creamed dark plum, cherry and blackberry fruit, with remarkably fine acidity providing the matrix. Features hints of sweet tobacco, incense and warm earth that peek in on the finish, with a fine mineral edge underscoring everything. Drink now through 2030. —J.M.



ASTON

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2019

94 points | \$75 | 500 cases made | Red

In the not-shy style, this pumps out tasty boysenberry and blackberry puree fruit, liberally laced with anise and singed mesquite. Shows a bit of a wild brambly edge through the finish as the fruit pumps through, with the requisite acidity for support. Very distinctive, and should be fun to cellar. Drink now through 2030. —J.M.



BREWER-CLIFTON

Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills Hapgood 2020

94 points | \$75 | 200 cases made | Red

This has lift and drive, with a racy-edged set of pomegranate, blood orange and red currant coulis flavors that are well-defined and course through, while red tea, mineral and savory accents add mouthwatering range through the finish. Shows nice coiled-up energy for cellaring, too. Drink now through 2032. —J.M.



DEHLINGER

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley High Plains
2019

94 points | \$75 | 190 cases made | Red

Very expressive, with a mix of pomegranate, damson plum, loganberry and mulberry flavors lined with hints of chaparral, sweet bay leaf and red tea, leaving a perfumed feel on the finish. Lovely. Drink now through 2029. —J.M.



RIVERS-MARIE

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Summa Vineyard
2019

95 points | \$60 | 275 cases made | Red

Boasts enticing mulled blackberry and black cherry notes, which are laced liberally with wood spice and singed anise. Features a filigreed minerality running underneath but fleshes out through the finish, providing a flattering edge without losing definition. Character-filled wine. Drink now through 2030. —J.M.



BREWER-CLIFTON

Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills 459 2020

94 points | \$75 | 200 cases made | Red

Packed with bramble-laced blackberry and mulberry fruit, this has excellent energy from start to finish, with mouthwatering anise and apple wood notes in the background. Shows a subtle singed sandalwood edge that provides a touch of perfume. Distinctive and delicious. Drink now through 2030. —J.M.



DEHLINGER

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Goldridge
2020

94 points | \$55 | 730 cases made | Red

Very pure and very defined, with a lovely wave of pomegranate, bitter plum and loganberry fruit carried by a pinpoint structure and backed by a piercing, long finish. A wine of confidence and precision. Best from 2023 through 2032. —J.M.



PATZ & HALL

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Burnside
Vineyard 2019

94 points | \$85 | 330 cases made | Red

A ripe and plush style, with a luscious wave of raspberry and boysenberry puree cruising through, laced with singed anise, mulling spice and black tea notes that add range and depth through the finish. For fans of the showy style. Drink now through 2027. —J.M.



ROCHIOLI

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley 2020

94 points | \$90 | 1,456 cases made | Red

Racy from the get-go, this delivers a delicious mix of linzer torte, blood orange and plum flavors inlaid with incense, black tea and mineral threads that add tension and range through the finish, dovetailing nicely with a pretty gloss of spicy toast. Best from 2023 through 2030. —*J.M.*



BLACK KITE

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$80 | 196 cases made | Red

Delivers a nice juicy burst of red and black cherry and blackberry compote flavors allied to a sleek structure, while singed anise, apple wood and black tea pour in on the finish. A showy and toasty style, but has the goods to back it up. Drink now through 2029. —*J.M.*



BOHÈME

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Occidental Hills 2019

93 points | \$65 | 226 cases made | Red

This pulls you in right away with the gently mulled raspberry and blood orange core, which is followed by subtle savory, chalky mineral and singed sandalwood notes. Long, focused finish. Drink now through 2027. —*J.M.*



BREWER-CLIFTON

Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills 3D 2020

93 points | \$75 | 200 cases made | Red

This offers some alluring red currant, raspberry and blood orange coulis notes that are stitched together with fine acidity, while flecks of savory, incense and red tea fill in judiciously through the finish. Shows nice length and detail. Drink now through 2029. —*J.M.*

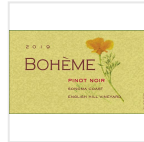


ARISTA

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley UV-Lucky Well Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$95 | 657 cases made | Red

Presents gently mulled raspberry, blackberry and blood orange notes that have good energy and tension, with light savory, red tea and mineral details checking in on the finish. Offers nice freshness in the end. Drink now through 2028. —*J.M.*

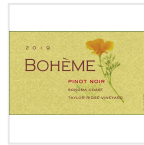


BOHÈME

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast English Hill Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$65 | 486 cases made | Red

A gentle, perfumed style, with *sous-bois* and red tea notes leading the way for a core of gently mulled raspberry and blood orange. A sanguine thread holds the graceful finish. Drink now through 2029. —*J.M.*



BOHÈME

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Taylor Ridge Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$65 | 247 cases made | Red

Nicely focused, with a controlled burst of damson plum and bitter cherry taking the lead, followed closely by red tea, singed sandalwood and dried anise accents. The racy-edged finish echoes the sense of controlled energy. Drink now through 2028. —*J.M.*



BREWER-CLIFTON

Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills Machado 2020

93 points | \$85 | 200 cases made | Red

Delivers a long beam of raspberry and mulberry coulis notes carried by fresh, nicely embedded acidity, while black tea, dried anise and rooibos notes add fuel for the finish. Shows really nice energy. Drink now through 2029. —*J.M.*

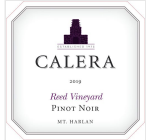


CALERA

**Pinot Noir Mount Harlan de Villiers
Vineyard 2019**

93 points | \$85 | 1,175 cases made | Red

Juicy and youthfully compact, with a core of black cherry and mulberry fruit wrapped in licorice root, singed balsam wood and black tea. A long underlying chalky mineral edge extends the finish. Let this unfurl in the cellar. Best from 2023 through 2032. —*J.M.*



CALERA

**Pinot Noir Mount Harlan Reed Vineyard
2019**

93 points | \$85 | 390 cases made | Red

Vibrant, with delicious black cherry and mulberry notes mixed with anise, black tea and singed sandalwood. The long, refined finish has rippling acidity and a subtle chalky thread, while the fruit keeps pace. Best from 2023 through 2031. —*J.M.*



DUTTON ESTATE

**Pinot Noir Russian River Valley La Familia
2019**

93 points | \$72 | 234 cases made | Red

This has a light savory note that darts to the lead, followed quickly by perfumed raspberry and mulberry compote notes. Finishes with a swirl of rooibos tea, anise and lightly singed vanilla, with the fruit keeping pace. Lots to like in this elegantly styled version. Drink now through 2025. —*J.M.*

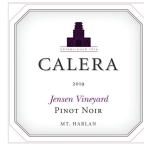


KOSTA BROWNE

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2020

93 points | \$115 | 4,650 cases made | Red

A lush, ripe style, with creamed plum and raspberry puree gliding through easily, flanked by lightly singed anise and mesquite. Shows a suave brushstroke of black tea on the finish. For the fruit bomb crowd. Drink now through 2029. —*J.M.*



CALERA

**Pinot Noir Mount Harlan Jensen Vineyard
2019**

93 points | \$105 | 720 cases made | Red

Very fresh, featuring raspberry, blood orange and mulberry fruit that's well-defined and backed by mouthwatering acidity. Offers rose petal and savory notes along the way. A nice piercing minerality extends the finish. Best from 2023 through 2032. —*J.M.*

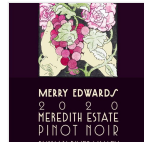


DEHLINGER

**Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Garbro
Ranch 2020**

93 points | \$45 | 235 cases made | Red

This has punch and guile, with a burst of kirsch and plum aromas and flavors that are energetic, while lively red tea, anise and pomegranate seed line the long, fresh finish. Best from 2023 through 2029. —*J.M.*



MERRY EDWARDS

**Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Meredith
Estate 2020**

93 points | \$90 | 1,180 cases made | Red

Mouthfilling, with ripe and lively boysenberry, plum and linzer torte flavors that bounce off each other, while anise and bramble fill in the available space. Not shy with the fruit, but has the freshness and form for balance. Best from 2023 through 2029. —*J.M.*



LYNMAR

**Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Quail Hill
Vineyard 2019**

93 points | \$71 | 1,201 cases made | Red

Juicy and broad, with a forward set of mulled raspberry, red cherry and blood orange notes liberally laced with anise and singed apple wood. Offers a late flurry of wood spice on the finish, as the fruit keeps pace. Drink now through 2027. —*J.M.*

**PATZ & HALL**

Pinot Noir Napa Valley Carneros Hyde
Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$75 | 594 cases made | Red

Ripe but sports a cool profile (temperature-wise), with blueberry and açai berry peeking in on the core of raspberry and plum fruit flavors, while sleek acidity is nicely embedded throughout. Pretty spice and violet hints gild the finish. Drink now through 2026. —*J.M.*

**PATZ & HALL**

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley
Chenoweth Ranch 2019

93 points | \$65 | 813 cases made | Red

Offers lots of sparkly energy, with mulberry, raspberry and blood orange notes leading the way, melding with incense, sassafras and red tea through the racy-edged finish. Shows nice length and refinement. Drink now through 2028. —*J.M.*

**PATZ & HALL**

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Gap's Crown
Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$70 | 398 cases made | Red

Offers good brambly energy that's still youthfully coiled up, but should unwind in the near-term to allow the cherry, pomegranate and raspberry coulis, red tea and shiso leaf notes to play out fully. Drink now through 2027. —*J.M.*

**JOSEPH PHELPS**

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Quarter Moon
Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$95 | 1,250 cases made | Red

Fresh and juicy, with raspberry and cherry compote notes that have good energy from start to finish, stretching out nicely over light savory, anise and floral notes. The long, pure finish has nice detail. Drink now through 2027. —*J.M.*

**PATZ & HALL**

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley
Bootlegger's Hill 2019

93 points | \$85 | 474 cases made | Red

Lively, with mulled raspberry, pomegranate and sassafras notes spiked with rooibos tea and savory notes, which lend a mouthwatering edge through the finish. Drink now through 2027. —*J.M.*

**PATZ & HALL**

Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Little Boot
Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$80 | 499 cases made | Red

Shows a gently mulled edge to the mix of sassafras, raspberry and boysenberry notes, backed by red tea and incense on the finish. Mouthwatering acidity keeps everything harmonious. Drink now through 2028. —*J.M.*

**JOSEPH PHELPS**

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Pastoral
Vineyard 2019

93 points | \$95 | 1,180 cases made | Red

A fresh, floral style, with a mix of rose petal, cherry pit, damson plum and sandalwood accents that knit tightly through a racy, savory-edged finish. Drink now through 2026. —*J.M.*

**RAEN**

Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Freestone
Occidental Bodega 2019

93 points | \$110 | 280 cases made | Red

A piercing, fresh style, with a savory tilt to the damson plum, blood orange and cherry pit notes. Stays tightly focused through the brisk-edged and well-detailed finish. A wine that relies on precision rather than bombast. Drink now through 2027. —*J.M.*



RIVERS-MARIE

**Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Occidental Ridge
Vineyard 2019**

93 points | \$60 | 250 cases made | Red

Juicy and focused, with a delicious beam of raspberry and boysenberry coulis lined with light anise, wood spice and black tea. Feels open-knit, but there's legit structure through the finish and some energy in reserve. Hard to lay off now, but give this a spell in the cellar. Drink now through 2029. —*J.M.*



RIVERS-MARIE

**Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Silver Eagle
Vineyard 2019**

93 points | \$60 | 350 cases made | Red

This has a restrained juiciness, with a light brambly textured edge to the mix of red and black cherry puree and dried anise. Shows really nice, focused energy through the finish, with the fruit playing out easily as wood spice and apple wood hints flirt along the edges. Drink now through 2028. —*J.M.*

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