



2016 Platinum Tasting Notes

Producer: **River Road**

Appellation: **Green Valley of Russian River Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Pinot Noir**

Proprietary: **Stephanie's Cuvee**

Vintage: **2014**

Price: **25**

Importer: **X**

Score: **96**

Color: **X**

Review: This area is renowned for great Pinot Noir for good reason, and all those reasons show in this bottling. Rich cool climate fruit aromas of cherry, raspberry, damp earth, flowers and powder are joined by rich oak spice, and these all translate directly to palate flavors, with popping acidity extending the finish and maintaining full integration.

Beautifully made wine.

Producer: **Fog Crest**

Appellation: **Russian River Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Pinot Noir**

Proprietary: **Laguna West**



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Vintage: **2013**

Price: **39**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: A rich, fully extracted style that maintains bright acidity to carry the deep fruit and spice. Black cherry, cinnamon, mild damp earth and notes of leaf and talc are lively in both aroma and flavor, and vibrant acidity lengthens the finish, adding a citrus zest note for interest. This will pair well with fish or fowl - go for an herb driven prep.

Producer: **Frank Family Vineyards**

Appellation: **Carneros**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Pinot Noir**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **35**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: A great example of classic Carneros fruit and earthy minerality. Rich black cherry, cranberry and raspberry fruit join with damp earth and crushed rock notes and hints of



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brown spice and moderate oak toast in a fleshy textured wine that is complex and long, with full integration in the finish. This can handle red meats as well as roast turkey or salmon.

Producer: **Lafond**

Appellation: **Sta. Rita Hills**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Lafond Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Pinot Noir**

Proprietary: **Pommard Clone**

Vintage: **2012**

Price: **48**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: A very interesting Pinot Noir. Aromas of dust and talc sit atop bright strawberry and cherry fruit, leading to a mouthful of rich mixed red fruit, rhubarb, dry earth minerality and hints of leaf and fennel. Mouthwatering acidity carries it all into a blooming finish that goes on and on. This will sit nicely along side a saucy salmon dish - it's got the backbone to handle it.

Producer: **La Chertosa**

Appellation: **Sonoma Valley**



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Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Sangiovese**

Proprietary: **Reserve**

Vintage: **2014**

Price: **35**

Importer: **X**

Score: **96**

Color: **Red**

Review: Sonoma County legend Sam Sebastiani is having a blast with the La Chertosa label, and he's got a real winner in this return to the roots bottling. Deep cherry, sage, moderate spice, full extraction, supple tannins with good grip throughout, a long finish with great integration - it's all here in spades. I suspect that Sam is as proud of this wine as any that he has made during a storied career. Pick up a bottle and taste the history.

Producer: **Eberle Winery**

Appellation: **Paso Robles**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Barbera**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**



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Price: **32**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: Of all the beautiful Barberas that have come from Gary Eberle's commitment to the grape, this may be the best of the lot, especially for fans of a more fruit driven style. The nose is a deep mix of cherry and herb that bursts from the glass, and Barbera's natural acidity makes those elements incredibly vibrant on the palate, adding a kiss of toasted oak and finishing long with some herb coming forward. A spectacular food wine - I'd go with roasted wild boar as an obvious match.

Producer: **Sunland Vintage Winery**

Appellation: **Lodi**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Tempranillo**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2014**

Price: **34**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: A gorgeous light bodied expression that's not at all



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light on flavor. Cherry, blackberry, proper dill notes from American oak as they do with the grape in Spain, fall spice and a touch of anise are bright and lively, with food friendly acidity keeping it all together through a lingering finish. I'd whip up some seared red meat for this

Producer: **Brian Arden Winery**

Appellation: **Napa Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Franc**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2012**

Price: **80**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: Brian Arden is new to me, but you can bet I'll be checking out the rest of the portfolio after this delicious Cabernet Franc. High toned cherry fruit, tobacco leaf, earth minerality and dried herbs balance beautifully on the nose and in the mouth, with supple fine grained tannins providing grip that doesn't distract from the mix of flavors. A bright chocolate note comes forward with some air time, adding complexity to an already intriguing package. Well done.



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Producer: **V. Sattui**

Appellation: **Alexander Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Franc**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **45**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: I love winemaking with Cabernet Franc that doesn't try to remove all of the green tones that make it such a useful grape for blending, and lets its Right Bank style shine. The team at V. Sattui masterfully employs minimal intervention and lets this wine give us bold red fruit, spice, pepper and leaf, moderate grip and a blossoming finish with intensifying flavors. If you're wanting to show someone what Cabernet Franc is supposed to be, you can't go wrong here.

Producer: **Ranchero Cellars**

Appellation: **Paso Robles**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Self Ranch**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Carignane**



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Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **32**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: A bold expression of this underutilized grape. It's full bodied, rich and on the dark side of the varieties' personality, showing blackberry, blueberry, leather, and brown spice aromas and flavors, with firm grip throughout and a long finish that brings some earthy minerality to the front. I'd pair this with something on the gamey side for a real treat.

Producer: **Carol Shelton Wines**

Appellation: **Alexander Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Oat Valley Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Carignane**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **28**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: I'm a real fan of this grape, and while I wish there was more of it available as a stand alone variety, I'm



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certainly glad that this one exists. You will be as well - it's a spot on correct example, but don't take that to mean boring. It's lively and fun, showing red and blue fruit with citrus, white pepper and mild spice. Try it where you might normally serve a light bodied Zinfandel.

Producer: **Alma Sol Winery**

Appellation: **Paso Robles**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Cuevas Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2012**

Price: **34**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: Bright aromas of cassis and blackberry fruit are balanced with soft dried herbs and fall spice, and they come together as flavors delivered on firm tannic structure that asks for a long decant or additional bottle aging. It's worth the wait either way. Pair it with your richest beef or lamb dishes.

Producer: **V. Sattui Winery**

Appellation: **Napa Valley**



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Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Vittorio's Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **60**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: 2013 is showing itself to be a great vintage for Napa Valley reds. This elegant Cabernet Sauvignon is a mix of blackberry, currants, dried herbs, brown spice and earthy mineral aromas and flavors with full palate weight and intensity of each element, and a long complex finish keeps you coming back. Sattui just keeps the great Cabernet coming. Contains 5% Merlot.

Producer: **Rodney Strong**

Appellation: **Sonoma County**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **20**



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Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: Rodney Strong is on a serious roll right now, and this is a budget friendly winner in their portfolio. It shows its Sonoma origin, with red and black fruit, high toned dried herbs and soft spice on the nose and in the mouth, with structured tannins, good grip and a long well integrated finish - the sort of thing that you'd expect to pay a lot more for. At this production level, you'll have no trouble finding it. Go now!

Producer: **Rodney Strong Vineyards**

Appellation: **Knights Valley**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **Estate Vineyards**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **35**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: Knights Valley produces some of my favorite Cabernet Sauvignon - it's certainly a go to appellation for value, and this bottle drinks way above its price category.



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Very dry in a food friendly way, it brings blackberry, dried herbs, granite minerality and toasty oak spice that's perfectly integrated. It's firm at present, and will certainly reward those patient enough to cellar it a while. Give it a long decant in the near term, and know that it's worthy of your finest beef or lamb preparations.

Producer: **Stargazer Barn**

Appellation: **Humboldt County**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Willow Creek**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **27**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: Locals refer to this county as being "behind the redwood curtain" and for that reason, its wines are little known beyond their borders. Wines like this one aim to change that. It's a great cooler climate expression that comes across more Washington than California in style, with no jagged edges or elements crying out for prominence in the mix. It's a soft, red fruit driven wine that's great on its own, yet will sit well with a beef meal. Pull the curtain back



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on this wine - you won't be disappointed.

Producer: **Lawer Family Wines**

Appellation: **Napa Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **56**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: Lawer Family, whether under their family name, their previous Three Coins label, or their Hooker RFC label, isn't that well known, but they certainly should be. They consistently produce solid wines across their portfolio, and they deliver serious bang for the buck, even at this price point. This is a rich, concentrated expression that shows black and red berries, fall spice, very faint dried herbs and a floral note, with soft tannic structure that makes it quite approachable near term. Well done.

Producer: **V. Sattui Winery**

Appellation: **Mt. Veeder**

Broader region: **California**



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Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **85**

Importer: **X**

Score: **96**

Color: **Red**

Review: Always a top scoring wine, V. Sattui's Mt. Veeder Cab continues the string with this vintage, bringing us deep blackberry, cassis, fall spice, dried herbs, white pepper, grippy mountain tannins and a blooming finish that really hangs in there. It's delicious now and will reward you should you choose to cellar some for the next 5 to 10 years.

Producer: **V. Sattui Winery**

Appellation: **Napa Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Morisoli Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **80**

Importer: **X**

Score: **97**



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Color: **Red**

Review: Collector alert... For all you cult wine keepers, here's a wine to add to your cellar that will outperform wines at three times the price. One of my favorite vineyard sources again shows why its fruit is so sought after. It's rich, round, supple and bursting with everything you'd expect it to, including Morisoli's distinctive earthy notes, which settle nicely into a supporting roll under the lush fruit, spice and light dried herb character. We talk about finish a lot in wine writing, but I'm not sure this wine ever finishes. Absolutely riveting.

Producer: **Santa Barbara Winery**

Appellation: **Sta. Rita Hills**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Lafond Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Grenache**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2012**

Price: **28**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Red**

Review: Cool climate Grenache is a delight when it's handled like this bottling. Lively cherry fruit, white pepper, blueberry and hints of tar, leaf and cinnamon show vividly in



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the glass, with a zesty finish that keeps the cherry in focus. This will pair with just about any meat - try it with a surf and turf plate.

Producer: **V. Sattui Winery**

Appellation: **Napa Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Grenache**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **35**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: There aren't many bottlings of this variety coming out of Napa Valley, but this one might change that. A nose of cherry, strawberry, powder and mild pepper translate directly to palate flavors that are bright and zesty. Foodies take note - look at utilizing more Grenache when you're pairing. Contains 4% Syrah.

Producer: **V. Sattui Winery**

Appellation: **Dry Creek Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Ramazzotti Vineyard**



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Country: **USA**

Grape: **Zinfandel**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **42**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: It's nice to see more Zinfandels like this one come across my desk. Don't get me wrong - there's a place for a full range of styles. I just happen to prefer this one. It's dry, food friendly and boldly flavorful all at once, with brambly fruit, pepper, allspice and moderate oak toast aromas and flavors, and it finishes with a zesty note that makes for a great pairing with simple grilled meats. Lip smackin' good Zin!

Producer: **21 Brix Winery**

Appellation: **Lake Erie**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **X**

Proprietary: **Thirsty Elephant**

Vintage: **NV**

Price: **11**

Importer: **X**



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Score: **94**

Color: **Pink**

Review: The world of wine has so much to offer that is rarely seen, and unless you've been put on the trail of something special that's outside the mainstream, it's difficult to find out about them. Here's an offering that any true lover of wine can appreciate for it's fresh, lively cherry and watermelon fruit, delightful sweetness and mouthwatering acidity that balances the sweetness perfectly.

Producer: **Gloria Ferrer**

Appellation: **Carneros**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **X**

Proprietary: **Blanc De Noir**

Vintage: **NV**

Price: **22**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **Sparkling**

Review: Easy to find, nicely priced California bubbly with depth and complexity for all occasions. It's perfectly clean, with lemon zest, stony minerality, a hint of strawberry and a yeasty note on the nose. Scouring acidity doesn't impede the flavors promised by the nose, which bloom in the finish



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and leave you clean, but with a lasting impression of flavor. Very impressive sparkling wine.

Producer: **Tangent**

Appellation: **Edna Valley**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Paragon Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Albariño**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2014**

Price: **17**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **White**

Review: Winemaker Christian Roguenant was one of the first to embrace this variety in California, and his work with it has inspired many others to plant the variety. It seems to do the best in this location so far, and Roguenant's hand with it is sure and solid. Crisp and dry, it delivers mixed stone fruit and pear aromas and flavors, with a streak of stony mineral freshening everything. Lots of pairing possibilities, but I say it's oyster time!

Producer: **Reustle-Prayer Rock**

Appellation: **Umpqua Valley**



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Broader region: **Oregon**
Vineyard: **Revelation Bloc**
Country: **USA**
Grape: **Gruner Veltliner**
Proprietary: **Estate Grown**
Vintage: **2014**
Price: **24**
Importer: **X**
Score: **94**
Color: **White**

Review: Reustle Prayer Rock has been making this variety for years with great success, and this bottle continues the trend with crisp citrus and mild green bean notes over a creamy texture and a long finish that brings a light nutty note forward. It's a unique refresher for a warm day, or will pair well with a green salad or a veggie platter.

Producer: **Reustle-Prayer Rock**
Appellation: **Umpqua Valley**
Broader region: **Oregon**
Vineyard: **Smaragd**
Country: **USA**
Grape: **Gruner Veltliner**
Proprietary: **Estate Grown**
Vintage: **2014**
Price: **29**
Importer: **X**



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Score: **96**

Color: **White**

Review: Smaragd is a term used in the Wachau in Austria that refers to a ripeness level similar to the German term Auslese. This wine presents as a beautifully ripe example that leans away from Gruner Veltliners green tones and into more citrus character. It's crisp and creamy, with zingy lemon and lime, granite minerality and a long refreshing finish with racy acidity keeping the flavors lingering. Delicious wine.

Producer: **Bargetto Winery**

Appellation: **Monterey County**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Pinot Grigio**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2015**

Price: **16**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **White**

Review: Yes - this is about as good as domestic Pinot Grigio gets. Peach, tangerine, and a wooly note blend beautifully and last through a long zesty finish that refreshes without becoming boring or tiresome. Pair this with a swimming pool,



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a lounge chair, a great friend and a sunny day, and be careful about finishing the bottle too fast.

Producer: **Sea Glass**

Appellation: **Santa Barbara County**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Riesling**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2014**

Price: **12**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **White**

Review: I first realized that I loved wine with a taste of a Santa Barbara Riesling decades ago, but I haven't seen too much of it recently. There are still some champions of the grape in the region, and this easy to find bottle shows the purity of fruit that attracted me all those years ago. The off dry style really matches the acidity here, with apricot, stone and spice blending together in a deceptively soft package that wows you with brightness in the spicy finish. A great value.

Producer: **Zocker**



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Appellation: **Edna Valley**
Broader region: **California**
Vineyard: **Paragon Vineyard**
Country: **USA**

Grape: **Riesling**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **20**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **White**

Review: If you don't know dry Riesling, you're missing one of the great wine experiences in the world, and this wine will show you what I mean. It's crisp and cleansing, yet packed with flavor and nuance. Lemon, lime, peach, wet stone and mild spice aromas and flavors flood through the dry profile and blossom in the finish. Try this with lots of different light meals and open your mind to a different kind of taste adventure.

Producer: **Newman's Own**

Appellation: **California**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Chardonnay**

Proprietary: **X**



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Vintage: **2014**

Price: **12**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **White**

Review: A crowd pleasing Chardonnay at a wallet pleasing price is always welcome, and this is one you can slide into a blind tasting of more expensive bottles to see just what can be accomplished at this price point. It's got great acidity to balance a plush texture, showing good oak spice that's not overdone, and rich apple, lemon and tropical flavors. What's not to like?

Producer: **Sutter Home**

Appellation: **California**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Chardonnay**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **NV**

Price: **6**

Importer: **X**

Score: **95**

Color: **White**

Review: Skillful blending of lots from different vintages can result in some great wine, and can save you a lot of bank in



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the process. This Chardonnay is quite elegant, showing soft oak spice over passion fruit, lemon and tart apple, with good viscosity and a long finish that adds a nutty note. For six bucks? Don't listen to me - go try a bottle.

Producer: **Chronic Cellars**

Appellation: **Paso Robles**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **X**

Proprietary: **Pink Pedals**

Vintage: **2015**

Price: **15**

Importer: **X**

Score: **97**

Color: **Pink**

Review: A delightful off dry Rosé that delivers fresh strawberry, cherry and watermelon flavors over zesty acidity and adds a faint touch of herb for complexity. A great summer quaffer all on its own.

Producer: **Flipflop**

Appellation: **American**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**



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Grape: **Riesling**

Proprietary: **X**

Vintage: **NV**

Price: **7**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **White**

Review: If you know where to look, you can find small lots of wine from multiple vintages that might not be much on their own, but when blended skillfully can make a great wine at a great price. This one is like a fresh apricot pie, with baked fruit and spice riding on zippy acidity that keeps you coming back for more. Available everywhere.

Producer: **Villa Bellezza**

Appellation: **Upper Mississippi River Valley**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **X**

Proprietary: **Dolce White Wine**

Vintage: **2015**

Price: **22/375ml**

Importer: **X**

Score: **96**

Color: **Dessert**



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Review: This sumptuous dessert wine from the largest AVA is made up of 80% Edelweiss and 20% Brianna. You may not know those grapes, but you should know this wine. It's very subtle on the nose, but explosive in flavor, with bright lemon lime and a bit of tangerine carried on vibrant acidity and finishing clean and long. This may be hard to find, but that's part of the fun, yes?

Producer: **Lafond**

Appellation: **Sta. Rita Hills**

Broader region: **California**

Vineyard: **Lafond Vineyard**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Riesling**

Proprietary: **Late Harvest**

Vintage: **2013**

Price: **32/375ml**

Importer: **X**

Score: **99**

Color: **Dessert**

Review: After writing 36 reviews of top scoring wines at the 2016 Monterey International Wine Competition, I'm happy to say that number 37 tops them all. This is an intensely concentrated Riesling, and it carries its almost twenty percent residual sugar with style, the acid propping up classic Riesling flavors through a long finish that continues to bloom long after the liquid has left you. The judges dropped



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a 99 point score on this wine, and I agree that it's worthy of such accolades. A stunning dessert, and the Wine of the Year at the 2016 Monterey International Wine Competition. Cheers!

Producer: **Macchia Winery**

Appellation: **California**

Broader region: **X**

Vineyard: **X**

Country: **USA**

Grape: **Zinfandel**

Proprietary: **Ambitious**

Vintage: **2014**

Price: **19**

Importer: **X**

Score: **94**

Color: **Red**

Review: Two Zinfandels received 94 point scores at the 2016 Monterey International Wine Competition, and they couldn't possibly be more different. This bottle is the full throttle, high octane, super ripe, highly extracted style, and it succeeds by delivering brambly fruit, pepper, spice and some heat without reaching into raisin or prune characteristics. The great thing about Zin is its wide range of possibilities, and your experience of the varietal isn't complete without trying the wines in the Macchia portfolio -



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they are constantly pushing the envelope of what this variety can do. I'm a fan.