

# Best of THE SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS

By LAURA NESS

The Santa Cruz Mountains have long been a bastion of Burgundian varietals, from the early days of Paul Masson (The Mountain Winery), but cuttings from treasured Bordeaux vines planted at La Questa Vineyard in 1884 are still propagated at Mount Eden and Ridge today. From the coastal climes of Pleasant Valley and Bald Mountain to the warmth of Bates Ranch and Saratoga, and further north to the extremes of Fogarty, winemakers like Ryan Beauregard, Jeff Emery, Nate Kandler, Marty Mathis and Shalini Sekhar, are making wines of precision, depth, and distinction. Let's journey through this land of many mountains, where each vineyard has its own microclimate, almost like a different dialect of a common language.

Bottle Photos: Annarose Monroe Photography



## 2021 BEAUREGARD VINEYARDS BALD MOUNTAIN VINEYARD CHARDONNAY

We begin with a redemption story. Fourth generation winemaker Ryan Beauregard picked the grapes from this coastal mountain vineyard on a former seabed in early September 2021 to preserve acidity. With the prior year's precious crop having been completely incinerated by the CZU fire of 2020, he was eager for a chance at redemption. A winemaker gets but one shot at perfection each year. After fermenting hot to preserve typicity, the wine spent 10 months in 33 percent new French oak barrels, and then rested for four months in stainless steel before bottling. Glistening pale yellow, this Chablis-like wine's pure lemon meringue pie aromas lift your spirits. The palate is brilliantly brisk with yuzu, candied lime, tangerine peel, and a kiss of salty fog. Redemption, indeed.

13.75% | \$65



## 2017 BIG BASIN VINEYARDS OLD CORRAL ESTATE PINOT NOIR

This is a story of second chances. When proprietor Bradley Brown planted his vineyard in a steep boulder-strewn bowl near Big Basin Redwoods State Park, he never intended to grow Pinot Noir, but so strong is the lore of this grape that he eventually succumbed. Old Corral Pinot Noir is comprised of Swan clone (grafted from Syrah) in the low-yielding Old Corral Block perched on vertiginous south- and east-facing hills, as well as Mount Eden selection from the Boulder and Rocky Blocks (also formerly Syrah), the latter so steep it is hand-tended. Old Corral rewards with its charming nose of rose petals and perfume, plus an utterly heavenly spice that continues to lurk beneath the fruit on the oh-so-silky palate. This wine just gets more glorious with age.

13.2% | \$75



## 2019 KATHRYN KENNEDY WINERY ESTATE CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Pioneering winemaker Kathryn Kennedy planted her estate Saratoga vineyard in 1973, with clone 8 Cabernet cuttings from David Bruce Winery. After selling fruit to Mount Eden Vineyards, she created her own brand in 1979. After her passing, her son and winemaker Marty Mathis continued the tradition of bottling the estate Cabernet in a distinctive silver label with Kathryn's signature. Only 600 cases of this limited-production, age-worthy wine are produced yearly. Stunning from the first whiff of bright red cherry, this svelte, acid-driven 2019 Cabernet is acrobatic and lifted, with cherry, tarragon, red licorice, fir and piñón spinning like a prima ballerina in a dazzling pirouette of technical precision and airy grace.

13.8% | \$295



## 2019 KINGS MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS CLONE 13 PINOT NOIR

Always distinctive for their intense spicy fruit and overt notes of well-toasted French oak, Kings Mountain Pinots are unlike any other from this region. From a hand-tended one-acre vineyard surrounded by redwoods, oaks and madrones, this vineyard is on the lee side of Skyline in the town of Woodside on Kings Mountain Road. In this 2019 wine, the Martini clone (aka 13), shows fetchingly earthy aromas, complemented by winsome raspberry, forest floor and cinnamon stick. Possessed of a lithe and silky texture verging on lush, this superbly balanced Pinot Noir has vibrant, mouthwatering acidity buoyed by thrilling red fruits enlivened by spicy ginger and Saigon cinnamon. Daring, adventurous, bold and unstoppable, the finish lingers long and luxuriously.

13.5% | \$65



**2017 MOUNT EDEN VINEYARDS  
ESTATE CABERNET SAUVIGNON**

An arresting nose of deep dark forest, a cedar closet filled with mysterious old furs and leather jackets, black cherries, clove, tobacco and graphite are the proverbial butler's knock on the door, guaranteeing something noteworthy awaits. Each earth-rimmed, darkly savory and meaty sip sinks you deeper into the wine's intense and provocative persona. It's like having a conversation with Kafka or Wilde, or both. Winemaker Jeffrey Patterson crafted this intriguing saga in a bottle from 80 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, which sets the foundation, 15 percent Merlot, which adds the fruit, 3 percent Cabernet Franc for fresh pine, and 2 percent Petit Verdot for dark velvet. Tannins are chewy and firm, and the acid is bristling with nervous energy, signaling a long and exciting evolution ahead. Drink now, if you dare.

**14% | \$110**



**2019 NEELY WINERY 'BEE BLOCK'  
ESTATE CHARDONNAY**

Golden in the glass, and oozing Meyer lemon shortbread, quince paste, toasted hazelnuts, wet river rock, honeycomb, fresh baguette and dried mango, this wine made by Shalini Sekhar has depth and grip from stem to stern. With acid as tight as a bowstring, the mouthfeel is simultaneously crisp yet fleshy, reminiscent of baked McIntosh apples with golden raisins, brown sugar, candied walnuts and a squeeze of Cara Cara orange. From one of the iconic vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains (made famous by the Varner twins), this is made in a fresh, aromatic style, signaling a new direction for the winery. Neely Winery is open by appointment on a serenely blissed-out vineyard property in Portola Valley where sheep do weed control.

**13.3% | \$50**



**2017 SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAIN  
VINEYARD BATES RANCH  
CABERNET SAUVIGNON**

Winemaker Jeff Emery is a conscientious bottler of history. As a UC Santa Cruz undergrad, he became a cellar rat at Ken Burnap's new winery, Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard, and essentially never left. After Burnap's retirement, Emery took over and kept doing things the old-fashioned, old-world way, keeping detailed notes. Tight, austere and forever lasting, his Cabernets from Bates Ranch are monumental. Harvested from upper rows planted in 1972, the 2017 Bates Cab is an aromatic mélange of raspberry, pomegranate, sage, wild thyme and basil. Superfine of texture, intense of red fruit and acid, this exhibits all the sinewy depth and drive you want in a racehorse that can repeatedly run for the roses. Superb, composed and magnificent.

**13.7% | \$150**



**2021 SOQUEL VINEYARDS  
PLEASANT VALLEY FARMS  
VOSNE-ROMANÉE CLONE PINOT NOIR**

Scoring a Best of Class at the San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, especially in a huge category like Pinot Noir, isn't easy. But Soquel Vineyards did just that, sourcing grapes from Pleasant Valley Farms, a 26-acre oasis in Corralitos known for its extra virgin olive oil. Here, five acres of Pinot Noir are planted to Vosne-Romanée and Chalone clones. Praise be to the sweet berries of the summer sunshine coupled with red apple, orange peel, ripe red raspberry and pomegranate that careen playfully through this winsome wine, doing somersaults with righteous abandon. Soquel Vineyards also scored Double Golds for their 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot, 2021 Ben Lomond Mountain Coast Grade Vineyard Pinot Noir, 2021 Stretched Boundaries Pinot Noir, and the 2021 Lago Lomita Vineyard Partners Reserve Nebbiolo. Bravo!

**14.6% | \$50**



**2019 THOMAS FOGARTY WINERY  
WILL'S CABIN VINEYARD, GIST  
RANCH VINEYARD PINOT NOIR**

Few spots for wine tasting are as sublimely picturesque as Thomas Fogarty Winery in Woodside. Breathtaking vistas set the stage for wines of equal magnificence and gravitas. Winemaker Nathan Kandler, who apprenticed under Michael Martella and took over when he retired, has proven himself a Pinot Noir whisperer, and his many vineyard designates reveal his quiet command. Will's Cabin Pinot comes from Mount Eden, Swan and Rochioli clones planted at Gist Ranch Vineyard on Skyline near Black Road, overlooking the Big Basin watershed. Garnet and ruby hued, it's fantastically vivid: a festive flamenco of strawberry, pomegranate and cranberry, framed ever so delicately by cedar and fir. Its pleasingly candied finish is uncannily charming. One sip and you're hooked.

**13.5% | \$75**



**2018 WINDY OAKS ESTATE DEUX  
GRAND CRUS ESTATE PINOT NOIR**

Proprietors Jim and Judy Schultze are renowned for their Burgundian style of Pinot Noir, many of which hail from their steep and hilly Corralitos estate vineyard above Monterey Bay. Since 1999, their secret is treating winegrowing and winemaking as one and the same activity. Gentle care and extended aging on the lees with no racking, fining or filtering results in magnificently textured wines of uncommon purity. Divinely perfumed and majestically transparent, the 2018 Deux Grand Crus is a combination of two clones, SBC (Special Burgundy Clone) and Chambertin, sourced from France. Soaring red fruit, diaphanous spice and an effortless texture of spun silk holds you spellbound, like watching a classic film and thinking, "Why can't they make movies like that anymore?"

**13.7% | \$110**