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CALIFORNIA

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

# Santa Cruz Cabernet proliferates



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*The secret is out on these hidden gems, some of the best California Cabernet on the market today.*

Thanks to the perennially outstanding wine from Ridge's Monte Bello vineyard (seen above overlooking Silicon Valley), California's Santa Cruz Mountains have been associated with high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon in the minds of many wine lovers since

at least the famous [Paris Tasting](#) of 1976. The grape's history in the region goes back to 1940, when Martin Ray planted the first cuttings at what would become Mount Eden Vineyards on the eastern flank of the Coast Range above Silicon Valley.

Monte Bello's reputation notwithstanding, in the decades that followed, the Santa Cruz Mountains have become better known for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay than for Cabernet. A few dedicated producers – such as Kathryn Kennedy and Mount Eden – have never wavered in their commitment to producing excellent examples of the grape. But for every Cabernet producer in the appellation, there are now five or six making burgundian varieties.

In the last decade, however, new bottlings of Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet have been appearing with greater frequency, often from smaller, well-known producers based elsewhere in California. Some of these wines are reminding California wine lovers that Cabernet comes in more flavours than just 'Napa' – and that the elegant, lower-alcohol, herb-inflected wines of the late 1970s and early 1980s aren't impossible, even in a warming climate.





Fellom Ranch (photo by Ken Swegles, Skyline Viticulture)

## Two plates, two geologies, two climates

The coastal range at the heart of the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA was formed by the slow collision of the Pacific and North American tectonic plates between 28 and 30 million years ago, which compressed the sedimentary layers of ancient seabeds into the steep mountains we see today. In some ways, that collision is still playing out in the (occasionally disastrous) movement of the San Andreas Fault, which almost – but not quite – divides the east and west sides of the range.

‘I get in trouble for saying this’, chuckles David Gates, VP of vineyard operations for Ridge Vineyards, ‘but the easiest way to understand the Santa Cruz Mountains is that everything on the west side is Pinot country, and everything on the east side is Cabernet country.’

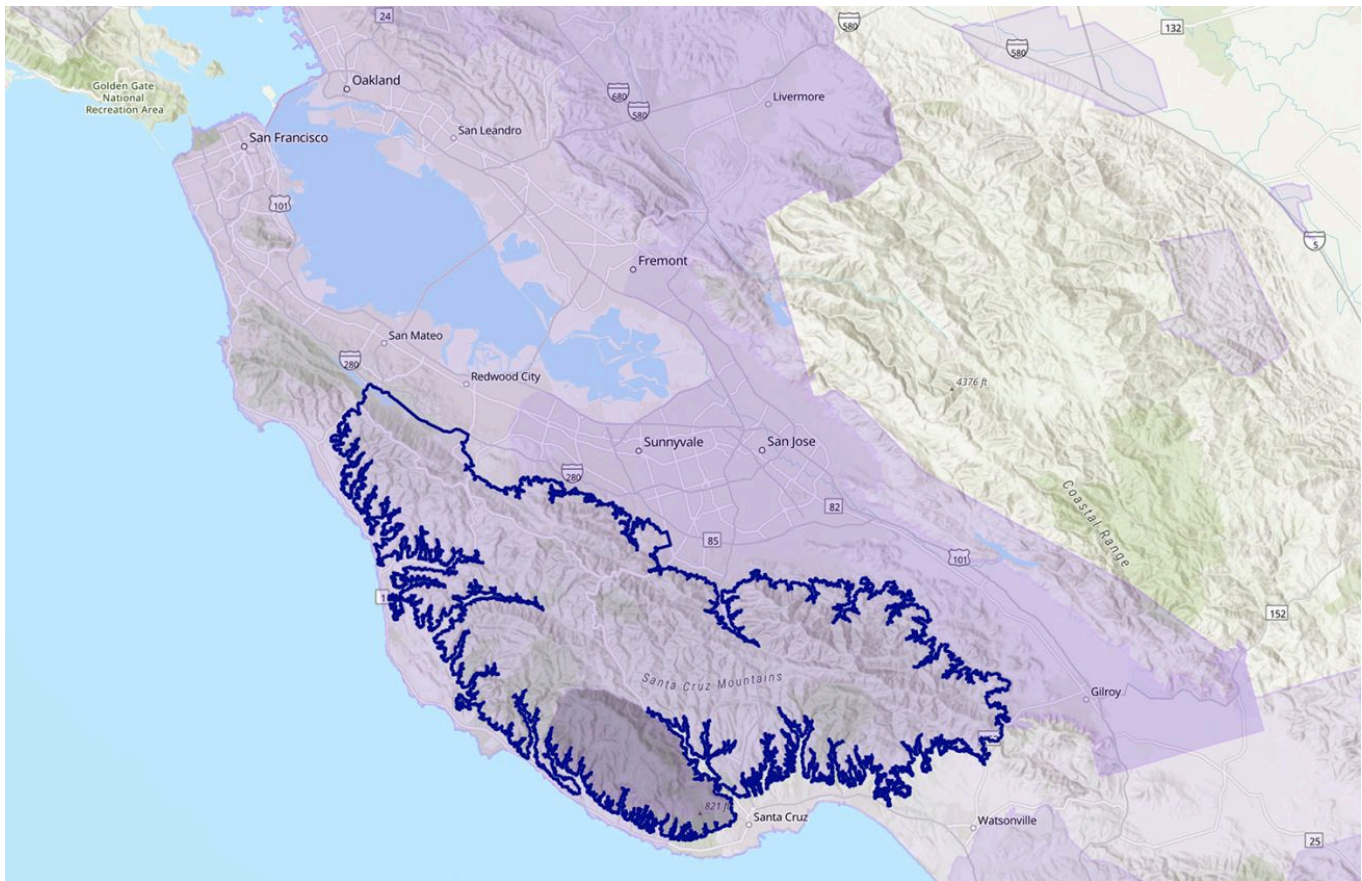
As with any generalisation about geography and winemaking, exceptions abound. But east versus west remains a solid starting point for understanding how an AVA famous for exceptionally cool-climate Pinot Noir and Chardonnay (to the point of being marginal in many places) can also ripen Cabernet Sauvignon.

The redwood-forested west side, directly exposed to Pacific winds and frigid fogs, can receive up to 50 inches (127 cm) of rain annually. Just over the ridge on the east side, vegetation quickly shifts to chaparral, as a rain shadow reduces rainfall to less than 15 inches (38 cm), and thermal inversions from nearby San Francisco Bay keep things considerably warmer.

Soils, too, vary dramatically. On the east side, contributed by the North American plate, soils are hundreds of millions of years older and prominently feature Franciscan shale and mudstone that have weathered into clay, providing crucial water-holding capacity, slightly higher pH, and lower fertility – all factors that help moderate Cabernet's naturally vigorous tendencies.

Millions of years of landslides, faulting, volcanic activity, and even the scattered presence of limestone (most notably beneath Monte Bello) have created a highly heterogeneous soil profile. This complexity is further shaped by the steep topography captured in the AVA's boundaries, which are defined entirely by elevation – above 400 ft (121 m) on the west, and 800 ft on the east – one of only three such AVAs in California.





The boundaries of the Santa Cruz Mountains AVA, and the sub-AVA of Ben Lomond Mountain a darker grey.

## Local style

Fifty years ago, the stylistic differences between Napa Cabernet and Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet were minimal. Today, a wide gulf separates them.

‘Our founding fathers in modern times – people like Ken Burnap, David Bruce and David Bennion – started their passion for wine in the sixties and seventies’, explains Marty Mathis, long-time winemaker and president at Kathryn Kennedy Winery. ‘When they got together, they had great bottles of bordeaux and they knew what it was about. So when they started making Cabernet from this region, they kept to a more restrained, ageworthy, even sophisticated style. They were willing to make wines that were austere in their youth but would develop into something like bordeaux.’

Anyone who has tasted early 1970s Cabernet from producers like Charles Krug, Inglenook or Clos du Val knows that Napa began in the same stylistic place. But as temperatures rose, rootstocks changed and vertical shoot positioning revolutionised Napa viticulture, the allure of higher-pH wines with opulent textures, greater ripeness –

and the scores that followed – pushed Napa away from the herbaceousness that still characterises the leaner, lower-alcohol style of the Santa Cruz Mountains.

While climate change hasn't ignored this region, the moderating effects of water on both sides of the range temper extreme summer heat. Elevation plays a role as well: some vineyards sit at 2,600 or even 2,800 ft (853 m) – well above most mountain vineyards in Napa.

‘Our slightly cooler temperatures preserve that natural acidity and keep the pH lower for Cabernet’, continues Mathis. ‘When it’s extremely hot, we get this cooling effect off the Bay. It provides a more moderate quality, and we stay a bit more Mediterranean than Napa, which tends to bake. This gives winemakers what I call more “delineated” fruit, which makes for a long, supple mouthfeel, and a wine that tells a story in an elegant way without knocking you over the head.’



| The Peter Martin Ray vineyard in early spring (photo by Ken Swegles, Skyline Viticulture)

Many of the best Cabernet vineyards here look nothing like Napa. Instead of neat, trellised rows, you'll often find sprawling, head-trained bush vines.



‘Vine training makes a huge difference when it comes to Cabernet’, says local viticulture consultant Ken Swegles. ‘Head-trained or basket-trained vines will produce many more pyrazines, which over time turn into some spectacular tertiary aromatics.’

None of the Cabernet vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains is flat, and few come anywhere close to forming a regular rectangle. Most drape across steep hillsides with exposures to three or even four cardinal directions, resulting in naturally uneven ripening – a feature most producers embrace which also serves to moderate alcohol levels.

With Napa Cabernets regularly clocking in above 14.5% alcohol (a recent tasting of over 100 2021 Napa Cabernets – a cooler year – averaged 14.7%), Santa Cruz Mountains bottlings stand in stark contrast. The wines tasted for this article average 13.88%.

As in any region, quality varies, and some producers seem intent on mimicking Napa’s style. But by and large, Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernets offer understated elegance that aligns with global trends toward lighter, more refreshing wines.



| The Lucchesi vineyard (photo by Ken Swegles, Skyline Viticulture)

## Producer proliferation

For weeks, I've tried to determine exactly how many acres of Cabernet are planted in the Santa Cruz Mountains. I've come up empty-handed. No official records exist – not from government agencies or even the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association.

The last comprehensive survey, conducted in 2003, counted 239 acres (97 ha) of Cabernet Sauvignon among the AVA's 1,300 planted acres. Current best estimates suggest the region now has about 1,500 planted acres total, most of which are Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. That puts Cabernet likely somewhere north of 300 acres, but almost certainly under 400 (162 ha).

Pinning down how many producers make Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet is equally difficult. CellarTracker shows 35 producers with 2003 vintage bottlings and 48 for 2021, but several producers whose wines I tasted don't appear there, and I'm aware of more than a dozen others missing from the database entirely.

Everyone I spoke with in the region agreed: more bottlings of Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet are showing up. Most credited this to the efforts of Swegles and fellow vineyard consultant Prudy Foxx, who works with the largest (and one of the oldest) commercial Cabernet vineyards in the AVA: Bates Ranch.

'Definitely one reason you're seeing all these different bottlings is that we opened up Bates [Ranch], and we started to produce more fruit and higher quality fruit', says Foxx, who began working there in 2012 after the vineyard's long-time fruit buyer ended their contract.

'The vineyard wasn't particularly being well cared for at that time', Foxx continues. 'Things like canopy management and long-term mildew issues hadn't been addressed.' She also oversaw the planting of four new acres of Cabernet in 2014.

As she restored the vineyard, Foxx made sure people knew that more than 20 acres of Cabernet were available for purchase. 'Part of what I do as a vineyard consultant is connect vineyards with winemakers that I think are a good fit', she says.





Bates Ranch (photo by Robert Bergstrom of Sandar & Hem Wines)

Since she took over, Ridge Vineyards has become a buyer. But Foxx's specialty may be sniffing out talented young producers, and consequently, newer wineries such as Sandar & Hem and Ashes & Diamonds are now bottling single-vineyard Cabernets from Bates.

Swegles, too, has an eye for young talented winemakers, and while he doesn't have access to a property as large as Bates Ranch, he works across a patchwork of smaller properties scattered throughout the suburban edges of the AVA.

'A Silicon Valley exec likes nothing better than to drive his Ferrari down a driveway lined with Cabernet on his way to work. That happened a lot in the last 30 years', says Mathis, laughing.

These 'backyard' vineyards – planted by wine-loving and/or status seeking mansion-owners in Woodside or Portola Valley – often disappeared into garage winemaking or were quietly brokered into larger commercial operations. Many of those owners, and

some vineyard managers, have grown tired of the hassle and expense. In their search for relief, they've turned to Swegles.

'Historically, a lot of these vineyards have been farmed pretty lackadaisically', says Swegles. Today, he manages dozens of these sites, farming organically with a focus on quality and connecting the fruit to a growing list of winemakers across Northern California.

'I get calls all the time', he says. 'Maybe someone just wants one or two bins of fruit – but the first thing they're asking is whether it's organic.'

Thanks to Foxx and Swegles, more winemakers are getting access to Santa Cruz Mountains fruit – and thanks to those wines, more drinkers are taking notice.

For now, these vibrant, fresh, claret-style Cabernets still qualify as hidden gems. But maybe not for long.

The following 74 tasting notes are ordered alphabetically by producer (sur)name but you can reorder them as you wish using the menu below.

Sort by score ▼

### **Ridge, Monte Bello Cabernet Sauvignon 2015 Santa Cruz Mountains**

19

*A blend of 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot, 7% Petit Verdot and 5% Cabernet Franc. 100% destemmed but not crushed. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Spent 17 months in 97% American oak and 3% French oak (94% of which was new). Filtered before bottling.*

Aromas of wet earth, green herbs and a touch of coconut and liquorice. Flavours of cherry and green herbs are wrapped in a gauzy haze of fine-grained tannins and shot through with notes of dried flowers, a touch of gunsmoke and whisky barrel. The oak seems much better integrated in this vintage than in recent new releases, at least to my memory. Excellent acidity and gorgeous freshness make this quite appealing to drink even now, though we all know it will be so much better in a decade or more. (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2019 – 2042



**Ridge, Monte Bello Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Santa Cruz Mountains**

19

*A blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Petit Verdot, 7% Cabernet Franc and 5% Merlot. 100% destemmed but not crushed. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Spends 16 months in 98% American oak, 2% French oak, all of it 100% new. Filtered before bottling.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of crushed nuts, coconut and whisky barrel. Beautifully billowy tannins provide a bed for gorgeous flavours of cherry, cedar and earth, overshadowed at first by the strong coconut and whisky-barrel flavours of American oak, which lessen with some air in the glass, revealing the sweet, gorgeous fruit and earth. The wine is tremendous, but will improve for the next ten years of cellaring, especially as the American oak melds into the wine. The harmony and balance of fruit, earth and acidity is undeniably fine and mouth-watering in its current state. (AY)

13.6%

Drink 2022 – 2042

**Arnot-Roberts, Fellom Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*Fermented with 30% whole clusters and ambient yeasts. Basket-pressed to French oak (roughly 30% new) for 22 months. Aged for 1 year in bottle before release. 75 cases produced.*

Aromas of black cherry and tobacco notes with gorgeous floral overtones. Almost explosively juicy in the mouth, with remarkably bright acidity and mouth-coating tannins that billow like cumulus clouds to fill every nook and cranny with a dusty fine-grained texture, even as a core of black cherry and cassis remains tightly wound.

Incredibly youthful at this point; it will be a wonderful treat to see how this wine evolves over decades. Outstanding. (AY)

13.9%

Drink 2020 – 2040

\$175 RRP

**Arnot-Roberts, Fellom Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2010 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*Fermented with 15% whole clusters and ambient yeasts. Basket-pressed to French oak (roughly 30% new) for 22 months. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Aged for 1 year in bottle before release. 175 cases produced.*

Aromas of mint and cocoa powder, dried flowers and cedar. Intensely juicy acidity brings flavours of blackcurrant, plum skin and cedar alive. The fruit is shot through with dried herbs, a touch of camphor and dried flowers. Faintly saline, juicy and bright. Electric and vibrant. Positively outstanding. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2015 – 2032

### **Arnot-Roberts, Fellom Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2007 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*Fermented with 15% whole clusters and ambient yeasts. Basket-pressed to 50% new French oak for 22 months. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Aged for 1 year in bottle before release. 50 cases produced.*

Dark ruby. Smells of cocoa powder, dusty roads, blackcurrant and cherry fruit. Gorgeously supple, velvety texture wraps around flavours of blackcurrant, camphor, plum skin, cherry and dried herbs. Seamless and rippling with velvet texture. Fantastic acidity. A very, very sexy wine. (AY)

13.3%

Drink 2011 – 2030

### **Ceritas, Mariana's Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*Grown on uplifted hard sandstone. Fully destemmed and allowed to warm up a bit before going into a concrete tank for fermentation with ambient yeasts and no additional temperature control. A combination of pumpovers and punchdowns are used with a goal of only moderate extraction. Spends between 30 and 36 months in 500-litre used French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered.*

Aromas of cherry and cedar with hints of dried herbs. Tight flavours of cherry and sour cherry mix with dried flowers, cedar and bright acidity. Dried flowers linger in the finish with tannins that feel like canyon walls erected around a core of fruit, walls that stiffen



and flex with time. Monumental without too much weight, this will likely age well for decades. Very impressive. (AY)

13%

Drink 2025 – 2048

\$95 RRP

### **Ceritas, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains** 18

*Fully destemmed and allowed to warm up a bit before going into a concrete tank for fermentation with ambient yeasts and no additional temperature control. A combination of pumpovers and punchdowns are used with a goal of only moderate extraction. Spends between 30 and 36 months in 500-litre used French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered.* Smells of black cherry, blackcurrant, dried flowers and herbs. Intensely juicy flavours of blackcurrant and black cherry have a faintly saline quality. Powdery, ethereal tannins coat the mouth and hang cloud-like as the flavours swirl and vibrate on the palate. Notes of dried herbs, liquorice root and dusty road. Fantastic acidity. A stunning wine. (AY)

13%

Drink 2025 – 2048

\$125 RRP

### **Ceritas, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 Santa Cruz Mountains** 18

*Fully destemmed and allowed to warm up a bit before going into a concrete tank for fermentation with ambient yeasts and no additional temperature control. A combination of pumpovers and punchdowns are used with a goal of only moderate extraction. Spends between 30 and 36 months in 500-litre used French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered.* Aromas of dried flowers, cinnamon, cherries and plums. Flavours of dried and fresh herbs, dried flowers and fleecy tannins wrap around a core of cherry, plum skin, road dust and a touch of cranberry, with saline, mouth-watering acidity. Fresh, bright and utterly delicious. Makes most other California Cabernets look like hulking brutes. (AY)

13.1%

Drink 2021 – 2040

\$140 RRP

**Ceritas, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*Fully destemmed and allowed to warm up a bit before going into a concrete tank for fermentation with ambient yeasts and no additional temperature control. A combination of pumpovers and punchdowns are used with a goal of only moderate extraction. Spends between 30 and 36 months in 500-litre used French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Smells of dried blackcurrant, dried herbs and a hint of smoked meat. Intensely bright, juicy acidity makes the mouth water as flavours of sour cherry, rhubarb, plum skin, dried flowers and dried herbs have a gorgeous salinity and fleecy tannic texture that coats the mouth and squeezes. Elegant and still very youthful, with a lot of potential to improve further with age, though it's damn delicious right now. (AY)*

13.1%

Drink 2020 – 2040

\$145 RRP

**Ceritas, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*Fully destemmed and allowed to warm up a bit before going into a concrete tank for fermentation with ambient yeasts and no additional temperature control. A combination of pumpovers and punchdowns are used with a goal of only moderate extraction. Spends between 30 and 36 months in 500-litre used French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Aromas of plum and plum skin, dried herbs and flowers. Flavours of dried flowers, blackcurrant, cherry, dried and fresh herbs swirl and shimmer on the palate. Gorgeous acidity and ethereal tannins. Long and persistent in the mouth, like a gymnast at full extension on the balance beam. Deeply impressive. (AY)*

13.1%

Drink 2019 – 2039

\$150 RRP

**Kathryn Kennedy, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2009 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and aged in 90% new oak for 28 months. Certified organic grapes.*

Dark ruby. Smells of cedar, forest floor, sour cherries and plum skin. Sweet cedar and



cherry flavours are bright with juicy acidity and wonderfully energetic. Mouth-watering citrus-peel and sour-cherry flavours mix with herbs and dried flowers. Lithe, with faint gauzy tannins that perform the dance of the seven veils across the palate. Outstanding. (AY)

14.4%

Drink 2015 – 2035

\$400 RRP

### **Kathryn Kennedy, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2006 Santa Cruz Mountains** 18

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and aged in 90% new oak for 28 months. Certified organic grapes.*

Dark ruby in colour with a hint of tawny coffee in the highlights. Aromas of cedar, dried flowers and smoked meats. Gorgeously plush tannins provide a bed for flavours of smoked meat, dried flowers, dried and fresh cherries and mulling spices. The acidity is holding up well and the umami character of this wine makes the mouth water.

Outstanding. (AY)

14.8%

Drink 2010 – 2028

### **Ridge, Monte Bello Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains** 18

*Contains 10% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot and 2% Cabernet Franc. 100% destemmed but not crushed. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Spends 19 months in 92% American oak, 8% French oak, all of it 100% new. Filtered before bottling.*

Very dark garnet with purple highlights. Aromas of black cherry, plum, dried minty herbs and a touch of whisky barrel. Gorgeously supple, fine-grained tannins coat the mouth and drape a core of black cherry, plum, plum skin, blueberries and liquorice root.

Fantastic acidity keeps the wine bright and lithe across the palate, with no heaviness to accompany its intense fruit. Lovely and poised, with the oak very well integrated even at this young stage. This wine will get better and better for the next 15 to 20 years.

Outstanding. (AY)

13.8%

Drink 2025 – 2050

\$245 RRP

### **Ridge, Monte Bello Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 Santa Cruz Mountains**

18

*A blend of 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. 100% destemmed but not crushed. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Spent 16 months in 97% American oak, 2% French oak and 1% Hungarian oak, all of it 100% new. Filtered before bottling.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of cassis, coconut and green herbs. Gorgeously smooth flavours of cherry, cassis and green herbs are tinged with the coconut and whisky-barrel scents of American oak. Amazingly supple, fine-grained tannins and fantastic acidity make this wine, as usual, quite regal. Still a baby, this wine will reward at least ten more years of cellaring. Outstanding. (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2019 – 2039

### **Arnot-Roberts, Fellom Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and 30% whole clusters. Basket-pressed to French oak (roughly 30% new) for 22 months. Aged for 1 year in bottle before release. Bottled unfined and unfiltered. 250 cases produced.*

Aromas of green herbs, bay and cherries. Intensely bright and herbal, with flavours of black cherry and blackcurrant mixed with chopped herbs and dried flowers. Fantastic acidity and very fine, powdery tannins. Wonderfully aromatic. (AY)

14%

Drink 2025 – 2045

\$125 RRP

### **Arnot-Roberts, Fellom Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and 30% whole clusters. Basket-pressed to French oak (roughly 30% new) for 22 months. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Aged for 1 year in bottle before release. 250 cases produced. Tasted from magnum.*

Medium to dark ruby. Aromas of camphor, dried flowers and dusty roads. Powdery tannins wrap around a core of baking spices, blackcurrant, dried and chopped green herbs, dried flowers and blood orange. Lean but not austere, the acidity here and lack of weight on the palate combine to convey elegance. (AY)

13.4%

Drink 2020 – 2038

### **Ashes & Diamonds, Mountain Cuvée No 5 Bates Ranch 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Cabernet Sauvignon with 2% Cabernet Franc. Grown at 2,100 ft of elevation on a 30% slope. Dry-farmed. Fermented in steel with ambient yeasts and 13 days of skin contact. Aged in 31% new American oak for 18 months before being bottled unfinned and unfiltered. 775 cases produced.*

Smells of tobacco leaf, black cherry, blackcurrant and chopped green herbs. Mocha, black cherry and dried herb flavours have a distinct Marmite salinity that keeps the salivary glands on overdrive as black cherry and dried herbs linger in the finish with hints of toasted oak. Very fine, powdery tannins offer only a light texture on the sides of the mouth. Regal and beautiful (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2025 – 2042

\$105 RRP

### **Big Basin, Betchart Vineyard, Odeon Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Grown at 2,075 ft on a 20% slope of sandstone and Franciscan shale. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Aged for 20 months in French oak. Bottled without fining or filtration. 55 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Aromas of bright cherry fruit, dried aromatic herbs and chopped green



herbs. Juicy and bright flavours of cherry and chopped herbs are mouth-watering with excellent acidity. Gauzy tannins coat the mouth and notes of herbs, wet pavement and a touch of pine boughs linger in the finish. Very tasty, taut and brimming with energy. (AY) 13.9%

Drink 2025 – 2038

\$85 RRP

### **Birichino, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Full bottle 1,630 g – too heavy. Grown at 1,600 ft of elevation in Franciscan shale soils. Organically dry-farmed. 100% destemmed and then fermented with ambient yeasts. Aged for 21 months in oak, one-third new, bottled with no fining or filtration. 71 cases produced.* Aromas of sweet cherry fruit, dusty earth and aromatic herbs. Faintly saline flavours of blackcurrant, sour cherry, cherry and dried herbs are mouth-watering thanks to fantastic acidity. Gorgeously supple, fine-grained tannins coat the mouth, as the citrusy, sour-cherry and herbal light show on the palate lingers for a long time. Delicious. (AY) 13%

Drink 2025 – 2040

\$80 RRP

### **Ceritas, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Fully destemmed and allowed to warm up a bit before going into a concrete tank for fermentation with ambient yeasts and no additional temperature control. A combination of pumpovers and punchdowns are used with a goal of only moderate extraction. Spends between 30 and 36 months in 500-litre used French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered.* Smells of dusty road, dried herbs, carob, a hint of cherry, plum skin and incense. Intensely bright flavours of cherry and plum skin are wrapped in a fleecy blanket of tannins, as dried and fresh herbs linger in the finish with a touch of salinity. Mouth-watering, with excellent acidity. Complex and delicious. (AY) 13.1%

Drink 2022 – 2037

\$135 RRP

**Ceritas, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2015 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

*Fully destemmed and allowed to warm up a bit before going into a concrete tank for fermentation with ambient yeasts and no additional temperature control. A combination of pumpovers and punchdowns are used with a goal of only moderate extraction. Spends between 30 and 36 months in 500-litre used French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Smells of dried herbs, fresh herbs, flowers, red shiso, road dust and plum. Bright flavours of plum and sour cherry are wrapped in fleecy, fine-grained tannins as fresh chopped herbs and dried herbs mix with flowers and a hint of salinity. Still remarkably youthful, but with mellowing tannins. Outstanding acidity and a wonderfully unique flavour profile at this point in its evolution. (AY)*

13.1%

Drink 2018 – 2036

\$155 RRP

**Ghostwriter, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2015 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

Very dark garnet. Smells of black cherry, cassis and freshly turned potting soil. Flavours of black cherry and green herbs mix with a touch of whisky barrel and tobacco leaf. Fresh and juicy thanks to excellent acidity, with notes of green herbs lingering in the finish. Muscular tannins are quite fine-grained and fairly restrained. Very pretty and seemingly built for the long haul. (AY)

13.6%

Drink 2020 – 2035

\$70 RRP

**I Brand & Family, Fellom Ranch Montebello Road Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

*Fermented in small lots with ambient yeasts. Pressed after 18 days and aged in 15% new French oak for 22 months.*

Aromas of black cherry and blackcurrant with a hint of black pepper. Intensely bright

flavours of black cherry and plum skin mix with notes of pink peppercorn, graphite, chopped green herbs, dried flowers and dried resinous herbs. Lightly muscular tannins coat the mouth and gradually increase their grip on the palate. Wonderfully dynamic and delicious. (AY)

13.9%

Drink 2025 – 2040

\$100 RRP

### **Kathryn Kennedy, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and aged in 90% new oak for 28 months. Certified organic grapes.*

Aromas of cherries and blackberries with a hint of plum. Bright flavours of cherry and blackberry have a wonderfully juicy quality, as faint, fine-grained tannins coat the mouth and stiffen slightly. Excellent acidity and notes of dried herbs. Fresh and energetic. (AY)

14.4%

Drink 2025 – 2045

\$345 RRP

### **Kathryn Kennedy, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and aged in 90% new oak for 28 months. Certified organic grapes.*

Aromas of blackcurrant, black cherry, and a hint of cocoa. Bright, mouth-watering flavours of black cherry and blackcurrant mix with a hint of dried flowers. There's a touch of alcoholic heat on the finish, but otherwise this is a really lovely wine, with faint tannins adding a little texture to the very pretty package. (AY)

14.7%

Drink 2021 – 2031

### **Kathryn Kennedy, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and aged in 90% new oak for 28 months. Certified organic grapes.*



Smells of black cherry, plum and a touch of black pepper. Bright and juicy flavours of black cherry and plum have a bright plum-skin tang to them along with hints of dark chocolate as the wine finishes. Excellent acidity makes for a mouth-watering experience, with floral notes arising over time. Very pretty and well balanced despite higher alcohol. (AY)

14.9%

Drink 2020 – 2029

### **Lexington, Gist Ranch Estate, Apex Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

*Planted up to 2,300 ft of elevation. Contains 24% Cabernet Franc and 1% Merlot.*

Aromas of forest floor, cherry, crushed nuts and aromatic dried herbs. The wine has a wonderful herbal and floral aromatic quality as flavours of cherry, sour cherry and plum skin mix with road dust and liquorice root. Powdery tannins coat the mouth, as bright acidity keeps things fresh and juicy. Wonderful balance and tension. Will age beautifully. (AY)

14.1%

Drink 2026 – 2044

\$125 RRP

### **Lexington, Gist Ranch Estate, South Slope Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17.5

*Planted up to 2,300 ft of elevation. Contains 2% Merlot and 1% Cabernet Franc.*

Smells of cherries, forest floor and tobacco leaf. Flavours of bright cherry and a hint of cola nut are wrapped in fleecy tannins as juicy acidity makes the mouth water and keeps things fresh. Hints of dried aromatic herbs and fresh herbs linger in the finish. The tannins stiffen slightly over time. (AY)

14.1%

Drink 2026 – 2044

\$95 RRP

**Mount Eden, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Grown at 2,000 ft of elevation. Contains 12% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. Fermented in small steel tanks, with punchdowns. Aged for 22 months in 100% new French oak, with three to four rackings before being bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Aged for 2 years in bottle before release. 728 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet with purple highlights. Smells of black cherries, blackcurrants and black plums. Juicy flavours of black cherry and black plum are wrapped in a muscular sheath of tannins that stiffens even as bright acidity brings an orange-peel brightness to the mouth and puckers the cheeks. The tannins dry the mouth slightly, but the acidity and a chopped-herb freshness keep the wood from being too dominant. This is a wine that needs some time to unwind in the bottle, but when it does – watch out! It's a coiled spring and has the potential to be very impressive. (AY)

14%

Drink 2028 – 2046

\$110 RRP

**Mount Eden, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Grown at 2,000 ft of elevation. Contains 10% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. Fermented in small steel tanks, with punchdowns. Aged for 22 months in 100% new French oak, with three to four rackings before being bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Aged for 2 years in bottle before release. 1,382 cases produced.*

Smells of sweet cherry fruit. Bright flavours of cherry and plum have a lovely aromatic sweetness. Faintly fleecy tannins are fine-grained and supple and juicy acidity keeps things fresh. There's a hint of herbal freshness in the finish. Lovely tension and energy and a touch of glossy polish. Notes of well-integrated sweet oak emerge in the finish. (AY)

14%

Drink 2024 – 2040

\$110 RRP

**Mount Eden, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Grown at an elevation of 2,000 ft on the original Mount Eden estate.*

Smells of black cherry and cassis. Elegant and lithe flavours of black cherry and cassis are shot through with pencil shavings and a touch of whisky-barrel wood. Excellent acidity and restrained fine-grained tannins suggest a very long life for this wine. Delicious. (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2022 – 2035

### **The Steven Kent Winery, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Fermented in a combination of stainless-steel tanks and open-topped fermenters. Malolactic conversion was induced in barrel. Aged in 60% new French oak for 22 months. 140 cases produced.*

Smells of dried flowers, black cherries and blackberries. Juicy flavours of blackberry and black cherry mix with blackcurrant, wonderful floral notes and a hint of cola. Deliciously bright acidity makes the mouth water, as fine-grained, athletic tannins flex their muscles around the palate. Hints of dried flowers and blueberries in the finish. (AY)

14.1%

Drink 2025 – 2045

\$155 RRP

### **The Steven Kent Winery, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Fermented in small lots and then aged in approximately 60% new French oak for 24 months. 90 cases produced.*

Smells of sweet black cherry, cola, blackcurrant and a hint of mocha. Juicy bright acidity makes flavours of blackcurrant and black cherry mouth-watering as fleecy tannins grip the palate and gradually stiffen. Lovely herbal and earthy aromas linger through the finish, which has a sour-cherry and plum-skin tang that is very appealing. (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2025 – 2042

\$155 RRP



## **The Steven Kent Winery, The Premier Cabernet Sauvignon 2020 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17.5

*Full bottle 1,560 g – unnecessarily heavy. Fruit comes from Bates Ranch in Santa Cruz. Aged for 22 months in 56% new French oak. 150 cases produced.*

Smells of black cherry and Bing cherry with a hint of tobacco. Juicy flavours of cherry and cola have a faint herbal tone and fantastic brightness thanks to excellent acidity. Faint, supple tannins caress the palate as the wine finishes clean and delicious. Quite pretty. (AY)

14.5%

Drink 2024 – 2034

\$150 RRP

## **Arnot-Roberts, Fellom Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Fermented with 30% whole clusters and ambient yeasts. Basket-pressed to French oak (roughly 30% new) for 22 months. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. Aged for 1 year in bottle before release. 225 cases produced.*

Medium to dark ruby. Smells of dried resinous herbs and flowers, dusty roads, blackcurrant and incense. Powdery, muscular tannins stiffen and provide a firm grip on the palate. Excellent acidity. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2016 – 2032

## **Assiduous, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Gravelly loam soils. Fermented with ambient yeasts and natural malolactic cultures. Aged in 20% new American oak for 18 months. 192 cases produced.*

Dark garnet with ruby highlights. Aromas of cherry, tobacco and hints of blackberry. Bright flavours of black cherry and black plum mix with a touch of liquorice root, chopped green herbs and candied blackcurrant. A hint of caramelised oak lingers in the finish. Excellent acidity and very restrained tannins that leave only a faint impression on the palate. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2025 – 2035

\$40 RRP

### **Extradimensional Wine Co Yeah!, Mariana's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2023 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Contains 7% Cabernet Franc and 3% Merlot. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Bottled unfined and unfiltered. 75 cases produced.*

Aromas of blackcurrant, black cherry and dried and chopped herbs. Bright flavours of blackcurrant and cherry are shot through with dried and fresh herbs, dried flowers and road-dust tannins that coat the mouth and almost seem to fade away. Excellent acidity touched by a hint of salinity. Juicy, bright and delicious. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2025 – 2036

\$125 RRP

### **Extradimensional Wine Co Yeah!, Mariana's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Contains 15% Merlot. Made with organically farmed grapes. 52 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Aromas of black cherry, cassis and dark earth. Lightly muscular tannins wrap around a core of black-cherry and sour-cherry fruit that has tremendous citric brightness and fantastic acidity. An interesting dichotomy between dark fruit and brightness recalls the tart skin of a plum and the dark, sweet fruit within. Powdery, muscular tannins possess a stony quality. (AY)

13.2%

Drink 2024 – 2038

\$125 RRP

### **I Brand & Family, Bates Ranch Stagecoach Block Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Fermented in small lots with ambient yeasts. Pressed after 18 days and aged in 15% new French oak for 22 months. 189 cases produced.*

Smells of blackcurrant, fresh flowers and chopped herbs. Juicy and bright flavours of blackcurrant and chopped herbs mix with a hint of dusty earth and star anise. The faintest of tannins hang ghost-like in the background. Very tasty. (AY)

12%

Drink 2025 – 2032

\$48 RRP

### **Lexington, Gist Ranch Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz**

17

#### **Mountains**

*Planted up to 2,300 ft of elevation. Contains 14% Cabernet Franc and 10% Merlot. 532 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Aromas of blackcurrant, black cherries and violets. Intense and bright flavours of black cherries, blackcurrants, blueberries and violets are wrapped in fleecy tannins that grow more muscular with time. Very well balanced for its ripeness, with excellent acidity and freshness. (AY)

15.1%

Drink 2025 – 2040

\$80 RRP

### **Marine Layer, Black Ridge Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz**

17

#### **Mountains**

*Full bottle 1,580 g – overly heavy. Grown between 825 and 1,175 ft of elevation.*

*Organically farmed. Destemmed and foot-crushed then fermented with ambient yeasts after a 3-day cold soak. Fermented in closed-top tanks with pumpovers. Aged for 14 months before being bottled unfinned and unfiltered. 70 cases produced.*

Aromas of blackcurrant and black cherry with hints of dried herbs. Fleecy tannins surround a core of black cherry, blackcurrant, dried and chopped fresh herbs, with a hint of dried flowers. Liquorice root and chaparral linger in the finish with a touch of road dust. Excellent acidity keeps the wine fresh and snappy. (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2027 – 2040

\$75 RRP

### **Martin Ray, Fellom Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17

*Fermented in small open-top fermenter then basket-pressed. Aged in 40% new French and American oak for 18 months. 75 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Aromas of sweet black cherry and black plum. Rich and sweet flavours of black cherry and black plum mix with a touch of blackberry. Excellent acidity keeps things fresh in the mouth, as muscular, fine-grained tannins wrap the palate and give it a good squeeze. Notes of sweet oak and black cherry linger in the finish with a hint of blueberry. Definitely on the ripe side, but not egregiously so. (AY)

14.8%

Drink 2026 – 2040

\$80 RRP

### **Mount Eden, Domaine Eden Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17

*Contains 20% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot and 1% Malbec. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Ages for 24 months in French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. 2,986 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of black cherry, blueberries and blackberries. Juicy black-cherry and blackberry flavours mix with a touch of dried herbs and citrus peel. Excellent acidity keeps things bright and fresh, as muscular, fleecy tannins flex their muscles and squeeze the palate. (AY)

14.5%

Drink 2026 – 2040

\$50 RRP

### **Mount Eden, Domaine Eden Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17

*Contains 11% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petite Verdot and 1% Malbec. Aged for 2 years in a combination of French and American oak.*

Very dark garnet. Aromas of rich black cherry and tobacco leaf. Juicy flavours of graphite,



black cherry and cedar are wrapped in a muscular fist of tannins. Excellent acidity and lovely balance, with a cigar-box finish. Tasty. (AY)

14%

Drink 2022 – 2029

### **Mount Eden, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Grown at 2,000 ft of elevation. Contains 15% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc and 1% Petit Verdot. Fermented in small steel tanks, with punchdowns. Aged for 22 months in 100% new French oak, with three to four rackings before being bottled unfined and unfiltered. Aged for 2 years in bottle before release. 1,566 cases produced.*

Very dark, nearly opaque garnet. Aromas of cherries, a hint of struck match and toasted oak. Nutty toasted-oak flavours surround a core of dark-cherry and black-plum fruit with hints of cedar and dried herbs. Powdery tannins coat the mouth and stiffen slightly over time as hints of cola and herbs linger in the finish. Excellent acidity. Slightly reduced, but nothing a good decant won't fix. (AY)

14%

Drink 2025 – 2040

\$110 RRP

### **Ridge, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*A blend of 86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Petit Verdot and 5% Merlot. Fully destemmed and fermented with whole berries and ambient yeasts. Calcium carbonate added to the ferment. Aged for 17 months in 100% air-dried American oak barrels (52% new, 20% one year old and 28% two years old): 56% Appalachian, 27% Missouri, 17% Virginia.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of black cherries, whisky barrel, blackberries and dried herbs. Electric acidity makes the mouth water as flavours of black cherry, blackberries and sweet American oak swirl on the palate. Intense in flavour but without any weight. This is a wine that will improve as the oak becomes more integrated. For now, there's a very strong oak signature in the finish. Give this three to five years and watch out. Pretty damn tasty already. (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2028 – 2032

\$103 RRP

### **Sandar & Hem, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Grown above 1,000 ft of elevation, with shallow gravelly soils. No herbicide use. Fermented in steel with 18 days of skin contact before pressing into 50% new French oak for 22 months of ageing.*

Aromas of bright cherry and vanilla with hints of dried herbs. Juicy flavours of cherry and dried herbs mix with a little vanilla and toasty oak as dried herbs, liquorice root and cola linger in the finish. Great acidity and very faint, gauzy tannins. (AY)

14%

Drink 2026 – 2038

\$58 RRP

### **Sandar & Hem, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Grown above 1,000 ft of elevation, with shallow gravelly soils. No herbicide use. Fermented in steel with 16 days of skin contact before pressing into 25% new French oak for 22 months of ageing.*

Aromas of bright cherry fruit, dried herbs and dried flowers. Beautiful bright flavours of cherry, dried herbs, fresh herbs and dried flowers mix with dried citrus peel and a hint of forest floor. Fantastic acidity and lovely balance, with powdery tannins that hang in a dusty haze around the palate. Notes of redwood bark and cola in the finish. Very pretty. (AY)

13.2%

Drink 2025 – 2035

\$58 RRP

### **Sandar & Hem, Peter Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Grown at 1,300 ft of elevation in Franciscan shale soils. Organically dry-farmed, head-trained vines. Fully destemmed. Spends 16 days on the skins. Aged in 25% new French oak for 22 months. 25 cases produced.*

Aromas of cherries, blackcurrant and dried herbs. Bright blackcurrant and black-cherry fruit flavours are juicy with excellent, mouth-watering acidity and wrapped in gauzy, powdery tannins. Notes of citrus peel and liquorice root linger in the finish with a touch of freshly chopped herbs. Balanced and lithe. Delicious. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2025 – 2039

\$62 RRP

### **Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17

*Vines planted in 1972.*

Dark ruby with garnet highlights. Smells of cherry and sweet oak. Gorgeously lithe flavours of cherry, sweet oak and dried herbs have a silky weightlessness to them as gauzy tannins hang in the background and excellent acidity keeps things quite fresh and delicious. There's significant oak influence here but it is well integrated. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2026 – 2040

\$150 RRP

### **Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard, Staiger Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains** 17

*Vines planted in 1973.*

Aromas of cherry and cedar with a hint of liquorice root. Flavours of cherry, plum skin and cedar are bright with juicy acidity as hints of dried citrus peel and dried herbs linger in the finish. Fleecy, fine-grained tannins coat the mouth and stiffen over time. Excellent acidity. Well-integrated oak. (AY)

13.5%

Drink 2026 – 2042

\$150 RRP

**Vidovich, Monte Bello Road Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2023 Santa Cruz Mountains**

17

*Grown at 2,450 ft of elevation. Inoculated fermentation. Aged for 24 months in 40% new French oak.*

Aromas of black cherry, toasted oak and Bing cherry. Bright acidity makes flavours of black and Bing cherry quite juicy and bright as hints of earth and cola linger in the finish with a touch of sweet oak. Muscular, fine-grained tannins coat the mouth and stiffen with time. Muscular. (AY)

14.8%

Drink 2027 – 2045

\$75 RRP

**Cooper-Garrod, George's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*A 2-acre vineyard, south facing at 800–900 ft of elevation. Started in 1972 with cuttings from Paul Masson. Dry-farmed, fermented with ambient yeasts. Certified organic. 168 cases produced.*

Dark ruby. Smells of cedar and earth, cherry and dried herbs. Bright flavours of cherry and cedar mix with dried herbs and flowers, as powdery tannins coat the mouth and remain supple through the finish. Hints of road dust and liquorice root linger on the palate. Excellent acidity. (AY)

14%

Drink 2022 – 2034

\$47 RRP

**Ghostwriter, Black Ridge Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2023 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and aged in older French oak. Minimal SO<sub>2</sub> additions.*

Smells of forest floor, cherry and blackcurrant, chopped and fresh herbs. Brawny, fleecy tannins wrap around a core of black cherry, blackcurrant and wet earth mixed with dried



and fresh herbs. Notes of liquorice root, dried blueberries and mint linger in the finish. Excellent acidity. The tannins here need a little time. (AY)

13%

Drink 2027 – 2042

\$65 RRP

### **Left Bend, Raines Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Fully destemmed. Aged in 36% new American oak for 18 months. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. 73 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of cherry and wet earth. Flavours of cherry, blackcurrant, black plum and dried herbs are wrapped in fleecy tannins that gradually stiffen around the palate. Juicy with excellent acidity. Notes of dried flowers and liquorice root linger in the finish. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2025 – 2037

\$50 RRP

### **Maison Areion, Chaîne d'Or Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Vines were planted in 1987 at 1,400 ft of elevation. Fermented with native yeasts and aged in neutral oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. 90 cases produced.*

Inky, opaque garnet. Smells of blackcurrant, black cherry and pencil lead. Flavours of blackcurrant and black cherry mix with black plum, potting soil and graphite as fleecy tannins coat the mouth and flex their muscles. Excellent acidity keeps things fresh, but there's a dark, slightly impenetrable, brooding quality to this wine. Oak surfaces in the finish. (AY)

14%

Drink 2028 – 2035

\$52 RRP

**Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Fermented in small open-top fermenters, with pumpovers three times per day. 30 days of post-fermentation maceration. Aged in 60% new French and American oak for 18 months. 750 cases produced.*

Smells of sweet black cherry and fresh flowers with a hint of raisin underneath. Flavours of black cherry and cola mix with a hint of chocolate-covered raisins, as suede-like tannins wrap the palate and squeeze. Notes of sweet oak and a touch of brown sugar linger in the finish. Very good acidity keeps things fresh and juicy, but there's definitely a caramelised note to this wine that I'd prefer not to taste at this young age. (AY)

14.5%

Drink 2025 – 2035

\$80 RRP

**Mount Eden, Domaine Eden Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Contains 14% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot and 1% Malbec. Fermented with ambient yeasts. Aged for 24 months in French oak. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered. 3,326 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Aromas of black cherry, struck match and cedar. Juicy, mouth-watering (perhaps a touch volatile?) acidity makes flavours of cherry, cedar and toasted oak tangy and bright. Muscular tannins coat the mouth and flex their muscles over time. The oak is well integrated, though there is more of it than might be preferred in the finish. (AY)

14.5%

Drink 2025 – 2039

\$50 RRP

**Santa Cruz Mountain Vineyard, Luchessi Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Vines planted in 1981. 234 cases produced.*

Aromas of forest floor, cherries and oak. Bright juicy acidity makes flavours of cherry, cedar boughs, pine duff and toasted oak bright and mouth-watering, with hints of dried

citrus peel lingering in the finish along with a bit of wood. There's a lovely freshness here, with hints of minty herbs lingering in the finish as well. (AY)

13.1%

Drink 2025 – 2038

\$54 RRP

### **Storrs, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Fermented in small lots, some with ambient yeasts, some inoculated. Hand punchdowns. Aged in French oak for 34 months before bottling. 148 cases produced.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of vanilla, black cherry and cola. Flavours of black cherry and cola are shot through with a modicum of nutty oak, but the intense fruit seems to subsume the wood nicely here, as fine-grained tannins flex their muscles and excellent acidity keeps things bright and fresh. Needs a little time to relax in the bottle, but there's power and grace here. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2027 – 2038

\$70 RRP

### **Vidovich, Monte Bello Road Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Grown at 2,450 ft of elevation. Inoculated fermentation. Aged for 24 months in 40% new French oak.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of black cherry, toasted oak and dried herbs. Rich flavours of black cherry, dried herbs and chopped fresh herbs have a nice, juicy brightness thanks to very good acidity. Muscular tannins coat the mouth with a leathery quality and gradually squeeze the palate. Earthy notes and a hint of black sesame linger in the finish. (AY)

14.5%

Drink 2026 – 2038

\$75 RRP

### **Vidovich, Lake Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Grown at 450 ft of elevation. Inoculated fermentation. Aged in French oak.*

Very dark, opaque garnet. Smells of black cherry and black plum. Thick leathery tannins wrap around a core of black cherry, black plum and a hint of dried cherry. Very good acidity. Ripe but not over the top. (AY)

14.5%

Drink 2026 – 2038

\$38 RRP

### **Wrights Station, Lago Lomita Vineyard, Semaphore 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16.5

*Grown at 2,600 ft of elevation. A blend of 50% Cabernet Sauvignon, 42% Sangiovese and 8% Cabernet Franc.*

Aromas of cherry, cola and sweet oak. Juicy flavours of cherry and cedar mix with the vanilla of sweet oak as fleecy tannins coat the mouth and stiffen over time. Very good acidity makes for a bright, juicy mouthful. (AY)

14.9%

Drink 2026 – 2038

\$54 RRP

### **Beauregard, Beauregard Ranch Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2023 Ben Lomond Mountain**

16

*Full bottle 1,640 g – overly heavy.*

Aromas of dark cherry and tobacco with notes of blackcurrant. Flavours of blackcurrant and black cherry mix with plum and dark earth as muscular tannins coat the mouth. Very good acidity keeps the wine from sitting too heavily on the palate, but the tannins are brawny and some of the alcohol seems to peek through in a high-octane way. (AY)

15.2%

Drink 2024 – 2029

\$150 RRP

### **Beauregard, Beauregard Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Ben Lomond Mountain**

16



*Grown at 1,802 ft of elevation, 4.56 miles from the ocean. Zayante sand soils over sandstone.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of black cherry and wet earth. Rich black-cherry flavours are wrapped in fleecy tannins that coat and slightly dry the mouth. Dark-cherry and ripe black-plum flavours are rich and a little thick on the palate. Good acidity but not enough to keep the wine from sitting a bit heavily on the palate. (AY)

15.2%

Drink 2027 – 2034

\$80 RRP

### **Kathryn Kennedy, Small Lot Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16

*Fermented with ambient yeasts and aged for 11 months in oak. Closed with a screwcap.* Aromas of slightly grapey black-cherry fruit. Faintly sweet flavours of black cherry and blueberry are shot through with dusty tannins and decent acidity. Less complexity here. (AY)

13.9%

Drink 2025 – 2030

\$44 RRP

### **Lightpost, Sevastien Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16

*Aged in 60 % new French oak for 22 months. 160 cases produced.*

Smells of prunes, cola and roasted figs. Flavours of cola, prune, raisins and roasted fig have a faint brown-sugar sweetness to them. Wrapped in faint gauzy tannins with decent acidity, this wine is far too ripe for my taste. There's a faint bit of heat in the finish. (AY)

14.9%

Drink 2025 – 2028

\$69 RRP

### **Silver Mountain, Alloy 2014 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16

*A blend of 51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 11% Petit Verdot and 9% Cabernet Franc from Bates Ranch.*

Dark ruby with garnet highlights. Aromas of oak, cherry and herbs. Sweet oak dominates in the mouth, as the cherry fruit has a compressed quality on the palate. Very good acidity keeps things fresh, as muscular tannins put an additional squeeze on the fruit. Too much wood here. (AY)

13.7%

Drink 2021 – 2033

\$50 RRP

### **Storrs Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16

*Fermented in small lots, some with ambient yeasts, some inoculated. Hand punchdowns. Aged in French oak for 34 months before bottling.*

Very dark, nearly opaque garnet with purple highlights. Aromas of sweet oak, black cherries and blackcurrants. Flavours of blackcurrant, blackberries and black cherries are rich and scented with sweet oak. Lightly grippy tannins wrap the fruit and very good acidity keeps things lively on the palate. There's a surprisingly intense sensation of ripeness here given the restrained alcohol. Much of the sweetness comes from the wood, which is somewhat overdone. (AY)

13.8%

Drink 2025 – 2034

### **Vidovich, Lake Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2023 Santa Cruz Mountains**

16

*Grown at 450 ft of elevation. Inoculated fermentation. Aged in French oak.*

Very dark garnet. Aromas of black cherry, cola and a touch of molasses. Juicy acidity makes rich, dark flavours of black cherry and black plum bright on the palate, even as thick, fleecy tannins coat the mouth and stiffen slightly. Mocha notes of sweet oak and black cherry linger in the finish. (AY)

14.9%

Drink 2027 – 2037

\$38 RRP

## **Wrights Station, Ormsby Trail Vineyard No 8 Cabernet Sauvignon 2019** **Santa Cruz Mountains**

16

*Grown at 2,600 ft of elevation.*

Very dark garnet. Smells of sweet black cherry and liquorice. Rich flavours of black cherry, black liquorice and black plum have a smoky espresso quality. Muscular tannins make a tight fist around the core of fruit as notes of oak and espresso linger in the finish with a hint of bitterness. Very good acidity. Feels somewhat squeezed by its oak at the moment. Needs more time in the bottle. (AY)

14.8%

Drink 2027 – 2035

\$59 RRP

## **House Family Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 Santa Cruz Mountains**

15.5

*A blend with 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. Aged for 30 months in 50% new, 50% one- to three-year-old French oak. 482 cases produced.*

Smells of sweet toasted oak. Mocha flavours of toasted oak mix with cherry and plum as lightly tacky tannins grip the palate. Decent acidity and length. Too much wood influence. (AY)

13.8%

Drink 2025 – 2032

\$74 RRP

## **Silver Mountain, Bates Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 Santa Cruz** **Mountains**

15.5

*Aged for 23 months. 100 cases produced.*

Dark ruby with garnet highlights. Smells of brown sugar, cherry and sweet oak. Sweet toasted-oak flavours are nutty and caramelised as cherry and sour-cherry fruit is bright with very good acidity. The oak leaves a bitter, woody quality in the finish, as powdery tannins coat the mouth. Just too much barrel influence here. (AY)

13.8%

Drink 2022 – 2033

\$50 RRP

## House Family Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 Santa Cruz Mountains

15

*A blend of 79% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot. Aged for 30 months in 50% new, 50% one- to three-year-old French oak. 92 cases produced.* Aromas of sweet oak, black cherries and grape candy. Candied flavours of cherry and Concord grape mix with lightly tacky tannins and decent acidity. There's a confectionery quality to this wine that is hard to get past. (AY)

13.3%

Drink 2025 – 2029

\$78 RRP

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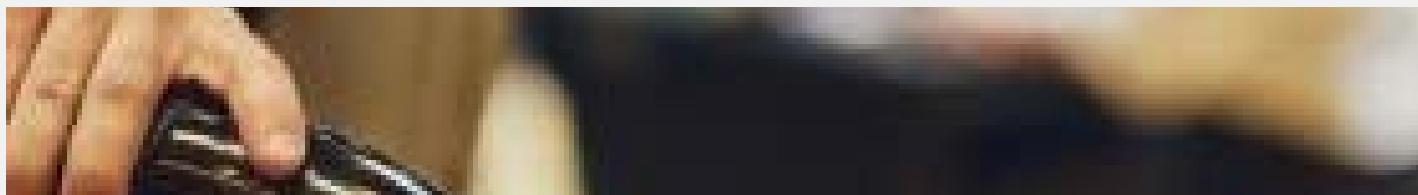
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A round-up of what's been on Nick's mind and in his digestive system this week. Above, Trevor Gulliver of St...

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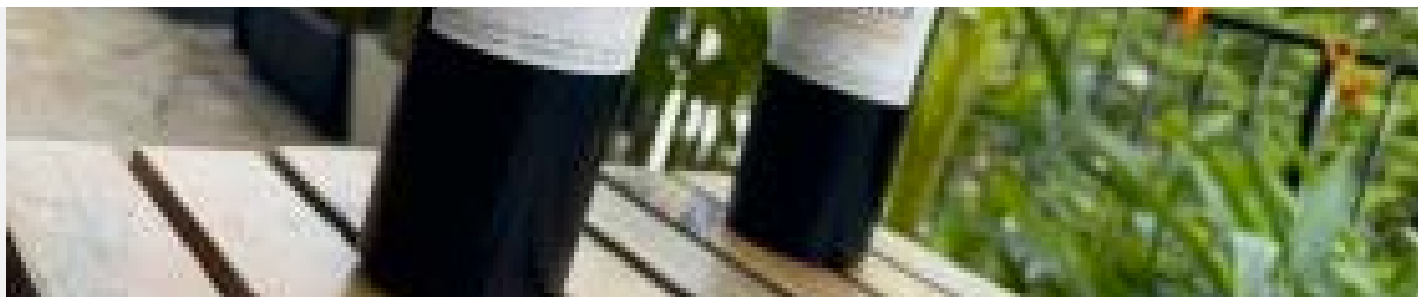
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## The Count of Burgundy

The Domaine du Comte Liger-Belair of Vosne-Romanée has been on quite a journey. A much shorter version of this article...

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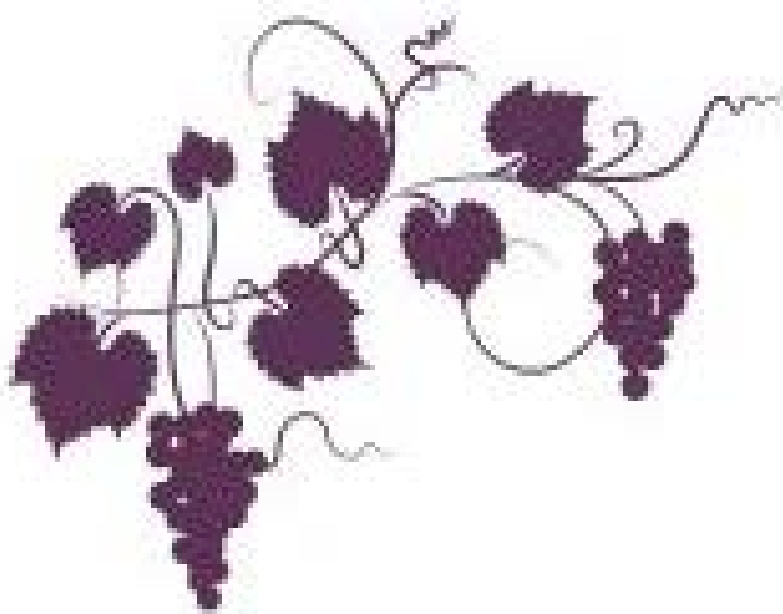


## WINES OF THE WEEK

### **Santa Maria, Valpolicella Classico Superiore**

Superiore is the operative word for this Italian stallion. From €18.50, \$19.99, £19.50. Finding a benchmark example of a wine...

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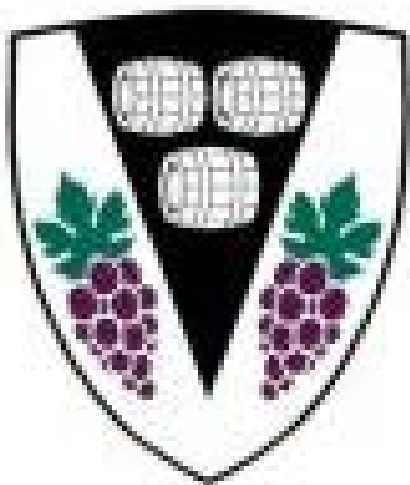


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### **Our 2025 wine writing competition**

19 June 2025 Prizes announced! Enter our wine writing competition for a chance to win one of these wonderful prizes...

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## 2025 MW exam questions unveiled

Many slaved, slogged, swirled and spat their way through the Master of Wine (MW) exams last week. Here's what they...

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## NICK ON RESTAURANTS

### **A family holiday – by train**

Parisian and Catalan meals enjoyed and described, including a useful recommendation for travellers. Above, morning view from the Hotel Empordà...

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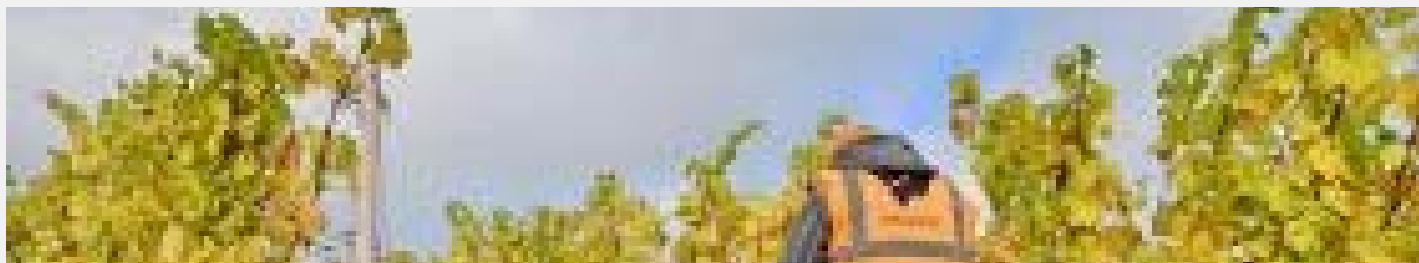


## WINE NEWS IN 5

### **Treasury Estates bets on NoLos, varietal Muscardin, mapping old vineyards, French glass recycling**

Plus tariff lawsuits, US-made alcohol in Canada and the effect of immigration raids on the wine industry. Update on Trump's...

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### **Wine production – who pays the price?**

A look at vineyard labourers in particular. A much shorter version of this article is published by the Financial Times...

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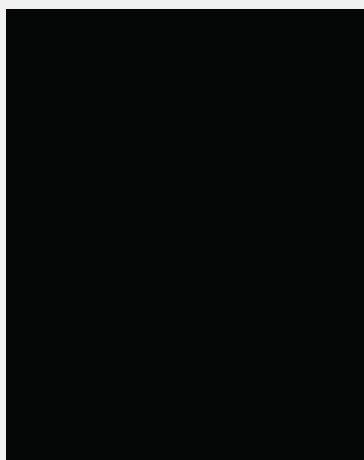
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