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More from California

11 Lip-Smacking California Pinot Noirs

New reviews of reds from Sonoma, Monterey, Sta. Rita Hills and more



Photo by: Courtesy of Wonderment

Wonderment was founded in 2011 and makes Pinot Noir from Sonoma's Dutton-Campbell Vineyard, among others.

James Laube

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Tasting Highlights' wine reviews are fresh out of the tasting room, offering a sneak peek of our editors' most recent scores and notes to WineSpectator.com members.

Whether you're new to wine or a seasoned Pinot lover, this is a good list to delve deeper into one of California's darling red grapes. These recent releases provide good value, with five selections in the outstanding range. Consider these wines for a comparative tasting of different regions and styles.

Wonderment is an up-and-comer. Owner and winemaker Stephanie Cook oversees a range of single-site Pinots and Zinfandels. Her excellent 2015 Pinot, with dark berry and floral notes, is from the Dutton-Campbell Vineyard in Russian River Valley. It grows on you with each sip.

Compare it with Foley's 2015 Sta. Rita Hills Bar Lazy S Ranch bottling, a crunchier expression of Pinot, almost like biting into a grape. Turn next to Monterey, where actress Drew Barrymore and winemaker Kris Kato collaborate for Carmel Road's Drew's Blend, which has a woody, herbal edge that shapes the flavors.

Discovering new regions and styles for California Pinot Noir is always worthwhile. Today's wines all cost under \$50.

WONDERMENT Pinot Noir Russian River Valley Dutton - Campbell Vineyard 2015 Score: 91 | \$44

Starts slow but builds gracefully, accented by a mix of gravel, dark berry, lavender and anise notes. Drink now through 2026. 240 cases made.—J.L.

MERRY EDWARDS Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2015 Score: 90 | \$45

Makes a strong initial push of generous plum and black cherry flavors, with touches of herb, cedar and spice, adding depth and dimension to the core fruitiness. Drink now through 2024. 1,095 cases made.—J.L.

FOLEY Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills Bar Lazy S Ranch 2015

Score: 90 | \$45

Juicy and crunchy, with macerated cherry and exuberant fresh-

crushed plum flavors. Finely textured, showing plenty of vibrant minerality on the finish. Drink now through 2020. 609 cases made.—*Kim Marcus*

SOJOURN Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast 2016 Score: 90 / \$39

Exhibits lively raspberry, cherry, red plum and spice notes presented in a sleek, well-focused, supple and graceful manner, ending with a lingering aftertaste and a sense of character. Drink now through 2024. 2,900 cases made.—*J.L.*

SOJOURN Pinot Noir Sonoma Coast Rodgers Creek Vineyard 2016 Score: 90 / \$48

Well-focused on a core of cherry and red candy flavors that are full and persistent, gaining depth and nuance while returning to the core fruit themes. Drink now through 2024. 800 cases made.—*J.L.*

LANDMARK Pinot Noir Santa Barbara-Sonoma-Monterey Counties Overlook 2015 Score: 89 / \$25

Offers a firm structure, with zesty flavors of cherry, red plum and currant that are flanked by savory notes. The minerally finish is rich and stylish. Drink now through 2020. 20,000 cases made.—*K.M.*

ARTESA Pinot Noir Los Carneros 2015 Score: 88 / \$25

Pure and focused, centered on a fresh and lively core of black cherry and red candy flavors. Compelling. Drink now. 5,300 cases made.—*J.L.*

SCHUG Pinot Noir Carneros 2016 Score: 88 / \$30

Lightly aromatic and light-bodied, with an emphasis on delicacy, allowing the mix of tar and licorice to rise and gain prominence. Drink now through 2024. 6,701 cases made.—*J.L.*

CARMEL ROAD Pinot Noir Monterey Drew's Blend 2014

Score: 87 / \$28

Oak and savory herb notes give this flavor dimension, adding to a modest mix of wild berry and spice elements. Drink now. 5,256 cases made.—*J.L.*

LA CREMA Pinot Noir Monterey 2015 Score: 87 / \$20

Offers a mix of loamy earth, dusty herb and savory dried red berry that's complex and lingering, with nice tannic grip. Drink now through 2021. 50,000 cases made.—*J.L.*

AUSTERITY Pinot Noir Santa Lucia Highlands 2016 Score: 86 / \$17

Marked by a dusty, gravelly texture and underlying flavor that commingle with berry and graphite notes, making for a chewy adventure. Drink now through 2022. 5,200 cases made.—*J.L.*

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