



## **PLATINUM AWARD TASTING NOTES**

BY RICH COOK  
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MONTEREY INTERNATIONAL WINE COMPETITION

**Producer:** 2370 O'Connell Vineyards  
**Appellation:** Russian River Valley  
**Broader region:** California  
**Vineyard:** X  
**Country:** USA  
**Grape:** Pinot Noir  
**Proprietary:** Estate Grown  
**Vintage:** 2016  
**Price:** 45  
**Importer:** X  
**Score:** 96  
**Color:** Red

**Review:** An explosive nose of cherry, rhubarb and spice announces the pleasure about to happen on the palate in this gorgeous opening salvo in Monterey. Racy acidity carries full throttle flavors that are true to type, with a focus on the interplay between fruit and spice. The finish blossoms long with great integration. Beautifully made! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer:** 6958 Mark West  
**Appellation:** Santa Lucia Highlands  
**Broader region:** California  
**Vineyard:** X  
**Country:** USA  
**Grape:** Pinot Noir  
**Proprietary:** X  
**Vintage:** 2016  
**Price:** 25  
**Importer:** X  
**Score:** 94  
**Color:** Red

**Review:** Some stem inclusion makes for an interesting expression in this bright glass of Pinot Noir, adding a pleasant green character that enhances the cherry rhubarb balsamic vibe. Bright acidity and a long finish that keeps the stemmy note present but soft make for a great food friendly wine. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer:** 4275 Estancia  
**Appellation:** Santa Lucia Highlands  
**Broader region:** California  
**Vineyard:** Stonewall Vineyard  
**Country:** USA  
**Grape:** Pinot Noir  
**Proprietary:** Reserve  
**Vintage:** 2016  
**Price:** 27

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** Oak spice and black cherry fruit drive this bold Pinot Noir, with charred notes adding interest in both aroma and flavor profiles. A perfect fish or fowl accompaniment that will stand up to rich sauces thanks to lively acidity and a touch of lemon zest in the finish. Well done! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 9965 Furthermore**

**Appellation: Santa Lucia Highlands**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: Rosella's Vineyard**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Pinot Noir**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2014**

**Price: 55**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 95**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** Vibrant Cherry and cola aromas introduce this richly styled wine. A viscous texture carries the bright fruit, and nicely balanced acidity enlivens the persistent finish. A fine expression of one of California's most renowned Pinot Noir vineyards. I'd give this a bit of cellar rest for full enjoyment. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 7323 Baileyana**

**Appellation: Edna Valley**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: Firepeak**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Pinot Noir**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 30**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: X**

**Review:** This wine shows an interesting interplay between tartness and fleshy character - I don't often say tart black cherry, but it applies here, with toasty oak pice and a touch of vanilla adding interest. I'd been toward mild cheeses as a pairing to show off the unique character within. The Edna Valley's cool climate acidity is on full display here, balanced artfully by winemaker Christian Roguenant. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 6369 J Vineyards**

**Appellation: Russian River Valley**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Pinot Noir**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2015**

**Price: 40**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** Here's a well integrated Pinot Noir that will please a crowd — it runs right down the middle of the spectrum of possibility of the variety. Cherry, strawberry, brown spice, bright acidity and medium oak toast make a well rounded package that will run the table from fish to beef. Nicely done! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 2146 MacMurray Estate**

**Appellation: Central Coast**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Pinot Noir**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2015**

**Price: 23**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** An earth focused Pinot Noir with a fair amount of grip that promises greatness in the future. Black cherry, medium plus oak toast, cinnamon and rich earthy mineral aromas and flavors fill the mouth and finish long, with the dark fruit coming to the fore at the end. This is suited for the beefier side of the main course scale. There's great value here! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 6838 Grape Creek Vineyards**

**Appellation: American**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: X**

**Proprietary: Rendezvous Red Wine**

**Vintage: 2015**

**Price: 27**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** A fine rhone styled blend with a touch of Touriga Nacional in the mix that proves that great wine can be sourced from places other than what we think of as the top areas. Bright cherry and blueberry mix with soft oak spice and a touch of fennel, all delivered on bright acidity that gives the finish some push and keeps the flavors pumping. Very nice! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 1899 Carol Shelton**

**Appellation: Alexander Valley**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: Oat Valley Vineyard**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Carignane**

**Proprietary: Old Vine**

**Vintage: 2015**

**Price: 28**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** I'm always surprised that there aren't more stand alone bottling of this variety when I taste a wine like this that shows what it's capable of. Black and blue fruit join fall spice, gentle pepper and a light balsamic note that are well integrated from stem to stern, with a slight pepper push at the end. Tons of pairings possibilities here - from cheese to chocolate. From one of my two favorite producers of the type — both women. Coincidence? A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 8388 Horton Vineyards**

**Appellation: Orange County**

**Broader region: Virginia**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Nebbiolo**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2014**

**Price: 25**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** Blind tasting always reveals some pleasant surprises, like when you get a wine that presents as spot on Barbaresco, but turns out to be from Virginia's Orange County. Horton is making a lot of noise on the competition circuit already this year thanks to carefully crafted wines like this one — blueberry, tar, bay leaf and earth tones are woven together artfully, with the puckering tannic structure you expect from Italian versions of Nebbiolo. Give this a long decant or a long cellar rest. And good luck finding Piemonte Nebbiolo at this kind of price.... A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 8374 DaVinci**

**Appellation: Chianti DOCG**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: Italy**

**Grape: X**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2015**

**Price: 15**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 92**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** Chianti can be the perfect food wine in many situations, especially when it carries a little extra weight. Such is the case here, with dark cherry, sage and spice aromas and flavors riding classic Tuscan acidity into an herb driven finish. Game bird would be my go to pairing with this value bottling. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 1577 Wakefield Taylors**

**Appellation: Clare Valley**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: Australia**  
**Grape: Shiraz**  
**Proprietary: St Andrews**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 70**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** Spot on Aussie Shiraz that's not shy about letting you know where it comes from, with bold blackberry and menthol aromas leading to a savory palate where the fruit matches the umami and menthol character beautifully. There's a long life ahead here, but if you can't wait, decant well and bring on the lamb... A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 2464 Hahn Family Wines**  
**Appellation: Santa Lucia Highlands**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: Estate Vineyard**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Syrah**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2016**  
**Price: 45**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 95**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** A full throttle Syrah that doesn't go over the top, and maintains the peppery character that makes the variety so attractive. It's black and blue all over, with bright pepper, tar and brown spice that fill the nose and mouth, and finishes boldly with full integration. Great Syrah! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 1306 Bertoli**  
**Appellation: Puglia IGT**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: Italy**  
**Grape: Sangiovese**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2017**  
**Price: 25**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 93**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** A brightly aromatic Sangiovese that features orange blossom, cherry and clay minerality, leading to a freshening palate of sweet cheery and fall spice. A fine stand alone glass, or try it with medium strength cheeses. Southern Italy can make this grape into wine just fine, thank you.... A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 3457 Reustle Prayer Rock Vineyards**  
**Appellation: Umpqua Valley**  
**Broader region: Oregon**  
**Vineyard: Timnah Bloc**  
**Country: USA**

**Grape: Tempranillo**  
**Proprietary: Estate Grown**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 29**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** This massive Tempranillo has a very firm grip up front, so give yourself a sip or two to calibrate before dismissing it prematurely. Cheery and chocolate aromas translate well on the palate, with notes of fresh roasted coffee coming forward in the finish. You'll want a big prime rib slab with this one! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 9975 Idlewright**  
**Appellation: Napa**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Merlot**  
**Proprietary: Opulent Red**  
**Vintage: 2013**  
**Price: 32**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** Merlot is undergoing a bit of a renaissance thanks to wines like this, that aren't trying to act like other varieties, instead choosing to embrace their own unique characteristics. It's all here — cherry, blackberry, a touch of dried herbs, supple tannic structure and a long well integrated finish. I'd have labeled this bottle Merlot proudly, but then I don't have a marketing manager. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 8882 Cooper Ridge Vineyard**  
**Appellation: Umpqua Valley**  
**Broader region: Oregon**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Merlot**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2014**  
**Price: 34**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 95**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** Terrific Merlot — and no, that is not a contradiction in terms. Rich red fruit, balanced oak toast and spice and hints of leaf and cocoa make for a very attractive, delicious expression. An easy to love wine that's got some staying power. It'll work with meats from burgers to steak. Merlot is finding a nice home in Umpqua Valley. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 2625 Wine Cube**  
**Appellation: California**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 17/3 liter box**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 90**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** It's great to be able to pick up a quality wine to take places where glass packaging isn't always welcome, in a crowd serving quantity and at a value price. This wine hits the mark, delivering true to type Cabernet character in a box. Cellaring problem solved... A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 9896 Menage a Trois**

**Appellation: North Coast**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 14**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 91**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** A bright, approachable Cabernet with good acid balance that delivers black and red fruit, a touch of dried herbs and prominent toasted oak. It's ready to drink now with just about any red meat or cheese. Widely available at a great price. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 3167 Trinity Oaks**

**Appellation: California**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 9**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 90**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** A moderately extracted expression that isn't short on flavor, delivering tons of spicy red fruit, dried herb and dill that are well integrated through the medium long finish. At this price, quaff away! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 1313 Newman's Own**

**Appellation: California**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**

**Proprietary: Common Good**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 12**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 92**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** Trinchero Family Wines knows how to make easy drinking wines for the masses, and their prowess is on full display in this fruit forward bottling. It's bright, fun and built for that moment when you just want a good glass of red wine with no pretense. Add in the fact that proceeds go to charity, and you've got a winner. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 1904 Robert Mondavi Private Selection**

**Appellation: California**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 11**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 90**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** Value wine in the Cabernet Sauvignon category is easier to come by than you might think — a key is to look for very recent vintages in the under fifteen dollar category. Like this wine, they are built for early enjoyment, where fresh fruit and spice rule the day. Blackberry, and spice aromas and flavors unfold quickly and finish cleanly in this easy to find bottling - go get some! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 9903 Niner Wines**

**Appellation: Paso Robles**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**

**Proprietary: Estate Grown**

**Vintage: 2015**

**Price: 40**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** A rich and approachable style that shows its Paso origins with fleshy black fruit and spice, with muted oak toast adding complexity. The fruit gets a big push in the finish, with the spicing tagging along for the journey — You'll want to hitch a ride... A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 2658 Eberle**

**Appellation: Paso Robles**

**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**



**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**  
**Proprietary: Vineyard Selection**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 24**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** Spot-on Cabernet from regional pioneer Gary Eberle's stable of wines. A sturdy backbone carries blackberry, cassis, faint dried herbs and mild spice through a long finish where the fruit sings clearly. Very nicely made by Chris Eberle - not related by blood, but definitely related in philosophy, where overdelivering quality for price has always been a hallmark. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 6176 V. Sattui Winery**  
**Appellation: Napa Valley**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: Morisoli Vineyard**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Cabernet Sauvignon**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 90**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 97**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** This is a California benchmark wine from a famed vineyard that continues to shine brightly vintage after vintage. My first look at the 2015 shows a continuation of the track record, with all the classic attributes of the vineyard brought to light. Blackberry, cassis, earthy minerality, bright acidity, weight with a lithe character that brings elegance, and a finish that goes on and on. Already showing great integration, this will continue to develop and deepen. Score another for Brooks Painter and his winemaking team. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 1374 Septentrio**  
**Appellation: Sonoma County**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: X**  
**Proprietary: Retrograde**  
**Vintage: 2013**  
**Price: 19**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** A deft blending hand is on display here, and the result is a lovely Bordeaux styled wine whose price will astound you. Black fruit, leather, brown spice and mild dried herbs commingle well, and finish long with all of the elements remaining and blossoming. A new producer to me, and one to keep an eye on. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 7820 VDR**  
**Appellation: Hames Valley**  
**Broader region: California**

**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: X**  
**Proprietary: Very Dark Red**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 25**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 93**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** Let's take a walk on the dark side! This glass is all about the black, with blackberry, tar, spice and full throated presentation of all the flavors. It's a lusty go to glass of red when you desire just that. Contains 60% Petit Verdot and 40 % Petite Sirah. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 6103 J. Lohr Estates**  
**Appellation: Monterey**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Valdiguie**  
**Proprietary: Wildflower**  
**Vintage: 2016**  
**Price: 10**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 92**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** Easily one of the best ten dollar bottles of wine available today. Every time I taste it I wonder why there aren't more domestic producers. It's bright and fresh, with cherry and spicy raspberry flavors delivered and lingering long. Great on its own or with chicken or turkey. Love it! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 1214 Carol Shelton**  
**Appellation: Rockpile**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: Florence Vineyard**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Zinfandel**  
**Proprietary: Rocky Reserve**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 36**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 95**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** A master of the art shows another fantastic Zinfandel that is mouthfilling, rich and bright all at once, with wild berry fruit joined by fall spice and mild pepper that pushes into the long finish. Carol has a way of taming bold fruit into its best expression, and she's done it again. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 3592 Carol Shelton**  
**Appellation: Mendocino County**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Zinfandel**  
**Proprietary: Wild Thing**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 19**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** The wine that started the Wild Thing line continues to overdeliver value at its price point. The '15 is showing forward orange zest over wild berry aromas, and the fresh citrus brightens the palate and provides a third wave to the fruit and pepper expression. I'll bite - Carol, you make my heart sing! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 9372 Idle Hour**  
**Appellation: Clarksburg**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: Heringer Estate Vineyard**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Tannat**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2016**  
**Price: 28**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** A favorite variety of winemaker Anna Marie Dos Remedios, who has sourced it from Heringer for several years now. The familiarity shows, with a gentle coaxing of full expression evident. Bright blackberry and spiced plum flood the nose and the mouth, with notes of cedar chest and vanilla adding interest. Delicious! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 7179 Barefoot Cellars**  
**Appellation: American**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: X**  
**Proprietary: Rich Red Blend**  
**Vintage: NV**  
**Price: 7**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 90**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** An off dry red that succeeds by offering juicy red fruit, a little spritz for freshness and a sweet fruit driven finish — think Lambrusco. There's a market, and there's a reason. Nicely put together. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 2978 Macchia**  
**Appellation: California**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**

**Grape: Late Harvest Zinfandel**

**Proprietary: Flirtatious**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 22**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Red**

**Review:** This wine is aptly named, and if you're not careful it'll seduce you in short order. The alluring aspect here is that true Zinfandel character is simply magnified by a little sugar and a little alcohol over what you'd find in a dry style bottling, keeping the brambly fruit and pepper that should be there. Go for the bold cheese here. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: Delilah**

**Appellation: Puget Sound**

**Broader region: Washington**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: X**

**Proprietary: Raspberry**

**Vintage: X**

**Price: 12**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 90**

**Color: Fruit**

**Review:** Fruit wines are often overlooked by the self proclaimed cognoscenti of the wine world, perhaps unfairly so if this wine is any indication. It's quite dry, and it delivers exactly what the label says it will with spice and persistent finishing power. Pair it with a simple pound cake and bliss out. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 5741 V. Sattui Winery**

**Appellation: California**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: X**

**Proprietary: 15 Year Old Port**

**Vintage: X**

**Price: 44/500ml**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 94**

**Color: Dessert**

**Review:** A nice tawny style from V. Sattui, aged 15 years in barrel prior to release. It's got fine depth and lively fruit for such a long rest, and the wood selection is complementary, adding spice and smoky character that lingers long. Chocolate or stinky cheese is the order of the day here. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

PM flights

**Producer: 7699 Reustle Prayer Rock Vineyard**

**Appellation: Umpqua Valley**

**Broader region: Oregon**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Gruner Veltliner, Smaragd**

**Proprietary: Hefeabzug**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 32**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 95**

**Color: White, Glorious White**

**Review:** Gruner Veltliner is steadily gaining a toehold domestically thanks to wines like this one, where a rich mid palate and scouring acidity play well together, showcasing Meyer lemon citrus and green bean aromas and flavors wrapped around a core of granite minerality. A lingering sweet lemon finish really hangs on. Great stuff! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 6559 Flipflop**

**Appellation: California**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Pinot Grigio**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: NV**

**Price: 7**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 90**

**Color: White**

**Review:** From the citrus style camp for the variety, where lemon, lime and wet stone ride a wave of acid through a long finish, with a lighter than usual touch of sweetness that works. I'm tasting more and more Pinot Grigio that I like — and that's always good news. At this price, it's even better news. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 4278 California Dream**

**Appellation: California**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**

**Grape: Pinot Grigio**

**Proprietary: X**

**Vintage: 2016**

**Price: 6**

**Importer: X**

**Score: 90**

**Color: White**

**Review:** A sweetly aromatic expression that's long on apricot, white flowers and a touch of wool that's correct for the variety. They translate well on the palate, with just a touch of residual sugar brightening the fruit. Summer's a'comin'... A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 5195 Hoya de Cadenas**

**Appellation: Valencia DO**

**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**

**Country: Spain**  
**Grape: X**  
**Proprietary: Night Harvest**  
**Vintage: 2016**  
**Price: 35**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** A crisp and refreshingly dry blend of Muscat, Viura, Chardonnay and Verdejo that shows a soft mix of pear, citrus fruit and wet stone on the nose, and these elements translate well on the palate, with a mouth watering finish that bring you back for more. A great solo glass, or try a duet with the salad course or the fish course. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 4156 Craftwork**  
**Appellation: Monterey County**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: Estate Vineyards**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Sauvignon Blanc**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2017**  
**Price: 20**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 93**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** A Sauvignon Blanc that gathers all the best elements of the variety int one glass - a rare feat. Melon, lemon, grass, a touch of gooseberry and stony minerality are balanced beautifully, and finish long with great integration. A touch of residual sugar brightens without detracting. This has warm weather written all over it. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 6101 Barefoot Bubbly**  
**Appellation: Prosecco DOC**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: Italy**  
**Grape: X**  
**Proprietary: Demi-Sec**  
**Vintage: NV**  
**Price: 10**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 91**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** Need a sparkler for a wedding or other large gathering that will get everybody dancing? Look no further than this widely available wine that brings pear, apple and peach together with a touch of pleasing sweetness that keeps the fruit popping. The bottles will keep popping as well — Cheers! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 2782 Vintage Crush**  
**Appellation: California**  
**Broader region: X**

**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Chardonnay**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: NV**  
**Price: 5**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 90**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** This oddly named wine — it carries no vintage date — certainly carries lots of fresh Chardonnay flavor, with apple, pear and lemon mixing nicely together and a touch of sweetness brightens the fruit. An easy summer quaffer. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 3450 Dominant Seven**  
**Appellation: California**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Chardonnay**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2016**  
**Price: 9**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 91**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** Here's a bang for the buck Chardonnay for fans of the bolder style, where butterscotch and spice are forward, and baked apple joins in the midpalate. The finish is nice and clean, leaving you ready to go again to the glass. A nicely priced cocktail style. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 8572 Z. Alexander Brown**  
**Appellation: Santa Lucia Highlands**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Chardonnay**  
**Proprietary: Uncaged**  
**Vintage: 2016**  
**Price: 20**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 92**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** A very polished wine for the price, showing rich apple, pear, spice and hitting my crisp and creamy marker with a viscous texture and a bright acid bump in the finish that keeps the flavor coming. Try this with sea bass simply prepared. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 9894 A3**  
**Appellation: California**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Chardonnay**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 8**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 90**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** It's the year of the fresh, easy to drink Chardonnay at Monterey International, where brightness seems to have trumped weight, and a touch of sweetness isn't a bad thing. This version delivers tart apple, pear and lemon zest, and finishes with a Meyer lemon kiss. Sip solo, or pair with salads of other light faire. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 9110 Horton Vineyards**  
**Appellation: Orange County**  
**Broader region: Virginia**  
**Vineyard:**

**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Vidal Blanc**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2016**  
**Price: 16**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** Dry style Vidal can be a real treat, as it is in this case. You may want a case after tasting the crisp Sorrento lemon expression that shows hints of pear and apple, finishing clean with lingering citrus flavor. Pair with fish of the region, or trout in general. Contains 5% early pick Viognier. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 5303 Loma Prieta Winery**  
**Appellation: Alta Mesa, Lodi**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: X**

**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Spakling Pinotage**  
**Proprietary: X**  
**Vintage: 2015**  
**Price: 55**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Sparkling**

**Review:** You heard right — sparkling Pinotage — and not from South Africa to boot. This vintage (yes, there have been others) gets it right, with a just off dry style coming across fresh and lively, with peach and strawberry flavors that linger through a zesty finish. I like it! A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 4589 Hive & Honey**  
**Appellation: Monterey**  
**Broader region: California**  
**Vineyard: X**



**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Riesling**  
**Proprietary: Estate Grown**  
**Vintage: 2017**  
**Price: 8**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 92**  
**Color: White**

**Review:** Riesling continues to be undervalued in the US market, and it's a shame, because like Merlot, the producers who remain dedicated to it simply try harder to make a delicious product. This budget friendly sweet is balanced for easy drinking, with soft with bright apple and lemon joined by sweet apricot and spice. A case buy for fans. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 6672 Swiss Heritage Winery**  
**Appellation: American**  
**Broader region: X**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: Concord**  
**Proprietary: Doggone Good**  
**Vintage: NV**  
**Price: 10**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red Hybrid**

**Review:** If memory serves, this wine has shown well in the past here in Monterey, and it's certainly a memorable expression of Concord. The classic flavors are there, and if you could say that bright red has a flavor, this has to be it. The acidity makes it work, extending the finish and keeping things from getting cloying or sticky. I'd drink this slightly chilled any day of the week for the sheer pleasure of it. A Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**Producer: 8817 Samson Estates**  
**Appellation: Puget Sound**  
**Broader region: Washington**  
**Vineyard: X**  
**Country: USA**  
**Grape: X**  
**Proprietary: Cassis Dessert Wine**  
**Vintage: NV**  
**Price: 13/375**  
**Importer: X**  
**Score: 94**  
**Color: Red**

**Review:** If you really care to know what we're talking about when we say that a wine has aromas and flavors of cassis, you should order up a bottle of this black currant wine and you'll get a delightful sensory lesson. It is, in fact, what it is. A pure expression, with great concentration and acidity that keep the finish going and going. I should mention that it added some brushing time to my pre dinner preparations, so smile at your own risk after enjoying. The final Platinum Award Winner at the 2018 Monterey International Wine Competition.