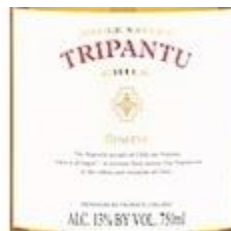


## 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition Platinum Award Winners

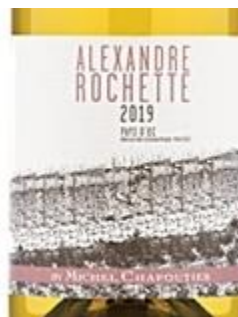
### CHILE

**Tripantu, Maule Valley (Chile) Sauvignon Blanc Reserve 2020** (\$19): The Maule Valley brings us this sharp and zesty Sauvignon Blanc, with aromas of fresh cut grass leading to a palate of grapefruit, asparagus and lime zest. It's built for bold seafood preps, and priced so you can splurge on the shellfish. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.  
91 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021



### FRANCE

**Alexandre Rochette, Pays d'Oc IGP (France) 2019** (\$20): What a crisp refresher this is! Stony minerality drives this wine, based on Vermentino, which is known as Rolle in France. A peach and soft lemon fruit vibe through a finish will bring you back to life after a day's work in the hot sun. I know some folks like a beer for this purpose, but here's a challenge – give this a spin and see if you don't think I'm right. You'll be glad you did. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.  
92 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021



**Le Paon de Bernard Magrez, Languedoc AOC (France) "Le Paon" 2018** (\$25): Bottled as a tribute to a trailblazing winemaker, this wine serves the purpose well by showing restraint and panache. It's a Rhône inspired blend that keeps its Languedoc character thanks to 15% Carignan in the mix, giving a sunny Southern French lift to the Syrah, Grenache and Cinsault. There's great integration through the finish, and it is certainly a bargain considering its stature. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021



**Château Philippe Jacques & Co, Bordeaux (France) 2019** (\$40): Another moderately priced Bordeaux hit the Chief Judge table, this one offering a pleasant bell pepper note to the typical regional profile. That contrast serves the wine well, and it will serve you well when pairing with a roast encrusted in herbs. It's nicely balanced and well executed. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021



**Château De La Pierre Levée, Côtes De Bordeaux AOC (France) “Castillon” 2018** (\$25): There's value to be had in Bordeaux – you just need to know where to look. This sub-region doesn't bring the hefty price tags that the classified growth players flaunt, but that's good news for us. There is solid Bordeaux character here, with all of the earthy notes hitting clearly and bringing the fruit interplay that you would expect to pay a lot more for. Bravo! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021



## NEW ZEALAND

**McBride Sisters Collection, Marlborough (New Zealand) Sauvignon Blanc 2020** (\$17): I like the way this wine leans into its gooseberry fruit notes in an unapologetic way, letting the notes of lemongrass and grapefruit sit subtly by in the background. The finish is rich and lingering, and for all the wine's initial power, it's quite elegant in the end. New Zealand is exploring a broader range of stylistic possibilities with this variety from this region now that the craze has subsided, and it's a good thing. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021



## SOUTH AFRICA

**Posted Accord, Swartland (South Africa)**

**Chenin Blanc 2020** (\$18): There's a term in Afrikaans – fynbos – that describes the unique mix of vegetation that grows on the Cape of South Africa. There's a touch of fynbos on this pleasant Chenin Blanc, one that supports the citrus fruit and adds depth. Very interesting wine! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



91 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021

**SPAIN**

**Locations, Spain (Spain) "E7" Red Blend NV**

**(\$20):** The point of a non-vintage, blended red wine is, put simply, the yum factor. Winemakers get the satisfaction of blending something pleasurable, and we get the benefit of enjoying their work. In this case, the work results in a juicy yet structured glass, with juicy red and black berries, moderate spice and a savory finish that keeps the fruit in play. Go for something in the beef zone when pairing – from grilled burgers to prime rib, this will work. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021

**Comarca, Spain (Spain) Verdejo 2019** (\$17):

Verdejo can deliver you to a summery Spanish afternoon with its sunny disposition of lively citrus with subtle stonefruit layers, and this example succeeds in doing so with elegance. Nice price to boot! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



92 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021

**Martin Codax, Rias Baixas DO (Spain)**

**Albariño 2019** (\$17): Picture sitting under a lemon tree in bloom by the sea and you'll get a picture of what Albariño is all about, especially in its native home on Spain's northwest coast. This bottle transports you to that place in direct fashion, with aromas of lemon and sea spray, which turn to mixed citrus and white peach on the palate, where a touch of salinity makes the fruit more lively than it would be otherwise. At seventeen bucks, it's a budget vacation in your mind.



A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

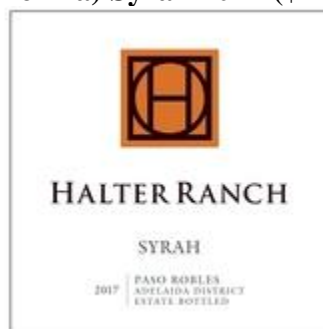
93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021

## UNITED STATES

**Halter Ranch, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (California) Syrah 2017 (\$42):**

You can always depend on Halter Ranch for structured wines that also satisfy near term. This Syrah's black and blue fruit notes get a push from layered spice and gentle oak that support rather than overtake. I like it now, and I'll love it in about five years. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 30, 2021



**Brecon Estate, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (California) Petit Verdot 2018**

(\$62): Here is a Petite Verdot for fans of dark roast coffee that doesn't cross over into the burnt zone. Juicy black fruit gets the coffee treatment thanks to judiciously selected charred oak, and it makes for a style that will cut through bold sauces or spicy dishes. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 30, 2021



**Louis M. Martini, Alexander Valley (Sonoma County, California) Cabernet Sauvignon 2018**

(\$40): I've written about this wine before, because it keeps getting sent forward at competitions that I run, which tells me that I'm doing a good job at selecting judges. What they didn't know is that this is a dark side expression of Alexander Valley fruit, more blackberry and black cherry than the usual red fruit-driven style. It

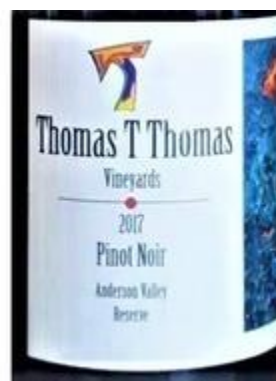
works again – no surprise at all. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021



**Thomas T Thomas Vineyards, Anderson Valley (Mendocino County, California) Pinot Noir Reserve 2017 (\$80):**

There are so many layers to this wine, it's hard to know where to start the praise process. Beautiful aromas of cherry, Asian spice, powder and cardamom are distinctly



layered, and they seem to move in and out on a sort of palate carousel. I could go on, but I'll save some of the joy of discovery for you. It's absolutely riveting Pinot Noir that's clearly been steered to life with the greatest care. A truly terrific tippie, and a Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

97 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021

**Carnivor, California (United States) Zinfandel 2018** (\$15): Zinfandel lovers will rejoice at finding a bottle at this price that delivers jammy berry pie aromas and flavors, and they'll rejoice even more that they'll actually be able to find it thanks to great distribution. We need more wines in this price range that deliver the goods as well as this one does. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



91 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**MacMurray Estate Vineyards, Central Coast (California) Pinot Noir 2018** (\$23): This label is always a dependable, value driven wine, and the 2018 is no exception. It will please fans of the oak spice driven style, one where the fruit comes right up underneath and provides tension and length. At 23 bucks, it's a steal. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 30, 2021

**Redland Ranch, Central Coast (California) Zinfandel 2018** (\$25): Claret styled Zinfandel was once the norm in California, and this bottle serves as a tribute to the style, with no rough edges or rusticity. Just solid drinkable red wine with a dash of pepper and brown spice that works. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



90 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**V. Sattui Winery, Contra Costa County (California) Zinfandel Duarte Vineyard 2018** (\$36): There are some great vineyards up in this area east of San Francisco Bay hiding amongst the hills, and it's time to count Duarte among them. Cooling bay winds temper the warm days and keep the acidity high enough to tame the bold Zinfandels, like this one, that hail from there. There's a touch of heat showing here, but for most





Zinfandel fans, that just another reason to like it. Count me in. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**McGrail Vineyards, Livermore Valley (California) “Shamus Patrick” Red**

**Blend 2018** (\$46): Here’s a big boy of a blend that is equal parts of Bordeaux’s big five varieties, and it acquits itself beautifully as an example of how the parts play together. It’s fun to taste a wine that says “here we are, you figure out what each different grape adds to the blend.” Here, you get Cabernet Sauvignon’s blackberry, Cabernet Franc’s cherry, Petite Verdot’s violets, Malbec’s meat and Merlot’s plushness singing in harmony. It’s a chorus worth the ticket price. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021

**V. Sattui Winery, Lodi (California) Zinfandel Pilgrim Vineyard Old Vine**

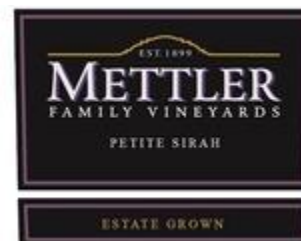
**2018** (\$39): This tightly-wound Zinfandel is going to need a little time for its intensity to unravel, but there’s a glorious time ahead. I am so impressed with what’s coming out of Lodi in general these days, and I’m obviously not alone if Brooks Painter is buying. Cellar this for five years before going in, or decant well if you just can’t wait. I do it all the time. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



95 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021

**Mettler Family Vineyards, Lodi (California)**

**Petite Sirah Estate Grown 2018** (\$25): Solid, drinkable young and perfectly capable of being aged a while, this is a wine for spicy grilled meats up to linguica level. Again, the judges have rewarded structure, balance, and layered aromas and flavors that fit the profile. That’s why they’re the judges. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**V. Sattui Winery, Los Carneros, Napa Valley (California) Pinot Noir 2019**

**2019** (\$39): Los Carneros has a signature minerality that is very evident in this wine. It’s got a gravelly character that complements the dark cherry fruit well, and the San Francisco Bay influence makes for vibrant



acidity that gives the fruit and earth mix a great push in the finish. Another example of the diversity of Pinot Noir possibilities. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**De Tierra, Monterey (California) Syrah 2016** (\$39): I am a fan of this style of Syrah. It was picked to ensure that the varietal characteristics of pepper, savory meaty notes, and tart cherry fruit would all be present, and then careful winemaking could soften the edges without obliterating those elements. Mission accomplished in the best possible way. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

95 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021



**Benziger Family Vineyard, Monterey County (California) Merlot 2018** (\$18):

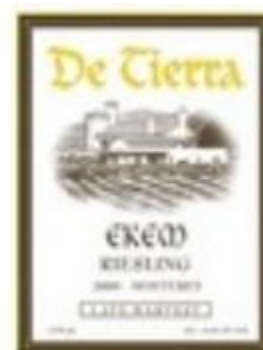
This venerable brand reaches south for the fruit for this delicious Merlot – not a grape that you’d expect to shine in Monterey county, but one that shines brightly in this bottle. Cherry, soft oak spice and supple tannins lead to a burst of flavor in the finish, and the flavor keeps pumping. Score one for Monterey Merlot! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021



**De Tierra, Monterey County (California) Riesling “Ekem” Late Harvest 2009** (\$37): A year after this wine took top dessert honors at this competition, it was back in the hunt, and it’s no worse for wear with another year in the bottle. Dried stone fruit, baked apple, honey and marzipan are bold on the nose and full flavored in the mouth, finishing with cleansing acidity that keeps the flavors amazingly fresh for a wine of this age. Dessert that needs no accompaniment! Sold in a 375ml bottle, and as for the proprietary name, please no lawsuits from Bordeaux or Paris -- it's not right to “kill the messenger”! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021



**V. Sattui Winery, Napa Valley (California) Cabernet Sauvignon Morisoli Vineyard 2018** (\$95): Morisoli Vineyard is a sweet spot on the Rutherford Bench, one of Napa’s most sought-



after sites. Dario Sattui was wise to enter into a long term contract for this fruit. It's a stunning wine that is always a favorite of mine. The 2018 is structured with fine grained tannins that provide a supple grip that keeps classic Cabernet character cruising from beginning to end. It's one of the few bottlings that I like to keep multiple vintages of. For the quality that's inside, that they've been able to hold the price under one hundred dollars is a measure of grace. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**96** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 16, 2021*

**V. Sattui Winery, Napa Valley (California)**

**“Paradiso” 2017** (\$95): As a director of several wine competitions, I get the pleasure of tracking some special wines across their early development. This wine has been in several competitions over the past year, and it continues to develop in the bottle. I think it's reached a solid spot now, with layered blackberry, cassis, spice, dried herbs and gorgeous supple structure that keeps it all together. An attractive sweet oak spice comes slightly forward in the finish, keeping things bright to the end. Beautifully realized, and a long term cellar candidate. I'm betting you won't be able to hold it very long. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



**96** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 23, 2021*

**V. Sattui Winery, Napa Valley (California)**

**Malbec 2018** (\$46): This bottling gets at Malbec's chocolatey side in its aroma profile with rich dark chocolate over black and red fruit. The fruit takes the lead on the palate, but the chocolate remains as a delightful accent. When you want something serious with the grilled fare you're rustling up for dinner, you can't go wrong here. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



**95** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 28, 2021*

**Frank Family Vineyards, Napa Valley**

**(California) Merlot 2018** (\$38): Bold cherry fruit welcomes your nose at the rim of this glass, and the welcome continues on the palate, where layered oak spice and a firm grip enhance the cherry and blackberry flavors. There is good structure here – drink over the next 6 to 10 years. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



**94** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 16, 2021*



**Frank Family Vineyards, Napa Valley (California) Cabernet Sauvignon 2018**

(\$58): Frank Family has developed a house style with this bottling, and it remains a successful one. I'm sure their sales figures don't need me to tell them that, but it's nice to be able to let you know that. Vintage after vintage, this well rounded, down-the-middle Cabernet Sauvignon will please everyone in the room. Not an easy chore. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021



**Louis M. Martini, Napa Valley (California) Cabernet Sauvignon 2018** (\$42):

I'm a fan of the set of three AVA Cabernets under this label, and I highly recommend a side-by-side tasting of this Napa Valley wine with its Alexander Valley and Sonoma County siblings. Make an educational and delicious afternoon out of it! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021



**V. Sattui Winery, Napa Valley (California) Petit Verdot Vittorio's Vineyard 2018** (\$47):

You've got to hand it to V. Sattui. That they can make so many different varieties so well and continue to add items to the portfolio is a testament to great winemaking. This wine aims at a customer who wants bright black fruit, a little spice, great acidity and finishing power, and it hits the bulls-eye. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021



**V. Sattui Winery, Napa Valley (California)**

**"Entanglement GSM" 2018** (\$42): There's a story emerging from V. Sattui's 2018 vintage, and the story is that you can't go wrong with a purchase across the portfolio. The hit parade continues with this bottle, where sweet oak spice deepens the mix of black, red and blue fruit, with cinnamon in particular dovetailed in beautifully. I like this as a bright solo glass of red. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021



**William Hill Estate Winery, North Coast (California) Cabernet Sauvignon 2018** (\$18): Nice and toasty describes this oak toast-forward Cabernet Sauvignon that will please a crowd. It delivers what you expect fruit-wise, and the spice makes it a fine foil for barbecue or chili. Nice price to boot! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

92 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021



**Ménage à Trois, North Coast (California) Cabernet Sauvignon 2019** (\$14):

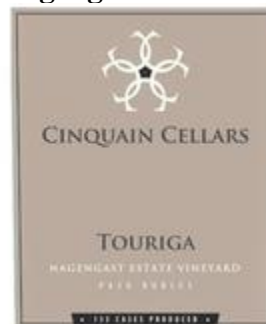
As wine takes a slight downturn in popularity (don't worry – it will come roaring back as usual) there is some better fruit going into less expensive bottlings, which of course is cause for rejoicing. That's what we've got here: spot-on Cabernet Sauvignon for under fifteen dollars. And good distribution. And a fun package. A party in a bottle, and just in time! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

91 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021



**Cinquain Cellars, Paso Robles (California) Touriga Nagengast Estate Vineyard 2017** (\$60): There is something very attractive about the aroma profile of this grape – you can see the line to Port wine here, even though this is a dry table wine. Black and blue fruit join high toned vanilla and citrus zest, and they all remain present from the beginning of the nose to the end of the finish thanks to great tannic structure. It would be interesting to age this a while to see if a dry style can develop like its more famous fortified cousins. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 30, 2021



**Defiance Vineyards, Paso Robles (California) Cabernet Sauvignon Estate BLK 1 2016** (\$48):

What a pleasure to see an older vintage make an appearance in a blind tasting of current release wines, and one that obviously worth the wait. It's got oodles of Paso Robles character (read, dense ripe fruit) but it defies past regional Cabernet conventions and takes things a step further thanks to solid backbone and real persistence. If you are into open-fire cooking, this is a perfect partner. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 30, 2021

**V. Sattui Winery, Russian River Valley (Sonoma County, California) Zinfandel Gilsson Vineyard "Old Vine" 2018**

(\$46): There is a fine balance between pepper and sweet red fruit in this wine, one that shows real old vine character thanks to racy acidity that keeps it all popping through a zesty finish. That's what Zinfandel is all about out on the classy side of the spectrum. This will delight with burgers or steaks. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**V. Sattui Winery, Russian River Valley (Sonoma County, California) Pinot Noir "Collina De Oro 2019 (\$49):**

Another award for this bottling isn't surprising, as Brooks Painter's team has been sourcing select fruit for it for a few years running now. It's long on black cherry fruit and cool climate acidity that drives the finish. It's a powerful and pleasurable expression of Russian River Pinot Noir. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**Lightpost Winery, San Luis Obispo County (California) Pinot Noir Spanish Springs Vineyard Reserve 2019 (\$58):**

Price Canyon Road runs west from Pismo Beach out to the heart of the Edna Valley, where the vineyards get consistent morning fog and afternoon sun.

According to this bottle, that's just what you want for great Pinot Noir. Brilliant acidity carries strawberry, cherry, cola and sexy oak spice from start to finish, with a mouthwatering citric kiss on the end. Love it! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



95 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021

**Lightpost Winery, San Luis Obispo County (California) Grenache "Mila" 2018 (\$49):**

This Grenache is big and bright, but there's plenty of cool climate structure to carry the weight. Back cherry, white pepper and moderate oak toast work well together, and the finish hangs together with a flourish of cherry coming forward. Well realized by winemaker Christian Roguenant. A Platinum



Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 30, 2021

**Seaglass, Santa Barbara County (California)**

**Pinot Noir 2018** (\$12): I challenge you to find a better Pinot Noir at this price point. Add in the fact that it's widely available, and it might just become your house wine of the year. Cherry, cola, moderate oak toast, a supple grip and a long finish with an orange zest note – words not often said at this level. Go get 'em. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



92 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**Lightpost Winery, Santa Cruz Mountains (California) Pinot Noir Ferrari**

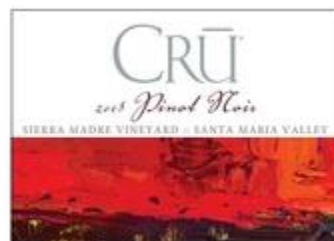
**Vineyards Reserve 2019** (\$65): A specific anise note fires the opening salvo in this tasty glass, one laden with dark cherry fruit, moderate oak toast and some grip that keeps the flavors coming. Winemaker Christian Roguenant is creating an amazing portfolio at Lightpost Winery – no big surprise there. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021

**Cru Winery, Santa Maria Valley (Santa Barbara County, California) Pinot Noir Sierra Madre Vineyard 2018**

(\$50): You have to love the variety that is possible in Pinot Noir across the state of California. The spectrum poles are so far apart that it encourages wading in to each region to find the smorgasbord of high quality that exists. Here is a delicious example of what I mean – strawberry, vanilla, light herbs, rich oak toast and a long, well integrated finish. I love variety! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 30, 2021

**La Chertosa, Sonoma Valley (California) Sangiovese "Don Silvio" Reserve 2018**

(\$35): This wine combines Old World style with New World ripeness, and it explains why the two worlds can coexist in one glass. Bold acidic structure and notes of sage and dry earth support cherry and blackberry fruit, and the grip in the finish suggests pairing with saucy pasta and meat dishes – it's more than up to the task. A Platinum





Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**94** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 30, 2021*

**Heath Vineyards, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (California) Syrah**

**2017** (\$75): This Syrah comes from the coolest side of Paso Robles, where an amazing diurnal swing in temperature keeps acidity high and makes extremely long hang time possible in the vineyard. That was the case here, allowing the near 16% alcohol to work in balance with the fruit and winemaking choices. If you like ‘em big, it doesn’t get any bigger than this without flying apart. Well done! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



**93** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 23, 2021*

**Barefoot, California (United States) White**

**Zinfandel NV** (\$7): There are still plenty of fans of this stylized, sweet expression of Zinfandel, one which was originally an accident at a winery that launched many imitators. This example gets at the intent of the original, with sweetness tempered by zesty acidity that makes the cherry strawberry pie vibe work. Another solid job by winemaker Jennifer Wall’s team. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



**90** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 28, 2021*

**Oak Farm Vineyards, Lodi (California)**

**Silvaspoons Vineyard Rosé 2020** (\$20): This Grenache Rosé gets a little push from a small percentage of Sangiovese which serves to pop the strawberry notes up and enhance the soft herbal character that adds depth and nuance. It likely also adds a zest to the finish that makes things fresh and inviting. This is the serious side of Rosé, and yes, I mean with a capital R.” A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



**92** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 23, 2021*

**Seaglass, Monterey County (California) Rosé**

**2019** (\$12): One of the crew members at this judging was mentioning an affinity for past vintages of this bottling, and I know she will be happy to see that the new vintage is continuing in the same vein. The combination of quality and affordability has my over-delivery radar up and pinging. The combination of strawberry, watermelon and mild white pepper delivered in dry style works in concert with zesty citrus notes, and the finish





lingers long. Quite a bit of this is going to hit the market for your enjoyment – here’s to that. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

92 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**Breathless Sparkling Wines, Sonoma County (California) Blanc de Blanc NV**

(\$34): Breathless is coming into its own of late, and I imagine that lessons learned while running a custom crush operation for multiple producers with all of their different demands and preferences has helped, giving owners Sharon Cohn, Rebecca Faust and Cynthia Faust a wide array of style exposure. This wine was clearly designed as a full throttle aperitif that could make the transition to the table without skipping a beat. Crisp, deep and layered with apple and pear, it’s a winner. Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021

**Navarro Vineyards, Anderson Valley (Mendocino County, California)**

**Riesling “Late Harvest, Cluster Select” 2019**

(\$39): At last, a worthy challenger went head-to-head with this wine in a competition, but it still took the top prize with intense aromas and flavors that are pure Riesling in its sweetest nectar-like expression. Finish? It doesn’t really, it just keeps going with spice and stone fruit. There is no better dessert wine for this price anywhere. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



95 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021

**V. Sattui Winery, Anderson Valley (California)**

**Dry Riesling Boonville Ranch Vineyard 2019**

(\$28): V. Sattui wisely invested in some vineyard land in Anderson Valley with an eye on Riesling and Gewurztraminer, and it’s starting to pay big dividends. This bottle is just off-dry, and the small dose of sugar serves to keep everything bright rather than sweet, extending the finish and leaving you with a smile. I’ve got mine on. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.



94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021

**ZD Wines, California (United States)**

**Chardonnay 2019** (\$42): This wine became so popular that a few years ago it switched from a Napa Valley appellation to the California macro



AVA, but that doesn't mean that there's been a drop in quality. Careful sourcing allows for more production, and the rich, deep style has been maintained to the delight of the fan base, and apparently to the delight of our competition judges. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**93 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021**

**Imagery, California (United States) Sauvignon Blanc 2020**

(\$20): Spot-on, melon-driven Sauvignon Blanc is something we can use more of, and Imagery has obliged us here. A creamy midpalate lets the melon come out, and softer acidity keeps it in front through the finish. Don't worry – varietal acidity is still present, and it gives enough pop to keep you wanting another taste. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**92 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 16, 2021**



**Ménage à Trois, California (United States) Pinot Grigio "Limelight" 2019**

(\$12): The label here says "Crisp, Elegant & Zesty" under its proprietary name, and a dash of residual sugar pops those characteristics up with just the right touch. This is a summer porch pounder if ever there was one, and you'll like the easy opening feature when that occasion presents itself. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**91 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021**



**Ménage à Trois, California (United States)**

**"Exotic Blend" 2019** (\$10): In this case, "exotic" means Chardonnay, Moscato and Chenin Blanc.

The wine works well with clove spice and ginger notes joining stone fruit in an off dry package that will please a crowd. It's built for the coming summer end-of-quarantine luau party that you are already planning. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**91 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 28, 2021**



**Ménage à Trois, California (United States)**

**Moscato NV** (\$12): Balanced, clean, sweet and spicy, this wine shows why there was a Moscato craze in the first place, and makes a strong case for continuing market share. I love the acidity here – it makes everything work. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International



Wine Competition.

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**Pomelo Wine Co., California (United States) Sauvignon Blanc 2019 (\$12):**

This is an aptly named wine that conjures the impression of its namesake fruit – sort of a gentle grapefruit/lemon mix, much softer than either fruit on its own. Add the bright grassy note and you’ve got a fine foil for green salads and light appetizers. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

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**Rancho De Philo, Cucamonga Valley (California) “Triple Cream Sherry”**

NV (\$42): Rancho de Philo’s Triple Cream Sherry is a Southern California legend. All the sweet, nutty goodness within can be used in so many ways – a pairing for stinky cheeses, to sautéed mushrooms, etc. It is the only one of its kind, and it hearkens back to the earliest days of California winemaking. I’m pretty sure this is a mailing-list-only bottle at this point, but it’s worth checking on it if you’re in the neighborhood. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

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**Navarro Vineyards, Mendocino County**

(California) Pinot Blanc 2020 (\$19): This is just about as good as white wine gets, and it comes at a price that lets everyone participate in that goodness. Peach and Meyer lemon aromas translate directly to palate flavors, with a honeyed midpalate and a crisp finish that will have you to the bottom of the bottle in no time. It’s always on my summer playlist. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

94 [Rich Cook](#) Mar 23, 2021



**Seaglass, Monterey County / Santa Barbara County (California) Riesling 2019 (\$12):**

Seaglass shows us the tropical side of Riesling in this off-dry bottling, where pineapple and white peach hold center stage with perceptible sweetness. The finish brings in a lime zest note that wipes away the sweet and waters the palate for the next bite or sip. Bring on the Thai food! A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

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**V. Sattui Winery, North Coast (California) Dry**

**Riesling 2019** (\$28): The “do no wrong” philosophy at V. Sattui extends into the white portfolio as well as evidenced by this juicy fresh yet zippy, zingy Riesling. I don’t know why the public isn’t demanding more wines like this one – it obvious to me that I’ll continue to bang the drum for domestic Riesling of this high quality for as long as it’s there to pay tribute to. Lemon, lime, stone fruit and stony mineral are melded together so well that they’ll have to pry the glass out of your hand. This is exactly the ticket to get the White Claw crowd to cross over. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**95** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 28, 2021*



**Carol Shelton Wines, Paso Robles (California) “Coquille Blanc” 2019** (\$25):

Ms. Shelton hits the Platinum button again with this gem, which I’ve loved since the first vintage. Lemon oil takes the lead, on the nose and in the mouth, with honeysuckle, nut and subtle stone fruit joining in. The finish is opening after a couple more months in the bottle, and like all of Carol Shelton’s wines, this is headed in a great direction. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**94** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 23, 2021*



**Belle Fiore, Rogue Valley (Oregon) Barbera**

**2017** (\$34): Belle Fiore winery is making a stand with Italian varieties in the Rogue Valley, and thanks to wines like this one, I would expect other producers to be following suit in the near future. This Barbera is spicy, but there’s plenty of blackberry and blueberry fruit to carry it off with finesse and balance. Food is definitely in order – osso bucco sounds like a plan. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**94** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 23, 2021*



**Reustle Prayer Rock Vineyards, Umpqua Valley (Oregon) Malbec "Estate Selection"**

**2019** (\$32): Another vintage, another big award for this bottling. This vintage delivers spot-on Malbec character that is a bit more structured than the 2018, and that mix of acidity and tannin keeps things taut and tasty with nice interplay of rich red fruit and powdery spice tones. Stephen Russell has this variety (among others) figured



out. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**94** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 23, 2021*

**Grape Creek Vineyards, Texas (United States)**

**Pinot Grigio 2020** (\$26): Yes, Virginia, there is good wine in Texas, and this one will have you singing about yellow roses in no time. It's bright and fun, and it's quite correct with its light woolly note over stone fruit and a little dried herb character. Summer is in fact coming. A Platinum Award winner at the 2021 Monterey International Wine Competition.

**92** [Rich Cook](#) *Mar 28, 2021*

