

Wine Spectator

Home > News & Features > Tasting Highlights

10 Distinctive California Pinot Noirs

New reviews from the 2012 vintage in Mendocino's Anderson Valley

Augustus Weed

Posted: June 2, 2014

Tasting Highlights bring the best wines from our editors' most recent tastings to WineSpectator.com members.

Anderson Valley, California's frontier outpost for Pinot Noir, is a three-hour drive north of San Francisco. It's remote and sparsely populated, with vineyards planted mainly in the benchlands and surrounding hills. Ocean breezes and morning fog help moderate temperatures, keeping the area cooler than many parts of neighboring Sonoma and Napa. The wines typically reflect the valley's moderate climate.

Here are a few standouts from the region's 2012 vintage.

The top-scoring wine comes from Lazy Creek, a longtime Anderson Valley producer that has changed hands several times since it was founded. It's the best Lazy Creek Pinot in a long time. Swiss émigré Hans Kobler established the winery in 1973, planting Pinot Noir and Gewürztraminer. He later sold the company to Josh and Beth Chandler, who expanded the vineyards. The current owner, Sonoma's Ferrari Carano, took over in 2008, keeping winemaker Christy Ackerman on board.

Another producer investing in the region is Napa's Cliff Lede, which bought Breggo Cellars in 2009, renaming it Fel with their 2012 releases. Still, many producers, such as Walt and MacPhail, buy grapes from Anderson Valley and transport them to their own wineries in Sonoma and Napa.

Couloir is a relatively new label from winemaker-owner Jon Grant. An avid skier, Grant segued into wine while employed at the wine shop at the Snowbird Ski Resort in Utah. After a stint managing the wine program at the resort's restaurants, he moved to California and worked at Turley and Plumpjack. He now makes vineyard-designated Pinots from Anderson Valley and Marin County.

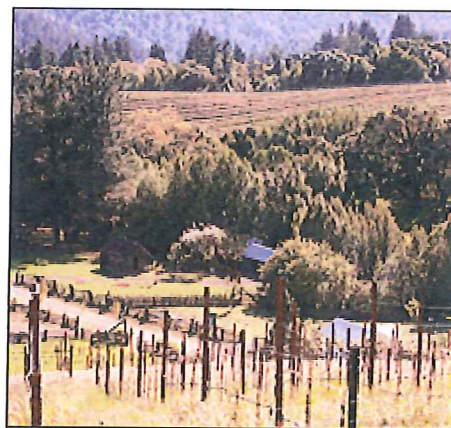
LAZY CREEK Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2012 Score: 92 | \$42

Perfumed plum, strawberry and watermelon aromas lead to a richer fruit presence on the palate, gaining depth and wild blackberry flavors and ending with a long, full-bodied and fruit-driven finish. Drink now through 2022. 257 cases made. —J.L.

COULOIR Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Monument Tree 2012

Score: 91 | \$46

Exhibits a dense, rich, firmly tannic mix of blackberry and wild berry flavors, with intense floral scents and touches of pomegranate and boysenberry. An



Courtesy of Lazy Creek Vineyards

Anderson Valley's Lazy Creek winery offers a long and rich 2012 Pinot Noir.

See Also:

Friday, May 30, 2014

18 Unique Wines from Italy and Slovenia

Friday, May 23, 2014

11 Crisp Whites from Chablis

Monday, May 19, 2014

10 California Rosés to Brighten Your Day

Friday, May 16, 2014

13 Red and White Values from Argentina

Monday, May 12, 2014

12 Seductive California Pinot Noirs

[More from Tasting Highlights](#)

More from California:

Monday, June 30, 2014

California Zinfandel Alphabetical Listing

expressive, focused Pinot Noir. Drink now through 2022. 197 cases made. —J.L.

CARPE DIEM Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2012 Score: 90 | \$35

Shows off ripe plum and wild berry flavors, with firm, grippy tannins. Gains depth and richness, adding a touch of dried herb. Needs time. Drink now through 2022. 2,807 cases made. —J.L.

FERRARI-CARANO Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Middleridge Ranch Vineyard Select Collection 2012 Score: 89 | \$55

Presents a solid, chunky core of dense blackberry and wild berry notes, with a cedary oak and mocha presence and a tightly wound, tannic finish. Drink now through 2022. 497 cases made. —J.L.

CASTELLO DI AMOROSA Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2012 Score: 88 | \$49

Smoky oak holds the upper hand, entering the mix of berry and dried herb notes. The wood lends this a supple texture, ending with a tight, tannic character. Drink now through 2022. 509 cases made. —J.L.

DUTTON-GOLDFIELD Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Angel Camp Vineyard 2012 Score: 88 | \$58

The aromas of pepper, spice and dark berry are pure and elegant, with a supple, graceful texture that firms on the finish. Drink now through 2022. 306 cases made. —J.L.

FEL Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2012 Score: 88 | \$38

Dried herb and pennyroyal notes emerge in this dry, savory effort, with dried berry, black licorice and wild flower scents leading to gripping tannins. Drink now through 2022. 2,923 cases made. —J.L.

HUSCH Pinot Noir Anderson Valley 2012 Score: 88 | \$25

Firm, dense and focused, with vivid blackberry, cranberry, spice and violet notes, ending with gripping, gravelly tannins. Drink now through 2021. 3,153 cases made. —J.L.

MACPHAIL Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Anderson Creek 2012 Score: 88 | \$49

Intense and rangy, with an earthy, rustic mix of gravelly dark berry, floral, cedar and spice notes, ending on a crushed rock theme. Drink now through 2022. 114 cases made. —J.L.

WALT Pinot Noir Anderson Valley Blue Jay 2012 Score: 88 | \$45

Very dense and extracted, with dried herb and pure, juicy berry flavors. The tannins are dry and gripping, offering a touch of underbrush and savory. Drink now through 2022. 3,600 cases made. —J.L.

Monday, June 30, 2014

Revisiting 2004 and 1994 California Zinfandel

Monday, June 30, 2014

Precision Zinfandels

Sunday, June 15, 2014

Mission Accomplished

Sunday, June 15, 2014

Back to the Future With Concrete

More from topic California