

# STILL #SONOMASTRONG *Forged by Fire*

BY LAURA NESS

Although the 2019 Kincadee Fire, compounded by PG&E's public safety power shutoffs, came just as many Sonoma County wineries were trying to wrap up a belated harvest, the region is now wearing a brilliant coat of spring green, resilient and welcoming. While several wineries sustained loss and damage, things are back to normal, or at least, back to the "new normal." Sonoma knows a thing or two about hospitality, gratefulness, and perseverance: qualities that we would all do well to embrace. Let's raise a glass to the brilliance and resilience of Sonoma!

It's a great time to visit Geyserville, Healdsburg and Windsor, in the heart of Alexander Valley and home to 15,000 acres of grapes and more than 30 wineries. We're so thankful that these laid-back towns and their irreplaceable treasures survived this latest fire season. We toast the rain!

Bricoleur Vineyards



## Taste

## ALEXANDER VALLEY VINEYARDS

Harry Wetzel, one of the stalwart pioneers of the region, popped for a generator after the public safety power shutoffs interrupted the 2019 harvest—so they won't "go dark" again. Alexander Valley Vineyards tasting room manager Denise Gill recommends their reserve Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Syrah and reserve Cabernet. I love their Gewürztraminer. Do the cave tour and barrel-tasting: it's free. From May through October, indulge in a Vineyard Tour, where you'll hike through vines past the original 1868 Alexander school and enjoy a picnic lunch from Big John's Market, featuring legendary sandwiches like the Healdsburg Avenue, with London broil, white cheddar, spring mix, mayo and horseradish.

8644 HWY. 128, HEALDSBURG  
AVVWINE.COM | (707) 433-7209

Bricoleur Vineyards



## BRICOLEUR VINEYARDS

This brand-new destination in the countryside of Windsor will instantly capture your heart. Even the name is fun: it translates to "flying by the seat of our pants," a slogan gaily written on the label of their Rosé of Grenache. Sip on winemaker Cary Gott's floral, creamy Viognier and juicy Sauvignon Blanc on Bricoleur's stunning stone tasting pavilion, which is surrounded by rose-covered trellises overlooking serene vineyards. Picnic or hang out in an Adirondack chair while you enjoy views of Mount Saint Helena.

If the Gott name sounds familiar, think burgers and shakes. You got it: Gott's Roadside. Tour the heritage rose garden or go rowing on the tranquil pond. Produce from the organic garden is provided to the Redwood Empire Food Bank Kitchen Collective, a nonprofit that prepares and delivers 4,000 fresh and nutritious meals per month for low-income seniors and families. Tasting by appointment only.

7394 STARR ROAD, WINDSOR  
BRICOLEURVINEYARDS.COM  
(707) 857-5700

## GARDEN CREEK VINEYARDS

This is a love story starring a farmer's daughter from Sweden and a farmer from Sonoma. And, it's a true tale of heroism. Justin Miller saved the vineyards his father planted (back in 1969 on a former cattle ranch in Alexander Valley) from the ravages of the Kincade Fire. He did this with the help of some rather antique five-gallon backpack hand pumps from the 1940s and his trusty vineyard crew.

Miller and his wife Karin lost two-thirds of their Cabernet crop—they managed to pick the other third just before the fire bore down upon them. They were thankful to have saved the vineyards: two years ago, they lost most of their crop to smoke damage from the Tubbs Fire. Their two wines, a cellar-aged Cabernet blend and a clonal selection Chardonnay, are excellent. They also grow Scheurebe, a German varietal meant for sweet wines. Visit them, by appointment only, for a memorable glimpse into the passion and devotion required to live the vine life.

2335 GEYSER ROAD, GEYSERVILLE  
GARDENCREEKVINEYARDS.COM  
(707) 433-8345

Valette



## RAMEY WINE CELLARS

David Ramey is a highly regarded master of Chardonnay, who actually started out as a literature major before he was charmed by the siren song of wine. His single-vineyard, barrel-fermented Chardonnays are things of ethereal beauty, but he makes so much more. Try his Napa Claret, a true treat, and the massive Rodgers Creek Sonoma Coast Syrah. The tasting room in Healdsburg offers seated tastings by reservation Monday through Saturday in an intimate setting. His side project, Sidebar, features wines to be enjoyed while they are fresh and youthful, like Sauvignon Blanc from Ritchie Vineyard and a stunning Kerner, a cross of Riesling and Trollinger that delivers loads of spice and bracing acidity.

25 HEALDSBURG AVE., HEALDSBURG  
RAMEYWINE.COM | (707) 433-0870

## ROBERT YOUNG ESTATE

Opt for the seated Scion Experience in the charming Scion house and revel in the history of one of the oldest family-owned properties in Alexander Valley, which dates back to 1858. It largely escaped damage from the Kincade Fire, which did claim some farm equipment and shipping containers but spared the family's cattle. Robert Young was among the first to replace prunes with wine grapes back in 1963, fueling the beginning of Alexander Valley's wine industry. We appreciate his foresight. Taste single-block reserve wines, including reserve Clone 17 Chardonnay, Scion Bordeaux blend, 100-percent Cabernets and limited production Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec as you take in the hillside vineyard views.

5102 RED WINERY ROAD, GEYSERVILLE  
(707) 431-4811



Chris Hardy

## Lat

## BARNDIVA

From a family with a Philo farm producing apples, figs and chestnuts, comes this delightful assortment of dining and imbibing experiences. Among these is its casual Gallery Bar in Studio Barndiva, where you can sip—surrounded by artistic talent of every hue—on a classic cocktail or a glass of wine. Linger in the garden for a bite, or gravitate to the elegant dining room and garden at Barndiva Restaurant, admiring the artwork that adorns the rooms and gardens, and feasting on produce from foodsheds spanning Sonoma and Mendocino counties. Lunch features a filet burger and croque madame. Quench your thirst with one of two cocktail programs: Barndiva aims for innovation while The Gallery Bar serves up local artisan spirits.

231 CENTER ST., HEALDSBURG  
BARNDIVA.COM | (707) 431-0100

Healdsburg is bursting with great food, from Campo Fina to Spoonbar, while Geyserville boasts the likes of Catelli's and Diavola. Nothing like hearty Italian after a day of wine tasting. For innovation and presentation, Barndiva and Valette are highly recommended.

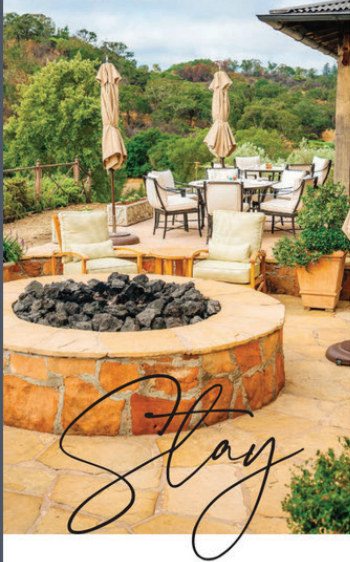
## VALETTE

Two brothers with a passion for hospitality offer dinner nightly at 5:15pm at this celebration of local farms and farmers. Hyde Park Culinary Institute of America-trained Chef Dustin Valette and General Manager Aaron Garzini both began their culinary careers at Catelli's, in their hometown of Geyserville. Much of the produce served here is grown in the onsite garden. Entrees include sweet potato falafel with orange split-pea hummus, preserved lemon-stuffed petrale sole accompanied by roasted romanesco, cauliflower mousseline, pickled pearl onions and smoked sturgeon, and pork two ways, featuring cider-glazed belly and tenderloin porchetta with apple soubise and candied walnuts. Sides like soy- and cognac-infused mushrooms and crispy gnocchi with Swiss chard are a must. Valette's father is a career firefighter (45 years) who flies tanker planes: he's had a busy couple of years.

344 CENTER ST., HEALDSBURG  
VALETTEHEALDSBURG.COM  
(707) 473-0946



## Mayacama Resort Residences



## BRICOLEUR VINEYARDS

This stunning farm includes a brand-new 10,000-square-foot entertainment center of reclaimed barn wood—complete with commercial kitchen and ample outdoor space. The stage is set for sumptuous farm-to-table dinners and celebrations. Envision hosting a corporate, philanthropic, or social gathering here, where you'll be surrounded by 20 acres of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir, adjacent to a protected watershed. Plan an unforgettable weekend getaway with friends in the adorable Vineyard House or the elegant Estate Villa featuring a grand dining room with massive fireplace.

7394 STARR ROAD, WINDSOR  
BRICOLEURVINEYARDS.COM  
(707) 857-5700

## HONORMANSION

The beautiful Italianate mansion dates back to 1883, but the three-acre property has been transformed into an oasis, offering 13 luxurious rooms, each uniquely decorated. Guests enjoy a full gourmet buffet breakfast in the dining room every morning, and appetizers and local wines are served every afternoon. Fresh-baked cookies, sherry and tea biscuits are constantly replenished. There's a heated lap pool and walking gardens for relaxation and renewal.

891 GROVE ST., HEALDSBURG  
HONORMANSION.COM | (707) 433-4277

## MAYACAMA RESORT RESIDENCES

Experience five-star hotel service in a luxurious private residence at this gated resort with Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course, gym, pool, tennis, bocce and a private clubhouse. Memberships guarantee a 1/10 interest, with 28 nights yearly, plus unlimited additional stays based on availability. Mayacama boasts an exceptional wine program, with an enormous wine cellar, 500 private wine lockers and a Vintner Member program featuring 35 of the leading winemakers from Napa and Sonoma. Each residence offers locked storage for personal items and daily housekeeping. Bonus: the refrigerator and pantry are completely stocked prior to owner arrival.

1240 MAYACAMA CLUB DRIVE, SANTA ROSA  
MAYACAMA.COM | (707) 569-2900



Mayacama Resort Residences

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SONOMA  
CALLING

BY LAURA NESS

At 1 million acres, and with more than 60,000 acres planted to grapes, the Sonoma County AVA is perhaps California's most bountiful and agriculturally diverse wine country. Blessed with countless farms, dairies, ranches and orchards from seacoast to mountaintop, Sonoma is a wondrous place to wander. There's a wildness and freshness about it, from Sebastopol to Windsor. Botanist Luther Burbank claimed it was "the chosen spot of all the earth, as far as nature is concerned." Whether you crave the dark potency of Russian River Pinot Noir, the mellow harmony of an Alexander Valley Cabernet, or the bracing intensity of a Sonoma Coast Chardonnay, Sonoma has it all. Now boasting 18 sub-AVAs, it speaks eloquently of diversity. Some of our favorite wineries and winemakers call this place home. There's no wonder why.

Bottle Photos: Mockingbird Studios



## BLAGDEN WINES

2016 PINOT NOIR, SANGIACOMO  
ROBERTS ROAD VINEYARD,  
PETALUMA GAP

The 130-acre Sangiacomo Vineyard has become one of the most lauded sources of fruit in the fog-shrouded Petaluma Gap. Like piling on sweaters, vests, scarves and coats to ward off the chill, the grapes take on a hearty, stalwart resilience. Long, slow ripening translates into wines aromatically endowed with earth, forest floor, wild plum and pine boughs. Powerfully built and statuesque, this wine displays impressive vastness from the first sip. Winemaker Catherine Blagden loves this vineyard for its abundant fruit, dark savory notes and intense acid, which deliver wines of structure and endless depth. Here, clones 117, Swan and 777 impart juicy black raspberry, cherry, plum, Alpine strawberry and exotic spice. Taste Blagden wines by appointment in Healdsburg by visiting [blagdenwines.com](http://blagdenwines.com).

14.7% | \$58



## BREATHLESS WINES

BRUT SPARKLING,  
SONOMA COUNTY

What's up with the dame on the bottle? It's a tribute to three sisters, Sharon, Rebecca and Cynthia, to their late mother, Martha, lost to a pulmonary condition. It conveys her passion for life, reminding us to take each breath with thoughtful, joyous intent. That's what sparkling is all about. Penny Gadd-Coster, recently named "Winemaker of the Year" by the *North Bay Business Journal*, crafts fine sparklings like this using *méthode champenoise*. This Brut splashes the tip of your tongue with a fine citrus-infused mousse, delicately pirouetting across it like a tropical breeze of guava and pineapple, finishing with a touch of yeast. Made from 60 percent Chardonnay and 40 percent Pinot Noir, and aged 24 months, it claimed Best Sparkling and Best of Sonoma at the 2019 Harvest Challenge.

12.8% | \$27

BRICOLEUR  
VINEYARDS2018 SAUVIGNON BLANC,  
KICK RANCH VINEYARD,  
FOUNTAINGROVE

Winemaker Cary Gott made this sassy Sauvignon Blanc with hand-picked fruit harvested by night from the 40-acre Kick Ranch in the Fountaingrove District appellation. So much California Sauvignon Blanc is either insipid or angular, with all the charm of a one-note guitar player. This wine, however, walks a balance beam of taut acidity, with gracefully woven citrus notes among a sheer fabric of bright kiwi, with a touch of mandarin and luscious lemongrass. Fermented in stainless tanks, then settled into 25 percent neutral French oak barrels and 75 percent stainless barrels, this wine is aged *sur lie* (on the yeast) for six months, imparting a just-perfect weightiness. It captures the zing of New Zealand and the delicate fruit of Sonoma, yielding a thoroughly seductive wine.

14.2% | \$25



## EN GARDE WINERY

2016 PINOT NOIR,  
STARKEY HILL VINEYARD,  
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Pinot Noir is such an ephemeral thing. Few can master both Pinot Noir and Cabernet with panache, but winemaker Csaba Szakal, who hails from Hungary, has proven such a grapemaster. Lifting cranberry, red raspberry, crushed pomegranate, roasted chestnut, sandalwood and forest floor make this an aromatic delight. The 30-plus-year-old Starkey Hill Vineyard lies just outside the Green Valley AVA in Sebastopol, and is planted to a Swiss clone called Mariafeld (23), which provides red-fruited lushness. Pommard, which creates a backbone of tannin, and 828, for fruit-forward liveliness. Composed and elegant, with a tantalizing cherry pie core, there's an ethereal silkiness to this riveting wine that constantly evolves in your glass. Awarded 99 points at the 2019 California State Fair.

14.5% | \$60



### MARTINELLI VINEYARDS & WINERY

2017 BELLA VIGNA PINOT NOIR,  
SONOMA COAST

What a year was 2017, beginning with a cool wet spring, followed by hot spells, especially over Labor Day weekend, which arrived during the peak of harvest. And then came the deadly Tubbs Fire in October, which burned from Calistoga to Santa Rosa, stopping just 1.5 miles from the Martinelli property. Thankfully, the grapes for the 2017 Bella Vigna (beautiful vines) Pinot Noir had already been plucked from the many coastal vineyards that comprise this appellation blend. It charges your nostrils with spicy, savory aromas, leading with grilled red plum, pomegranate, soy and clove. This is a robust, richly framed wine, amplified by well-developed viscous tannins that fill your mouth with sweet fig jam and date-nut bread, finishing with chocolate-covered cherries.

14.9% | \$45



### PFENDLER VINEYARDS

2018 CHARDONNAY,  
SONOMA COAST, PETALUMA GAP

Kimberly Pfendler and her late husband Peter believed in the provenance of Sonoma Coast's Petaluma Gap, where ocean fog and breezes flow in from Bodega Bay. Peter planted the first family vineyard in 1992, followed by many others, including the famed Gap's Crown. Kimberly founded the winery in her late husband's honor, and was thrilled to have the Petaluma Gap recognized as an AVA in 2017. Here, honeycomb, lanolin, and lemon curd waft on heady vanilla, creating a welcoming bouquet. Lively, energetic flavors of key lime pie with coconut meld with peach and nectarine galette on the snappy, oak-framed palate. Native yeast gives the wine a plump apple turnover middle, and a long finish of toasted brioche. Made by Erica Stancliff, President of the Board of the Petaluma Gap Winegrowers Alliance.

14.2% | \$45



### RAMEY WINE CELLARS

2016 CHARDONNAY,  
WOOLSEY ROAD VINEYARD,  
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Somewhere between the jasmine, fresh lime and tea biscuit, there's a slab of limestone off which plump raindrops are skittering. Elegant, round and polished like a marble vanity, this wine exhibits a graceful gravitas that walks the line between velvet and lace. It gleams with mouthwatering acidity, yet has no sharp edges, only rounded corners where one flavor flows, riverlike, into the next, finishing with a cascade of key lime tart. From Old Wente cuttings derived from the Platt Vineyard (which was derived from the Hyde Vineyard), Woolsey Road is owned by the Martinelli family and was planted to Ramey's specifications in 2007. Renowned for his mastery of Chardonnay, Ramey's 2016 Hyde Chardonnay was named Wine Spectator's No. 7 wine of the year for 2019.

14.5% | \$65



### ROCHIOLI VINEYARDS

2015 ESTATE PINOT NOIR,  
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Big, juicy, broad-shouldered and mouth-filling, this is quintessential Russian River Pinot, oozing warm gingerbread spice, cinnamon cherry compote and dusty field-fresh blackberries. Sourced from Rochioli's many vineyard sites, including those on the 136-acre home ranch that was originally planted in the 1930s, this is aged for 15 months in French oak. Delivering silky tannins, fresh acidity, and ripe dusty fruit with clear hints of cola, it exemplifies RRV Pinot Noir. With its aromatics of wild berries and clove, and its core of blackberry pie with a ginger crust, this is something you want to drink on a dark and stormy night. Bold spice, pekoe tea and orange peel add interest as the wine's inherent generosity keeps on giving as it opens up.

14.5% | \$75



### RUSSIAN RIVER VINEYARDS

2018 CHARDONNAY,  
PETERSON VINEYARDS

This succulent wine, which comes in a handy screw cap, making it easier to enjoy its silky poached pear-like creaminess, was named Best White at the 2019 Sonoma Harvest Fair competition. One whiff and you'll want a sip of this unoaked beauty best described as peach cobbler topped with lemon curd. Utterly mouthwatering, it flows like a nectarine stream. Made by longtime RRV resident and winemaker Giovanni (Gio) Balistreri, with consulting grape-whispering from the renowned Anthony Austin, it is totally done in stainless steel. This wine exemplifies how vividly good Chardonnay fruit can shine when unfettered by wood. The Petersen Vineyard, planted in 1999, is located outside Sebastopol and features Clone 95 of Chardonnay, known for its minerality and depth. Dive in.

14% | \$42



### TONGUE DANCER WINES

2017 CHARDONNAY,  
BACIGALUPI VINEYARD,  
RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Winemaker James MacPhail is known for his Pinot prowess and his self-proclaimed obsession with the grape. He started Tongue Dancer to craft wines that dance upon your tongue. But his wife Kerry fancies Chardonnay from time to time, so what better place to source it than the famed Bacigalupi Vineyards, which were propagated with cuttings from the same vines that won Château Montelena the Judgement of Paris in 1976? This is pure decadence, oozing white peach and lemongrass, vanilla custard, apricot bars, banana nut bread and exotic sandalwood. Refreshingly, it delivers the same panoply of flavors on the palate. Thanks to the use of native yeast, low-toast French oak (20 percent new) and frequent bâtonnage, the texture is softly sublime and creamy divine.

14.3% | \$50