

THE tastingpanel MAGAZINE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019

At Happy Wine in Miami, FL, Spanish red blend **FYI** is a favorite pairing with almost every dish.

FOR YOUR
INFORMATION:

Tempranillo!

HOW **FÉLIX SOLÍS AVANTIS**
IS BRINGING SPANISH WINE TO
THE AMERICAN TABLE

GENERATIONAL GEM

2014 50 Harvests Meritage

NAPA VALLEY (\$50)

In 2013, the Scotto family produced a wine both to honor their 50th harvest in California and memorialize the family's winemaking heritage, which originated in 1883 on the island of Ischia just off the Italian coast. First crafted with the 2011 vintage in Napa Valley's Oak Knoll District by Winemaker Paul Scotto, the 50 Harvests transformed into a true Meritage blend reflecting the model of Old World Bordeaux in 2014, when Scotto teamed up with fellow winemaker Mitch Cosentino. The family's five-generation history of viticulture culminates in the 2014 50 Harvests Meritage, making it *The Tasting Panel's* "Generational Gem" of 2018.

Vivid, fresh flavors of juicy plum and spice; tangy and nicely structured; a lovely, well-balanced effort. **92** —A.D.B., September 2018



BEST ROOTS

Ancient Peaks Winery

Ancient Peaks Winery is located in Santa Margarita Ranch, the southernmost AVA in the Paso Robles wine region. Family-owned, its proximity to the Pacific Ocean means ancient sea fossils can be found in its soils, imparting a unique minerality. Given this striking sense of place, Ancient Peaks earns "Best Roots" of 2018.

Ancient Peaks 2014 Oyster Ridge, Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$60)

Oyster fossils are ubiquitous along the Santa Margarita Vineyard. While the tannins are developed, the liquid is plush with layers of flavors from lavender to mulled plum and blackberry to dusted cocoa-cedar. **94** —M.M., April 2018

Ancient Peaks 2016 Zinfandel Santa Margarita Ranch, Paso Robles (\$20) This stellar red shows off an array of exciting flavors. Aromas and flavors of lavender and cocoa nibs charm as cherry and plum generously wash across the mouth, preceding a finish of cola and toasted oak woven into a bouquet of blue flowers. **94** —M.M., August 2018



COOLEST OF THE BUNCH

Balletto Vineyards 2016 Pinot Noir

BCD VINEYARD, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY (\$46)

Family-owned Balletto Vineyards was established in 1977 as a vegetable farm in the celebrated Russian River Valley AVA of Sonoma County, California. Derived from the area's cool climate, the brisk natural acidity present in Balletto Vineyards' expressive grape varieties yields a Pinot Noir with depth and structure, prompting *The Tasting Panel* to name this wine 2018's "Coolest of the Bunch."

Tilled with chocolate? That's the initial impression of this special, sustainably farmed, single-vineyard Pinot Noir. Additional scents of dark summer plum also appear in the flavor profile with blueberry, cherry, and sweet tobacco. There's structure to this wine's round body, which has fine acidity and a bold nature. **92** —M.M., July 2018



BIGGEST CHART-TOPPER

Z. Alexander Brown

Delicato Family Vineyards and Grammy Award-winning artist Zac Brown teamed up several years ago to release wines under the Z. Alexander Brown label. With Napa Valley winemaker John Killebrew behind the wheel, the following trio proved our "Biggest Chart-Toppers" of the year.

Z. Alexander Brown 2016 Uncaged

Chardonnay, Santa Lucia Highlands (\$20) Expressive aromas of pineapple upside-down cake, caramel, and baked apple exude an imaginative air of depth and agility. Acidity pops through the sumptuous flavors of tangerine, vanilla candles, and stone fruit. **92** —M.M., June 2018

Z. Alexander Brown Uncaged 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, California (\$20)

This red overdelivers from nose to palate. Deeply rich aromas of dark chocolate lead as blackberry jam pervades. The acid is bright for food-pairing. **93** —M.M., June 2018

Z. Alexander Brown 2017 Uncaged Sauvignon Blanc, North Coast (\$20) Lemon verbena defines the citrus-floral perfume of this lighthearted white. On the palate, tart, mineral-driven stone and lime notes ascend with a vibrant acidity. Reminiscent of a Sancerre. **93** —M.M., June 2018

