

JEB DUNNUCK

Jeb Dunnuck Reviews October 2019

2017 Chardonnay Block UU – Bien Nacido – 92+ Points

Moving to the two Chardonnays I was able to taste, the 2017 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Vineyard Block UU spent 8 months on lees in 20% new French oak 500-liter barrels. Caramelized apples, toasted spice, white flowers, and lots of minerality and iodine notes all emerge from this more structured, foursquare, concentrated effort that's going to benefit from 2-3 years of bottle age. It's a classic expression of this site and should keep for over a decade.

2017 Chardonnay – Tinaquaic Vineyard – 92 Points

Also from the Santa Maria Valley, the 2017 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard (25% new French oak) offers a more toasty style in its buttered white currants, sautéed orchard fruits, honeysuckle, and toasted bread aromas and flavors. Rich, nicely concentrated, balanced, and with good acidity, it's going to benefit from a year or two of bottle age.

2017 Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley – 91 points

I loved the nose of the 2017 Pinot Noir Santa Maria Valley. It just screams Pinot Noir with its spiced cherry, raspberry, white pepper, and sappy herb aromas and flavors. Medium-bodied, nicely textured, fresh, and lively on the palate, it's a smoking little Calif Pinot Noir well worth checking out. This cuvée was just 25% destemmed and spent 9 months in used French oak. There are 3,500 cases produced.

2017 Pinot Noir – Julia's Vineyard – 94 Points

The more translucent, ruby-colored 2017 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard comes from a vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley and was all destemmed before spending 16 months in 44% new French oak. Classic raspberry, forest floor, sweet spice, and sappy floral notes all flow to a medium-bodied, vibrant, incredibly classy effort. It's balanced, has integrated acidity, and a great finish. It's another terrific Pinot Noir from Santa Barbara County that's going to evolve for at least a decade.

2017 Pinot Noir – Solomon Hills Vineyard – 91 Points

The 2017 Pinot Noir Solomon Hills Vineyard comes from a site just down the hillside from Bien Nacido, just a few miles to the west, closer to the Pacific Ocean. Completely destemmed and aged 16 months in one-third new French oak, it offers a slightly more exotic bouquet of sweet strawberries, spring flowers, passion fruits, and wet stone-like minerality. This vineyard always seems to lead with its fruit, and this is no exception. Medium-bodied, elegant, and textured, with bright acidity, drink it over the coming 6-7 years.

2017 Pinot Noir – La Encantada Vineyard – 94 Points

The 2017 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard is darker colored (than the Solomon Hills) and comes from the Sta. Rita Hills. It was destemmed and brought up in 53% new French oak. It's one of the standouts here, offering a rocking core of dark berry fruits, ground herbs, earth, and wood smoke. Ripe and beautifully textured, with sweet tannins and terrific overall balance, it's already impossible to resist yet will keep for a solid 7-8 years, probably longer.

2017 Pinot Noir – John Sebastiano Vineyard – 92 Points

From the eastern side of the Sta. Rita Hills, the 2017 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard saw a touch of stems (25%) as well as 16 months in 54% new French oak. Lots of spice cherries, dried herbs, underbrush, and forest floor all emerge from the glass, and it's medium-bodied, with a rounded, supple texture, moderate acidity, and ripe tannins. It's a sexy, forward effort that has loads to love, although I don't think it will make old bones.

2017 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard – 95 points

From a well-known Sta. Rita Hills vineyard and aged 16 months in 44% new French oak, the 2017 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard is another gem in the lineup. More ruby-colored, with terrific notes of cassis, black raspberries, crushed violets, ground pepper, and underbrush, this beauty hits the palate with medium to full-bodied richness, polished tannins, a stacked mid-palate, and a great finish. It's a ripe yet flawlessly balanced effort that has loads to love.

2017 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 96 Points

The 2017 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 43 was all destemmed and spent 16 months in 43% new French oak. It has the classic minerality and marine/iodine character that's almost always present in wines from this site as well as brilliant blackberry and black raspberry fruits, notes of ground herbs and underbrush, medium to full body, a rounded, seamless texture, and fabulous purity and class. It's a beautiful, layered effort that's up with the crème de la crème in the vintage.

2017 Pinot Noir Block 8 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 94 Points

The 2017 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 8 saw the same upbringing but comes from a larger block. Its slightly lighter ruby/plum color gives way to a more savory, medium to full-bodied effort that offers classic notes of dried cherries, forest floor, and earthy, loamy soil notes. It too is beautifully balanced and layered, and it a terrific wine. Drink it anytime over the coming decade.

Jeb Dunnuck Reviews October 2018**2016 Chardonnay Block UU – Bien Nacido – 94 Points**

The 2016 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Block UU comes from a great vineyard located just east of the town of Santa Maria and was brought up in 20% new French oak. A classic Bien Nacido bouquet of honeyed orchard fruits, crushed rocks, oyster shells, and white flowers flow to a rich, beautifully textured, concentrated Chardonnay that has everything you could want from this variety. With terrific balance, nicely integrated acidity, and a great finish, it's brilliant stuff that should evolve gracefully for 5-7 years.

2016 Chardonnay – Tinaquaic Vineyard – 94 Points

The 2016 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard comes from a site in the Santa Maria Valley and was aged 25% new 500-liter French oak barrels. This medium gold-colored effort offers a classic orchard fruit, white flower, brioche, and mineral-laced bouquet. It's medium to full-bodied, has beautiful purity of fruit and integrated acidity, with the rounded, sexy style of the vintage front and center.

2016 Chenin Blanc – Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard – 91 Points

A variety you don't see very often from California (which is a shame, as it does quite nicely), the 2016 Chenin Blanc offers a clean, crisp, medium-bodied style as well as lovely notes of green citrus, mint, leafy herbs, and hints of minerality. I'd drink bottles over the coming couple of year but certainly would be unsurprised to see it age gracefully for over a decade.

2016 Pinot Noir Block 8 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 95 Points

Moving to the Pinot Noirs, the 2016 Pinot Noir Block 8 Bien Nacido is a beauty that was brought up all in 3- and 4-year-old barrels. Sporting a vivid ruby/purple-tinged color as well as notes of wild strawberries, black raspberries, scorched earth, forest floor, and salty minerality, this beauty hits the palate with medium-bodied depth and richness, vibrant acidity, and a fresh, focused core that's mostly covered by the upfront 2016 fruit. I love its purity and vibrancy, and while you can certainly drink this beauty today, it's going to evolve gracefully on its balance.

2016 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 95 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir Block 43 Bien Nacido comes from a single block in the Bien Nacido Vineyard and was aged 17 months in one-third new French oak. It's not far from the Block 8 cuvée yet has slightly more new oak as well as beautiful cassis and strawberry fruits, spice box, violets, and crushed rocks. Voluptuous and sexy on the palate, with a stacked mid-palate, this beauty fills the mouth with fruit and displays no hard edges, nicely integrated acidity, and a beautifully pure, balance style

2016 Pinot Noir – Julia's Vineyard – 96 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard comes from another cool site in the Santa Maria Valley and was raised in 46% new French oak. It has a more classic, evolved, complex style as well as lovely notes of forest floor, ripe cherry and raspberry fruits, dried spices, and dried orange peel. Seamless and elegant on the palate, with no hard edges, perfect balance, and ultra-fine tannin, it's a thrilling Pinot Noir that's going to keep for 10-15 years. Bravo!

2016 Pinot Noir – Solomon Hills Vineyard – 93 Points

Strawberries, violets, citrus blossom, and some exotic passion fruit characteristics all emerge from the 2016 Pinot Noir Solomon Hills Vineyard, a pretty, elegant, perfumed wine that has tons to love. Possessing medium-bodied richness, nicely integrated acidity, and a clean finish, it's one of the more vibrant, racy wines in the lineup. Give bottles 2-3 years of bottle age and it will keep for 10-15 years or more. This cuvée spent 17 months in one-third new French oak.

2016 Pinot Noir – John Sebastiano Vineyard – 92+ Points

Slightly darker colored, the 2016 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard (17 months in 40% new French oak) is a much bigger, richer Pinot Noir that offers lots of black cherry and blackberry fruits intermixed with spice, forest floor, and a distinct salty minerality. It too is juicy and racy on the palate, with high yet integrated acidity. It's a beautiful wine, yet like the Solomon Hills releases, it needs 2-3 years of bottle age.

2016 Pinot Noir – La Encantada Vineyard – 94 Points

From a site on the southern side of the Sta. Rita Hills, the 2016 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard (17 months in 40% new French oak) has a medium ruby color as well as a spicy, underbrush, and forest floor-scented profile. Possessing beautiful strawberry and raspberry fruits, medium body, bright yet integrated acidity, and a beautiful finish, it can be enjoyed any time over the coming 15 years or more. If you can, give it a year or two of bottle age.

2015 Cuvee Jeanne Marie – 92 Points

The 2015 Cuvée Jeanne Marie checks in as 60% Grenache, 23% Syrah and the rest Mourvèdre, all from the Williamson-Dore Vineyard outside of Los Olivos. It's a sappy, vibrant, juicy red that has lots of Syrah-like darker berry fruits, peppery herbs, and tapenade notes, medium-bodied richness, nicely integrated acidity, and beautiful purity of fruit. Drink it over the coming 5-7 years.

2015 Syrah – Tinaquaic Vineyard – 94+ Points

The 2015 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard (there's 7% Viognier in the blend) sports a seriously inky purple color as well as a beautiful bouquet of blackberries, blueberries, crushed rocks, camphor, and ground pepper. This beauty is medium to full-bodied, has remarkable purity of fruit, and building structure, all while still carrying plenty of fruit and richness. It's going to benefit from 2-3 years of bottle age and cruise for a decade or more. It's a brilliant Syrah.

2015 Syrah – Williamson-Dore Vineyard – 95 Points

From the Los Olivos District in Santa Barbara County and based on 97% Syrah and 3% Roussanne, the 2015 Syrah Williamson-Dore Vineyard has an exotic, sexy bouquet of bacon fat, lavender, plums, black olives, and ripe blackberry and blueberry fruit. Deep, rich, and powerful, with a voluptuous style on the palate, it has a broad, expansive texture, sweet (yet present) tannins, and a big finish. This tour de force in Syrah needs 3-4 years of bottle age to integrate its oak élevage and will cruise for a decade in the cellaring.

2015 Cabernet Sauvignon – Los Potreros – 91 Points

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Los Potreros is all Cabernet from Starelane and Grimms Bluff Vineyard in the Happy Canyon region of Santa Barbara County. Slightly deeper colored than the Range 30 West release, this medium to full-bodied effort has classic notes of crème de cassis, bouquet garni, tobacco, and lead pencil. With a juicy, lively style, excellent overall balance, and notable structure, it can be drunk today or cellared for over a decade.

2015 Cabernet Franc – Tinaquaic Vineyard – 93 Points

The 2015 Cabernet Franc Tinaquaic Vineyard (87% Cabernet Franc and 13% Petit Verdot) comes all from the Tinaquaic Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley and was aged 22 months in 50% new American oak barrels. Its deep ruby/purple color is followed by a fabulous bouquet of crème de cassis, crushed flowers, violets, and spice. Possessing medium to full-bodied richness, fine, elegant tannins, and a great finish, it needs a year or two of bottle age and will keep for 10-15 years.

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2015 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 94 Points

One of the riper, richer wines in the lineup, the 2015 Pinot Noir Block 43 Bien Nacido offers beautiful notes of framboise, dried spices and earth, with full-bodied richness, a rounded, textured and mouth filling style and a great finish. In a vintage that yields mostly hard, austere wines, this offers fruit!

2015 Pinot Noir Block 8 - Bien Nacido Vineyard – 92 Points

A big step up over the Santa Maria Valley release, the 2015 Pinot Noir Block 8 Bien Nacido offers a terrific bouquet of black cherries, saddle leather, spice-box and dried herbs. It's fresh, nicely concentrated and textured, with good acidity, and will benefit from short term cellaring.

2015 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard – 92 points

The 2015 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard is reserved aromatically, yet offers solid notes of black raspberries, barnyard, spice and dusty earth. Medium-bodied, fresh and lively on the palate, with bright, yet integrated acidity. It's a beautiful wine I'd happily drink anytime over the coming 7-8 years.

2015 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard – 90 points

Reminding me of Premier Cru from the northern part of Burgundy with its darker cherry, saddle leather, and sappy floral aromas and flavors, the 2015 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard is medium-bodied, supple and seamless on the palate. It drops off too quickly on the finish, but it's still a beautiful wine. This site lies on the eastern edge of the Sta. Rita Hills, and the 2015 spent 17 months in 36% new French oak.

2015 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard – 91 Points

The 2015 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard is another forward, sexy, straight up charming wine. It lacks the focus and definition of some of the other cuvées, yet has loads of strawberry and raspberry

fruit, medium to full-bodied richness, a mouth filling texture and a good finish. Drink it over the coming 4-6 years.

2015 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard – 92 Points

Christmas spice, peppery mint, candied cherries and hints of strawberries all emerge from the 2015 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard, and it's another beautiful, elegant, seamless Pinot Noir from this terrific estate. However, like too many 2015s, it drops off on the finish, yet the tannin is beautifully managed and I suspect it will evolve gracefully.

2015 Pinot Noir Solomon Hills Vineyard – 92 Points

I also loved the 2015 Pinot Noir Solomon Hills Vineyard, and it's a broad, expansive red that shows the power and fruit-forward style of the vineyard. Kirsch, framboise, dried tea and spice aromas and flavors all emerge from this beauty, and it's already drinking nicely, yet will easily keep through 2025.

2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Los Potreros- 92 points

One of my favorites in the lineup, the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Los Potreros (100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged in 50% new French oak) has plenty of darker currant fruits, scorched earth and toasted spice, with subtle menthol nuances, medium to full-bodied richness, juicy acidity and a clean finish. It's a polished, balanced, impressive Cabernet from this team to drink over the coming 10-15 years.

2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Mamère Vineyard- 90 points

All the Foxen Bordeaux blends are released under the Foxen 7200 label. Notes of eucalyptus, black currants, underbrush and violets all emerge from the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Mamere Vineyard, and its juicy, nicely textured and balanced on the palate, with the more charming style of the vintage front and center. With chalky minerality and fine tannin on the finish, it should evolve positively for 2-4 years and keep for a decade.

2014 Range 30 West – 91 points

From the McGinley and Vogelzang vineyards, the 2014 Range 30 West (a blend of 61% Cabernet Franc and 39% Merlot, aged 22 months in 44% new French oak) is another juicy, perfumed, elegant wine from the team at Foxen. Possessing lots of black raspberries, mint, leafy herbs and spice-box aromas and flavors, it's medium to full-bodied, has integrated, juicy acidity and sweet tannin. Drink it over the coming decade.

2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Mamère Vineyard- 90 points

Mint, eucalyptus, plum and assorted dark fruits dominate the 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Mamere Vineyard, and it's a singular, unique expression of Cabernet Sauvignon. With medium to full-bodied richness, sweet tannin and good freshness, drink it anytime over the coming decade or more.