

Vinous Reviews September 2018

2016 "Old Vine" Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard – 93-96 Points

The 2016 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard Old Vine, Dry Farmed is one of the most compelling and arrestingly beautiful wines I have ever tasted from Foxen. Inky and explosive on the palate, with tremendous fruit intensity and fabulous balance, the 2016 is a real showstopper. Inky dark fruit, black pepper, lavender and sage build into the huge, explosive finish. The high percentage (75-80%) of whole clusters adds tremendous aromatic depth. There are just 180 cases of the 2016. If you can find it, get it!

2016 Pinot Noir Block 8 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 93+ Points

An explosion of aromas and flavors hits the palate in Foxen's 2016 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Block 8. Sweet rose petal, lavender and a host of red/purplish berry fruit opens up in the glass. Exuberant, racy and superpolished the 2016 is virtually impossible to resist.

2016 Cabernet Sauvignon Los Potreros – 93 Points

The 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon Los Potreros is wonderfully polished and nuanced. Super-ripe dark plum, chocolate, licorice, leather, smoke and tobacco are all pushed forward. Although not especially subtle, the 2015 delivers the goods on a racy, up-front style that holds considerable near and medium term appeal.

2016 Chenin Blanc Ernest Wickenden Vineyard – 93 Points

The 2016 Chenin Blanc Old Vines Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard is the most distinctive white in the Foxen range. Ample and creamy on the palate, the Chenin exudes tons of old vine depth. What a gorgeous wine this is.

2016 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard – 93 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir La Encantada is wonderfully perfumed, silky and lifted, all of which give it a distinctive sense of total finesse. The flavors are bright and aromatically deep, with plenty of red cherry, blood orange and pomegranate overtones. This is a terrific expression of La Encantada.

2016 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard – 92-95 Points

The 2016 Cuvée Jeanne Marie, Foxen's GSM blend, is outrageously beautiful. Sensual, racy and perfumed, the Cuvée Jeanne Marie has a lot to offer. This is an especially racy, flamboyant Grenache-based wine, and yet all the elements are wonderfully woven together.

2016 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard – 92-95 Points

The 2016 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard is positively stellar. A rush of red plum, blueberry pie, leather, pomegranate and blood orange infuses this deep, super-expressive Syrah. A dollop (10-12%) of whole cluster adds energy.

Next to the Williamson-Doré, the Tinaquaic Syrah shows a greater sense of verticality in its structure along with a brighter, more red-toned expression of fruit. I can't wait to taste it from bottle.

2016 Range 30 West – 92 Points

The 2015 Range 30 West is a blend of Cabernet Franc from McGinley and Merlot from Vogelzang. Savory and pliant, with terrific balance, this Happy Canyon blend is absolutely delicious. Drink it over the next decade or so.

2016 Chardonnay Block UU – Bien Nacido – 92 Points

Foxen's 2016 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Block UU is polished, nuanced and understated, with lovely white orchard fruit and floral character to match the wine's mid-weight personality. As always, this is an especially delicate, perfumed style of Chardonnay from Bien Nacido.

2016 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard – 92 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard is a powerful, explosive wine endowed with considerable richness. Layers of fruit fill out the wine's vertical frame effortlessly. There is tremendous depth to the blue/purplish fruit. It will be interesting to see if greater nuance develops over time. Today, the JSV Pinot is a bit one-dimensional, although it is undeniably hugely appealing.

2016 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard – 92 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega is deep, fleshy and powerful. Although a bit monolithic, the 2016 possesses good depth and enough intensity to develop nicely over the next handful of years. Dark shades of fruit add to the wine's virile feel.

2016 Pinot Noir Solomon Hills Vineyard – 92 Points

Foxen's 2016 Pinot Noir Solomon Hills capture all the raciness that is so typical of this Santa Maria site. Perfumed, supple and nicely textured, the 2016 will drink well right out of the gate. Ideally, it would have been nice to see a little more depth here, but the 2016 is still quite attractive.

2016 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 92 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Block 43 is an attractive, fruity wine. The style here favors a bit more overt fruit and immediacy than is found in the Block 8. Bright red cherry, raspberry, pomegranate, blood orange and baking spice flavors are nicely delineated.

2016 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard – 91-94 Points

The 2016 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard is another hugely promising wine in the Foxen stable. Ripe, dense and racy, the 2016 is showing beautifully from barrel today. There is more than enough textural intensity and persistence to support many years of fine drinking. As always, the Williamson-Doré is the more fruit-driven and overt of the two Foxen Syrahs.

2016 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard – 91 Points

The 2016 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard is very pretty. Sage, hazelnut and lemon confit give the wine striking aromatic nuance. Bright, translucent and delicate in the glass, the 2015 has a lot to offer. Own-rooted vines in this parcel always yield a distinctive Chardonnay, as is once again the case in 2016.

2016 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard – 90 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard is one of the bigger wines in the range. There is no shortage of body or size, although the contours are a bit less polished than in some of the other wines in the range. Smoke, game, tobacco and feral notes contribute to the wine's slightly wild personality.

2016 Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills – 90 Points

The 2016 Pinot Noir (Sta. Rita Hills) offers terrific richness and volume for an appellation-level wine. Plump, juicy and forward, with tons of character, the 2016 is a positively joyous wine to drink now and over the next handful of years. Vineyard sites are John Sebastiano and La Encantada.

Vinous Reviews September 2017

2015 Pinot Noir Block 8 - Bien Nacido Vineyard – 94 Points

Racy, silky and beautifully nuanced, the Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Block 8 captures all the richness of the year while retaining terrific energy. The red berry and floral notes show quite a bit of nuance and silkiness in a Pinot that manages to be both powerful and refined. The aromatic, highly expressive finish adds to the wine's considerable beauty.

2015 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard – 94 Points

A deep, potent wine, the 2015 hits the palate with serious tannic heft and sheer power. Dark blue and black fruit, smoke, licorice, lavender and cloves, along with the wine's vertical structure, contribute to an overall impression of gravitas. The 2015 has only recently been bottled, but it is fabulous and full of potential.

2015 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard – 93 Points

One of the many highlights in this lineup from Foxen, the 2015 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard captures all the best qualities of the year. Black cherry, plum, lavender and spice all flesh out in this decidedly seductive, beautifully resonant Pinot Noir.

2015 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 93 Points

The 2015 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Block 43 is absolutely striking. Large-scaled and ample in feel, the 2015 possesses remarkable richness in every dimension. Floral notes add lift to a core of succulent red cherry fruit. The

Block 43 is a big, ample Pinot with exceptional balance and class to burn. Here, too, the best 2015 has to offer is very much on display.

2015 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard – 93 Points

A wild, exotic wine, the 2015 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Block UU emerges from a parcel of Chardonnay that was regrafted onto Riesling roots. Tangerine, acacia, honey, apricot jam and sage infuse the oily, voluptuous Chardonnay from Foxen. The Block UU Chardonnay is always long on personality, as it is once again in 2015.

2015 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard - 93 points

The 2015 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard, Foxen's Grenache/Syrah/Mourvèdre blend, is terrific. Succulent and racy in the glass, the 2015 offers striking textural depth and resonance. Sweet red cherry and plum notes, along with soft, silky contours, give the wine much of its appeal. The 2015 can be enjoyed with minimal cellaring. Time in bottle will bring out more aromatic nuance. Today, the just-bottled 2015 is quite primary.

2015 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard – 93 Points

The 2015 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard is fabulous. Inky blue/purplish fruit, crème de cassis, menthol, licorice, lavender and exotic spice notes are pushed forward in this sensual, exotically ripe Syrah from Foxen. There is plenty of tannin and structure lurking beneath all of the fruit and yet all the elements are impeccably balanced throughout.

2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard - 93 points

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard offers up a striking expression of Happy Canyon Cabernet in its dark fruit and bold, pungent flavors. Savory herb, leather and earthy notes open up in this plush, inviting Cabernet. All the elements are impeccably balanced.

2015 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard – 92 points

A deep, luscious wine, the 2015 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega offers superb textural resonance and creaminess, with layers of dark-fleshed fruit that open up beautifully in the glass. This is a terrific example of the best 2015 has to offer. Supple and inviting, the 2015 Fe Ciega will drink well pretty much upon release.

2015 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard – 92 points

The 2015 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard is a bold, direct wine with more of a savory character than the other Foxen Pinots. My impression is that the 2015 needs time to fully open up, as there is quite a bit of density and depth waiting to emerge. Even today, though, the John Sebastiano is compelling.

2015 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard – 92 Points

The 2015 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard is clearly marked by punishing

yields that were down 90%. Powerful, deep and super-concentrated, the 2015 is unusually viscous and intense. Even so, there is no shortage of personality or intrigue. Naturally, readers should expect a pretty extreme style of Chardonnay.

2015 Chenin Blanc Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard – 90 Points

The 2015 Chenin Blanc Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard is rich, lush and forward, with quite a bit of old-vine intensity that gives the wine its shape and volume. Powerful and exquisitely beautiful as it opens up in the glass, the 2015 has a lot to say. The Ernest Wickenden Chenin remains one of the most distinctive whites being made in California today. Readers should expect an especially phenolic, savory style..

2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Los Potreros- 90 points

The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Los Potreros is a wine with real potential. Black cherry, chocolate and spice, along with the wine's racy, voluptuous personality, make for a decidedly forward wine that will appeal most to readers who enjoy bold, plush Cabernets. The Potreros is a blend of fruit from Star Lane and Grimm's Bluff.

Vinous Reviews September 2016

2014 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard – 93 Points

The 2014 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard presents a much deeper and more phenolic expression of Chardonnay. Oily and viscous, with tremendous fruit intensity, the Tinaquaic offers superb nuance and complexity throughout. Scents of hazelnut, orange blossom and honey give the wine its distinctive exoticism and overall feel. Dry farming seems to give the Tinaquaic much of its distinctive personality and pedigree. This is another superb wine from Foxen.

2014 Pinot Noir Block 8 - Bien Nacido Vineyard – 92 Points

The 2014 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Block 8 is a bit darker and fleshier than the Block 43, with more of a vertical expression of structure, greater tannic heft and notable breadth in its shape. Dark spice, lavender, sage, iron, game and mint infuse a core of blue and purplish-hued stone fruits. This is an especially brooding, intense Pinot from Foxen, and yet all the elements are impeccably balanced.

2014 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 92 Points

The 2014 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Block 43 offers lovely depth and creaminess in a surprisingly succulent style for this site. Then again, this parcel was planted for Foxen with Dijon clones that naturally yield generous fruit. Underlying beams of salinity confer freshness and persistence throughout

that balance the fruit nicely. Sweet dark red and purplish fruit, mint and sweet spice meld into the fleshy, inviting finish.

2014 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard – 90 Points

The 2014 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard is a soft, open-knit, fruit-driven Pinot to drink over the next few years. Sweet red cherry, plum and spice are pushed forward in this succulent mid-weight offering from Foxen. Ripe, silky tannins add to the wine's considerable appeal.

2013 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard – 95+ Points

The 2013 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard is magnificent. It's as simple as that. Inky dark blue and purplish fruit, lavender, menthol, sage and licorice make a strong first impression, before the considerable tannins kick in. Readers will have to be patient, as the 2013 needs at least a few years to soften. The interplay of fruit, tannin and acidity is compelling. This large-scaled, rich Syrah from Foxen has enough intensity to drink well for the next dozen years or more.

2013 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard – 95 Points

A rich, explosive wine, the 2013 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard hits the palate with tremendous intensity of fruit, heady aromatics and phenomenal length. Polished, silky tannins give the Williamson-Doré a bit more roundness and overt opulence than is found in the Tinaquaic, but there is no shortage of structure beneath. The resonant, inky finish makes it impossible to resist a second taste, and then a third. What a gorgeous wine this is.

2014 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard – 91 Points

The 2014 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard, Foxen's Grenache/Mourvèdre blend, is one of the more restrained wines in this range. Sweet tobacco, crushed flowers and red stone fruits are all nicely delineated throughout.

2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard – 91 Points

The 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard is bold, pungent and deeply expressive. Black cherry, herb, smoke, licorice, game and dark spices are front and center. Drink this fleshy, voluptuous Happy Canyon Cabernet Sauvignon over the next few years. Readers will find a super classic expression of Happy Canyon in the Vogelzang.

Vinous Reviews August 2015

"Proprietors Bill Wathen and Dick Doré are at the top of their game."—Antonio Galloni

2014 Chenin Blanc Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard – 91 Points

The 2014 Chenin Blanc, which emerges from 50 year-old vines, is rich, phenolic and intense to the core, with a real sense of apricot/peach pit character that dominates. Sweet floral and spice notes add nuance as the wine opens up, but the Chenin remains quite structured and intense, at least today. This is one of the most distinctive Chenin Blancs readers will come across.

2014 Chardonnay Block UU – Bien Nacido – 95 Points

Foxen's 2014 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Vineyard Block UU is one of the quirkiest California Chardonnays readers will come across. The plant material here is Chardonnay grafted onto own-rooted Riesling rootstock that was originally planted in the early 1970s. Oddly enough, this wine often shows distinctly tropical, Riesling-inflected notes, as it does again in 2014. White peach, ash, slate, pear and crushed rocks show superb energy allied to power in a Chardonnay with searing intensity, fabulous balance and tons of personality

2013 Pinot Noir Block 8 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 93 points

A powerful, structured wine, the 2013 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 8 is literally bursting at the seams with explosive energy. A host of savory herbs, smoke, licorice and tobacco open up in the glass, but this is a wine to put a way for a few years, as the elements still need time to come together. The firm, grippy finish and the wine's overall delineation are both striking.

2013 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 92 points

It's fascinating to taste the 2013 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 43 after the Block 8. Creamy, round and supple, the Block 43 is all about sensuality and soft, inviting contours. Raspberry jam, wild flowers and mint are some of the notes that open up in an open-knit, expressive Pinot to drink over the next handful of years. Next to the Block 8, the Block 43 has a bit more alcohol and higher pH, which contribute to richer feel.

2013 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard – 92 points

The 2013 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard is wonderfully nuanced and pliant in the glass. Sweet red cherry, plum, smoke, licorice and mint are some of the notes that meld together. Supple and juicy throughout, the 2013 is an excellent choice for drinking over the next few years, while the wine retains its racy, forward personality.

2013 Pinot Noir Melville Vineyard – 90 points

The 2013 Pinot Noir Melville Vineyard is a soft, supple wine to drink now and over the next few years. Smoke, game, licorice and tobacco add shades of complexity, but overall this is a relatively straightforward Pinot with texture and balance, if less in the way of real distinction

2013 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard – 92 points

The 2013 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard is one of the most expressive wines in this range. Sweet red cherry, plum, spice and mint weaved together through the mid-palate and finish. Succulent and nicely layered throughout, the 2013 offers a striking combination of expressive aromatics and open-knit fruit. I expect the Fe Ciega will continue to drink well for the better part of the next decade.

2013 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard - 91-93 points

Foxen's 2013 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard, a Grenache/Syrah blend is open, pliant and, not surprisingly, quite a bit more expressive than the Syrahs. Sweet red cherry, kirsch, hard candy and wild flowers abound in a wine that should drink well pretty much upon release.

2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard - 90 points

The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard offers plenty of depth and power, along with a more floral/savory element that balances some of the wine's more overt leanings. Graphite, smoke, mint, olives and leather add nuance, while firm tannins give energy, especially through the finish. A Cabernet Sauvignon of real character, the Vogelzang will drink well for a number of years. The 2012 spent 22 months in French oak, 80% new, and all of it nicely integrated. This is a textbook example of Cabernet Sauvignon from Happy Canyon.

Santa Barbara: The Thrill of Discovery by Antonio Galloni

"This lineup from Foxen is easily among the most impressive I have tasted this year. The wines move from strength to strength, always with exceptional purity, tons of transparency to site and impeccable class. The only problem here is one of mind-boggling choice, as the range is full of highlights. Simply put, I can't recommend these wines highly enough." - Antonio Galloni, July 2014

2013 Chenin Blanc Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard – 90 points

The 2013 Chenin Blanc Ernesto Wickenden Vineyard Old Vines is soft, supple and accessible. Pear, melon, almonds, and spices inform the expressive, silky finish. This is an impeccable white from Foxen to drink now and over the next few years.

2013 Chardonnay Block UU – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 91-93 points

The 2013 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Vineyard Block UU is gorgeous and also remarkably different from the Tinaquaic. Honey, orange blossom, mint, sage and tropical overtones meld together in an overt, opulent Chardonnay built on pure texture.

2013 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard – 94 points

Sweet lemon peel and floral notes emerge from the 2013 Chardonnay Tinaquaic Vineyard. This bright, impeccably textured Santa Maria Chardonnay is built on silkiness, energy and texture. There is a lot to look forward to. The partial malo style and the choice to not stir the lees yields a beautifully focused Chardonnay.

2012 Pinot Noir Block 8 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 92 points

The 2012 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 8, from one of the highest and steepest parcels on this site, is beautifully perfumed, vibrant and expressive. Graphite, violets, blueberries and mint are all laced together in a supple, lifted Pinot loaded with class and personality.

2012 Pinot Noir Block 43 – Bien Nacido Vineyard – 91 points

Foxen's 2012 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard Block 43 is a bit bigger and richer than the Block 8, with more density and mid-palate, but less in the way of aromatic complexity. Crushed flowers, spices, red berries and mint are all laced together on the supple finish.

2012 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard – 91 points

Rose petals, sweet red berries, mint and cinnamon are woven together nicely in the 2012 Pinot Noir Julia's Vineyard. The Pommard clone planted here yields a supple, resonant Pinot built on fruit, mid-palate texture and approachability.

2012 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard – 92 points

The 2012 Pinot Noir John Sebastiano Vineyard is one of the more intense, explosive wines in the Foxen range. Dark red and black stone fruits, cloves, menthol, tar and licorice blossom as this large-scaled, voluptuous Pinot shows off its personality. The finish is rich, broad and creamy.

2012 Pinot Noir Melville Vineyard – 91 points

The 2012 Pinot Noir Melville Vineyard stands out for its floral, lifted personality. This is the only Pinot in the Foxen range made with whole clusters, which marks the wine to a significant degree. Sage, tobacco, tea leaves, lavender and dried rose petals are some of the many notes that inform the pointed, vibrant finish.

2012 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard – 94 points

The 2012 Pinot Noir Fe Ciega Vineyard is one of the clear standouts among

this year's Pinot releases from Foxen. A crystalline, weightless wine, the 2012 impresses for its pure nuance and vibrancy. Layers of dark red and blue fruit, wild flowers and cinnamon wrap around the silky, expressive finish. Sadly, there are just 125 cases to go around. Readers who can find the 2012 should not hesitate, as it is superb.

2012 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard – 94 points

The 2012 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard is another of the many highlights in this range. Here the flavors are dark, smoky and gamy. Dark red cherry, plum, tobacco and cured meats flesh out in a resonant, highly expressive Pinot endowed with notable depth, especially within the context of the vintage. Hints of dried rose petal and violets linger on the finish. From start to finish, the Encantada is superb.

2012 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard – 93 points

The Grenache-based 2012 Cuvée Jeanne Marie Williamson-Doré Vineyard is floral, lifted and very pretty. Bright red berries meld into perfumed notes in a forward, fruit-driven wine to drink in its youth, while the flavors remain alive and expressive. This is yet another superb, polished wine from Foxen. The blend is 83% Grenache and 17% Mourvedre.

2012 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard – 93 points

Deeply spiced, layered, violets, menthol and blueberry jam meld together in the 2012 Syrah Williamson-Doré Vineyard. Pliant, expressive and beautifully layered, the 2012 stands out for its sheer balance. In 2012, the Syrah Williamson-Doré is flat-out delicious.

2012 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard – 95 points

Foxen's 2012 Syrah Tinaquaic Vineyard Estate is laced with rose petal, white flowers, mint, blood orange and spices. The Tinaquaic boasts gorgeous aromatics, finely-sculpted fruit and exceptional overall balance, all in a mid-weight, gracious style. Today, the 2012 is simply irresistible. The Tinaquaic Syrah isn't huge, rather it is a wine built on total harmony.

2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard - 92 points

Sandalwood, cedar, mint, tobacco, sage and sweet plums are all laced together in the 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Vogelzang Vineyard. This is a typical and highly representative Happy Canyon Cabernet with just a bit less richness than is typically the case, most of that the result of the cold year. Today, the 2011 is drop-dead gorgeous. It will drink well for another 5-7 years, although I don't expect it to materially improve. No matter, though, the 2011 Vogelzang is beautiful and expressive right now.

2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Grassini Family Vineyard - 91 points

The 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Grassini Family Vineyard is a bigger, richer, more explosive wine than the Vogelzang Cabernet, but it also lacks that

wine's aromatic complexity and overall finesse. Hints of chocolate, red plum and spice flesh out on the expressive finish. There is a wonderful sense of immediacy here, though. I expect the 2011 will continue to drink beautifully for another 5-7 years.