

Your
**Alta California
Collection**

from the Bonner
Private Wine Partnership



BONNER
PRIVATE WINE
PARTNERSHIP

America's Most Unique Wine Club

Dedicated to searching the world for astounding
wines from little-known winemakers

Dear Member,

“Will they hate this?” we wondered in June of 2020.

We had just finished sourcing our first ever American Collection, a group of six small batch bottles not widely available outside of their home states. It was – like everything we do at the Partnership – an experiment; we couldn’t be sure how members – so used to our small batch foreign wines – would receive a domestic collection.

Yet, members loved it – particularly the Washington State tempranillo and the Happy Canyon cabernet.

This quarter, as we faced an international shipping jam that made it hard for our small international producers to get wines to us on time, we decided to return to the West Coast. This time, however, we would focus our search on just one area: the northern California wine corridor established under the Spanish mission network in the 1700s.

In 1782, when the area was known as Alta California, Spaniards brought vines to the Ballard Canyon (outside of what is now Santa Barbara) to support their missions with wine sales. That’s where we started with this new collection.

There we found a dry farmed vineyard run by two generations of the Stolpman family. Working with a vigneron dubbed “the grape whisperer” by Wine Enthusiast, they produce the kind of syrah (stone, fresh berries) that would rival the best French Rhône... with no additives, commercial yeast, or machine harvesting.

We continued north through Napa, where we found a surprising cab sauv (with a petit verdot kick) made by a guy who sold his first vintage from his car (with this good a wine you don’t need a fancy label).

From there we hugged the coast above San Francisco, up past the foggy fishing villages of Bodega Bay, and east along the Russian River to find the misty chardonnays of the Sonoma Coast AVA (“AVA” is the American version of the Italian DOCG or the French AOC).

The further north you go from Napa, the more idiosyncratic and

isolated the vineyards become. Instead of large machines spraying fertilizer, you get flocks of sheep munching (and fertilizing) among the rows. Instead of broad picketed landscapes with vines running for miles, the vineyards disappear into forests of redwood and sycamore, the odd pot farm popping up here and there.

In Mendocino County's Anderson Valley, we found a combination of Alsatia and Burgundy, and the first wine we've ever recommended pairing with a turkey burger.

In High Valley, to the east, we found a low intervention vineyard that produces, not the usual wimpy organic wine, but a 93-point monster of a cabernet.

In this box, you will find six bottles:

- ① Edict Pinot Noir 2019
- ② Ovis Cabernet Sauvignon 2016
- ③ Landy Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 2019
- ④ Verdon Estate N.3 Blueline Vineyards Red Blend 2018
- ⑤ Auctioneer Cabernet Sauvignon 2018
- ⑥ Stolpman Vineyards Estate Grown Syrah 2018

For those of us who usually balk at California wines, this collection should serve as a reminder that anywhere you look, there are gems to be found.

To your health,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Will Bonner', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Will Bonner
Founder, Bonner Private Wine Partnership

A Quick Note on Wine Tasting

On the next few pages, we've included tasting notes. Here's a quick tip on how to approach them.

What makes a "wine expert" is not just his depth of knowledge – which anyone can achieve – but his sensitivity to taste and smell. A great wine expert will find a hundred little aromas that most ordinary noses will never be able to detect.

Now. If you don't pick up on the same flavors, does that mean you're doing it wrong?

No. Tasting is subjective. Pronounced flavors on my palate may present themselves as secondary or tertiary notes for you. Remember, wines are always evolving in the bottle. That hint of cherry from a few months ago might present itself differently now. So, if you detect a flavor or aroma you don't see on the tasting sheet, add it. See what your friends say. Better yet, if you have a tasting that differs markedly from what's written here, send us your notes. We'd love to compare them!

2019 Edict Pinot Noir (Anderson Valley, CA)



**Northern
Anderson Valley
New French oak
Pinot Noir
(clone mix)**

On California's "North Coast," the Anderson Valley funnels fog and wind inland from the Pacific Ocean to a patchwork of redwood forests, vineyards and pot farms. The wine culture – mostly Alsatian, with grapes like riesling, gewurztraminer, pinot gris – traveled to the area with European immigrants seeking gold in the 1840s. The pot came with hippies fleeing San Francisco in the 70s.

Pinot noir didn't arrive until the 1980s. Most pinot types can't tolerate the Valley's hot days and cold, misty nights (the temperature differential can swing as much as 50 degrees). Only the famous Dijon clones (115, Swan, Pommard) introduced in the 80s by French oenologists and UC Davis graduates ripen reliably enough.

They say you should look to the local fare to find a wine's best pairing. So true for this light 2019. Fish and veggies from the grill, a turkey burger even, will go well with the notes of cherry pie and spice.

Drink now.



2016 Ovis Cabernet Sauvignon (High Valley AVA, CA)



**Only 1618 cases
made**
93 pts (WE)
Cabernet Sauvignon

You could easily mistake Clay Shannon for a sheep farmer, especially if you visit his High Valley vineyards (northern CA, east of Mendocino) at shearing season (right about now). A bleating mass (watched over by several Great Pyrenees dogs) crowds around a temporary trailer that emanates a low hum. Clay and his farm hands are inside with electric clippers – the best shearers take 2 minutes a sheep, lifting the wool in large sheets you can hang around your shoulders like a shawl.

The wool is incidental. Clay's sheep provide natural weed control and fertilization for his vines, reducing need for machinery and chemicals. Thus the name "Ovis," from the Latin for sheep, for this 2016 cabernet sauvignon.

The 2016 harvest ran late. The resulting grapes were few but fat, producing but 1618 cases of this 93-point monster of a wine. Notes of black current, chocolate, cherry and toasted hazelnut.

Drink 2021-2026



2019 Landy Sonoma Coast Chardonnay (Sonoma Coast AVA, CA)



**Middle Reach of
Russian River Valley
High Elevation
Chardonnay**

Heading north from San Francisco on the two-lane coastal Highway 1. Past the fishing villages of Bodega Bay, redwoods and sycamores. The fog is often so heavy you slow to a crawl while navigating the twists and turns that threaten to toss your car off a cliff. If the scenery seems familiar it was along this sleepy marine strip that Hitchcock filmed *The Birds* and John Carpenter shot *The Fog*.

At the town of Jenner, the Russian River flows into the Pacific. Head inland to the Russian River Valley. If you hate gaudy CA chards, the valley's Middle Reach – the area closest to the river – is where you'll find the crisp, earthy chardonnay for you.

This 2019 came from a vineyard above the cloud line (1,000 ft.) where the grapes stayed cool to produce a chardonnay with as many twists, turns, chasms, and cliffs as the coast itself. Don't fall in. Leave open for 40 mins then place in fridge for 15 mins to chill. Pair with mushrooms, pork, fish, and popcorn.

Drink 2021-2025



2018 Verdon Estate N.3 Blueline Vineyards Red Blend (Napa Valley, CA)



**Top 1% Wines of
the World (Vivino)**

**10 months
French oak**

**50% cabernet
sauvignon, 30%
malbec, 20% merlot**

Yes, it's Napa (the first of two in this collection). But with an Argentine twist. Note the 30% malbec here – like the Bordeaux of old, but the experience is more like a great Amarone. Malbec often grows poorly in California. Finding it here is a treat.

We have winemaker Kevin Morrissey to thank. Having gone to UC Davis relatively later in life (35 years old), Kevin nonetheless got off at a sprint, working first at Château Petrus (known for its \$8,000 bottles), then at Stags Leap for close to a decade.

This 2018 is begging for a steak and maybe a piece of hard cheese. You'll find notes of plum, toasted almond, dark chocolate and even (some claim) eucalyptus (don't ask us – our palate wasn't good enough to find it). Swirl it around for a moment and gaze at its fine legs. And be sure to savor the long finish.

Drink 2021 to 2028.



2018 Auctioneer Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley, CA)



Winemaker: Trevor Sheehan

60% new oak and 40% neutral barrels (15 mos)

80% cabernet sauvignon, 15% merlot, 5% petit verdot

To compare with the previous wine, we've also sourced a Napa cab. But this isn't one of those insufferable, velvet loafer Napa cabs. Trevor Sheehan, the guy who made this wine, sold his first vintage out of his car (a few barrels of cabernet from Howell Mountain, a high elevation AVA known for deep, complex reds).

In 2020 Trevor released this two-year aged cabernet as a tribute to Michael Broadbent, the 24th master of wine and the founder of auction house Christie's wine department.

This blend has a bit of merlot to give it a long finish, plus a kick of petit verdot to plump out the body. You'll find cassis, aniseed, and plum (thanks to the petit verdot) on the nose followed by a fresh spice on the palate (with maybe a hint of toast).

Drink 2021 to 2028.



2018 Stolpman Vineyards Estate Grown Syrah (Ballard Canyon, CA)



6,069 ft.
93 pts
(Atkins – 2019)
Syrah

In the 1700s, the Spanish settled Santa Barbara's Ballard Canyon as part of the mission system in what was then Alta California. Grapes arrived in 1782 (the missions supported themselves with wine sales). Syrah may have made it over at the same time. Others claim that a group of wine dorks (at least we assume they were dorks) known as the "Rhône Rangers" (probably dorks) brought it over.

In any case, they were onto something, those Rhône Rangers. Ballard Canyon's syrah rivals any in southern France. This 90+ point 2018 has been compared favorably to St. Joseph. It's like walking through the garden of a ruined stone church after a heavy rain. Stone. Mortar. Rose and fresh berries. A hint of smoke in the air.

The freshness likely comes from the fact that vigneron Ruben and Maria Solorzano insisted on hand harvesting at night (Ruben's methods have earned him the nickname "the wine whisperer" from Wine Enthusiast). The vines were also dry farmed (no irrigation) forcing the roots to dig deep into the limestone soil to survive the hot dry days and cold dry nights. If you like the balanced acidity here, that would be why. Drink 2021 to 2026. Cellar a bottle if you can.





Our Mission

At the Bonner Private Wine Partnership, our mission is to bring you unique bottles from all over the world. We seek wines that are bursting with life and character – wines with an adventure in every bottle.

Your Next Quarterly Shipment

As you read this, we are already selecting and arranging to import wines for next quarter's shipment. We will be in touch to share what we've found with you when we get closer to the shipping date. Until then, enjoy your wine! (And let us know what you think!)

Problem with Your Shipment?

Please call our customer service, 9-5 EST Monday through Friday. We want everyone to get the most out of this club and these wines. So if there's a problem, we'll do our best to make it right.

...Can We Ask A Small Favor?

Can we “compare notes” with you on these wines?

Maybe you picked up on aromas that we didn't. Maybe you just fell in love with a particular bottle. Or maybe the exact opposite. Whatever the case, we want to hear from you. Because you're part of this. And we can only keep this mission going if you're onboard.

Shoot us an email at feedback@bonnerprivatewines.com