



ARISTA

WINERY



2021 VINTAGE OFFERING

WILSON DANIELS 
SINCE 1970

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PHILOSOPHY

The core principle of the winemaking philosophy at Arista is to capture and express the true character and potential of each vineyard. The winery works with a very carefully chosen handful of grand-cru level Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards and are uncompromising in their efforts to maximize the potential of the wines which are crafted from these special sites. To them, this means working every day in the vineyards to ensure that they begin with the highest-quality grapes, and then working meticulously in their custom-built state-of-the-art winery to capture every bit of quality and nuance in the bottle.

Arista sits on a 36-acre estate located on the famed Westside Road and the winery is focused on old vine, cool climate vineyards in the Russian River and Anderson Valley. They work solely with famous, established vineyards that hold a proven track record of quality. Arista believes that their exclusive use of native yeast fermentation allows full expression of the character of each vineyard and vintage in the most pure and transparent manner. Every Arista Pinot Noir and Chardonnay is fermented using only the unique mix of naturally occurring yeast populations that reside in each of their vineyards and arrive at the winery on the grapes on the day of harvest. The resulting fermentations are gentle, gradual, and slow, but result in wines that have incredible complexity, unique personalities and are exquisitely expressive of their sites.

Arista never fines or filters their wines, but instead work tirelessly during élevage to ensure each wine is clean, healthy, and stable. Meticulous attention to detail during the winemaking process allows them to capture and preserve the freshness and character of each unique vineyard which is fully manifested in an unfinned and unfiltered bottle of wine.

It's the winery's sincerely held belief that the combination of exceptional vineyard sites in the hands of an experienced vineyard management team is essential for optimum fruit quality. Ideal fruit in the hands of a highly skilled winemaking team using time-proven, minimal intervention winemaking techniques will result in wines of focus, precision, and transparency.

Arista Winery was founded in 2002 by Al and Janis McWilliams and is currently run by their sons Mark and Ben McWilliams. Winemaker, Matt Courtney, joined the team in 2013 and boasts over 15 years experience in making terroir driven Pinot Noir and Chardonnay in Sonoma County.



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2021 VINTAGE NOTES

The 2021 vintage felt like a generous gift from Mother Nature: The season was warm, steady, and chaos-free. Overall, consistent temperatures and favorable weather allowed us and our partners to focus on growing exceptional grapes, rather than mitigating unfavorable circumstances, resulting in wines that we are happy to share today.

The winter of 2021 was relatively dry in California, leading to an early bud break and small yields. Beautiful warm weather during the summer and the absence of extreme heat spikes in the latter half of the season allowed for excellent fruit quality at the time of harvest. As the season progressed, the theme of “early” continued, leading to a prompt harvest in advance of fall rains.

With nearly ideal growing conditions such as these, it should come as no surprise that the wines are incredible. The Pinot Noirs offered in this release are without a doubt the most deeply and vibrantly colored wines we have ever produced at Arista. Their flavors and aromas are as dynamic as their deep ruby color, with a beautiful and unique array of fruit-derived perfumes on display in each of the wines.

While the exceptionally high quality of these wines can be attributed to the specialness of the vintage, I also believe that constant improvements in the cellar over the last decade have played a pivotal role in elevating our wines.

As we fine-tune our farming practices site by site, we’re able to achieve near-perfect levels of concentration and ripeness without excessive alcohol, allowing us to produce balanced and multidimensional wines. We’ve also tailored our use of whole cluster fermentation - the practice of using some whole, intact grape clusters in a red wine fermentation - has been tailored specifically for each block of every vineyard. Across our estate and in collaboration with our grower-partners, these improvements have given our wines an added level of vivacious fruit aromas and flavors, as well as an increased finesse and complexity.

I believe these wines represent a new high-water mark for wine quality at Arista. I hope you enjoy drinking the 2021 wines as much as we’ve enjoyed making them, they’re true reflections of a wonderful season at Arista and across California. — *Matt Courtney, Winemaker*





THE WINES | 2021 CHARDONNAY

2021 CHARDONNAY, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

An exceptional snapshot of the 2021 vintage in the Russian River, this release is a blend of barrels from five Russian River Valley sites: Flora Marie, El Diablo, Ritchie, Banfield, and Arista's Westside Road Estate. With contributions from some of the finest Chardonnay vineyards in the appellation and made with slightly less new oak than single vineyard designates, this cuvée offers the highest level of early drinkability while maintaining an extraordinary degree of quality and age-ability. Notes of wet stones, lemon drop, and white flowers give this wine a vibrant and refreshing character. The palate shows a firm and zippy texture that is beautifully balanced by a subtle mineral tone, adding a degree of complexity to the wine. The finish is crisp and clean, leaving a mouthwatering sensation that lingers pleasantly.

2021 CHARDONNAY, BANFIELD VINEYARD, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

The Banfield Vineyard Chardonnay comes from the northern edge of the Green Valley, a sub-appellation of the Russian River Valley. The location of this vineyard is ideal for growing Chardonnay due to the cooling influence of coastal fog. The Chardonnay block of Banfield Vineyard was planted around 1980, giving this vineyard the status as one of the oldest Chardonnay vineyards in California. These nearly 50-year old vines continue to produce a tiny crop of the most intensely flavored and aromatic Chardonnay in Sonoma County. Classic Banfield notes of bright citrus and Granny Smith apple are accented by hints of freshly cut tropical fruits. A citrus-inflected minerality gives the finish a tangy lift while keeping the palate lively and balanced.

2021 CHARDONNAY, EL DIABLO VINEYARD, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Ulises Valdez planted the El Diablo Vineyard in 2008. The site is located on a ridge off Eastside Road and serves as the eastern edge of the Russian River Valley Appellation. The location of the site means that while each morning the vineyard is shrouded in fog, the marine layer burns off and the vines can soak in several hours of warm sunlight by early afternoon. Careful thought was put into both rootstock and clonal selection for the vineyard. Arista's blocks are planted to the Montrachet and Old Wente selections of Chardonnay and are grafted to rootstock 420a. Row spacing is tight at 4x6 which helps to further reduce vigor and encourage competition for nutrients. The result is fairly low yielding vines that produce intense, flavor packed clusters. Ripe pear and lime zest gives way to bursts of mango and grilled pineapple. Subtle oak notes give this Chardonnay a creamy, caramelized sugar character without weighing down this bright, vibrant wine.

2021 CHARDONNAY, RITCHIE VINEYARD, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

Kent Ritchie has owned and farmed his namesake vineyard since the early 1970s. The vineyard is located just off River Road at the intersection of Eastside Road and Trenton Road. The location is unique because it sits on a bench at the confluence of the Russian River, the Santa Rosa Plain and the Laguna de Santa Rosa. The vineyard's proximity to the Pacific Ocean exposes it to the cooling effects of the coastal fog, yet also allows for ample sunlight once the fog has burned off around noon. The well-drained, sandy, Goldridge Soils are ideal for growing Chardonnay. The vineyard is planted to, predominately, the Old Wente Selection of Chardonnay which is highly coveted for its low yields and ability to produce an intensely flavored and aromatic wine. The 2021 Ritchie Vineyard Chardonnay is packed with energy and tightly wound. At first, lemon-lime notes drive the aromatics, and the wine is racy and lean on the palate. With time in the glass, a procession of hidden flavors emerges: grilled pineapple, lemon tart, and creme brûlée all add to the incredible complexity of this bright and aromatic expression of New World Chardonnay.

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MATT COURTNEY | WINEMAKER





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THE WINES | 2021 PINOT NOIR

2021 PINOT NOIR, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

The Russian River Valley blend represents the unique characteristics of the appellation that set it apart from other growing regions. The wine is assembled using select lots from Arista's Westside Road Estate Vineyard as well as selections from a handful of single vineyards. No de-classified wine or "filler" vineyards are used for this appellation blend. Instead, this wine is viewed as an excellent survey of the vintage and appellation each year. Blue and red fruits predominate on the nose, but the presence of a lavender inflected floral component is unmistakable. The firm tannins, which are a hallmark of the 2021 vintage, round out the long finish on this quintessential Sonoma Pinot Noir.

2021 PINOT NOIR, FERRINGTON VINEYARD, ANDERSON VALLEY

The Ferrington Vineyard is tucked away just off Highway 128 in Booneville, a small town in the heart of the Anderson Valley. Though 25 acres of the vineyard are planted to multiple clones of Pinot Noir, Arista has selected a block in the vineyard that was planted to the Pommard clone because of its proven legacy in this cold climate appellation. The vineyard has a gentle south-facing slope and has decomposed sandstone and clay soils with three to four feet of topsoil. This vineyard was originally planted in the late 1960s although some of the 25 acres of Pinot Noir vines were planted in 1998 and some more recently. Ferrington Vineyard is famous for marrying depth and density with electric acidity, and the 2021 Ferrington Vineyard Pinot Noir is a perfect example: A hint of earthiness blows off to reveal layers of tangy red cherry, cinnamon candy, pomegranate, cranberry, and roasted chestnut. In true Anderson Valley fashion, elegance and vibrancy define the feel of this wine, with snappy, justpicked red fruit and a subtle cola note carrying the long, smooth finish.

2021 PINOT NOIR, U.V. LUCKY WELL VINEYARD, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

The Lucky Well vineyard sits atop a knoll on the western edge of the Sebastopol hills outside of the towns of Graton and Sebastopol. The area is home to some of the most highly acclaimed Pinot Noir and Chardonnay vineyards in the Russian River Valley due in large part to the perfect confluence of soil, climate, and elevation. The vineyard is in an area often referred to as the "banana belt" of the Russian River Valley because, though on the very coolest, foggiest, and western edge of the appellation, it sits on a knoll that rises above the fog line. This feature exposes the fruit to more gentle sunlight, which allows very slow and even ripening across the entire growing season. Arista's 4-acre section was planted in 2008 to Pommard, Swan, and Calera clones of Pinot Noir. This wine has it all: a shockingly vibrant ruby color, incredible aromatics, density, intensity, a seamless texture, and perfect weight and balance. A strong contender for the best wine ever made at Arista, full stop. This 2021 is Pinot perfection.

2021 PINOT NOIR, KANZLER VINEYARD, RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

One of the first vineyards planted on the Western edge of Sonoma, the Kanzler Vineyard is a premier Russian River Valley site situated a mere eight miles from the Pacific Ocean. Since its inception in 1996, the Pinot Noir planted on these 14 acres has showcased the potential of coastal Pinot Noir in California. The well-draining Goldridge soils that form the backbone of this site are perfect for Pinot Noir, which is notoriously finicky. Combined with cool, oceanic fog, the organically farmed vines at Kanzler—primarily Dijon and Pommard clones—ripen slowly and gradually, yielding wines with incredible complexity and finesse. Crushed wild berry and tart plum flavors match perfectly with the bouquet of violets and exotic spices evident in the 2021. The wine is packed with aromatic and flavor intensity yet feels nearly weightless across the palate. The 2021 Kanzler is arguably the most precise, crystalline, and exquisitely balanced Arista Pinot Noir of the vintage.

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CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"Family-owned Arista Winery is a fantastic representation of this region's prowess, for they cut no corners when it comes to the quality of their wines." — Clara Hogan, Jess Lander, 7x7, June 2023 [Read the Article](#)

"...the strides made here in recent years by brothers Ben and Mark McWilliams under the direction of winemaker Matt Courtney are notable." — Antonio Galloni, June 2022

"The portfolio is consistently outstanding, with each vineyard-designated bottling showing both a consistent house style but a genuine variability from site to site as well." — James Molesworth, May 2022
[Read the feature piece: "Fine-Tuning a Sonoma Standout at Arista"](#)

"...certain places simply imbue inherent rock star quality." — Kathleen Willcox, Wine-Searcher, June 2021 [Read the Article](#)

"[Arista Winery] brought on board winemaker Matt Courtney, revamped vineyards, and renovated the cellar, all of which appears to have paid off as they've fashioned some of the top wines in this report. Readers looking for the next superstar estate are advised to get on the bandwagon." — Jeb Dunnuck, June 2019 [Read the Article](#)

"These wines – both Pinots and Chardonnays – are focused, full of flavor, bright, persistent and delicious."
— Jane Anson, Decanter, November 2018 [Read the Article](#)

PREVIOUS VINTAGE ACCLAIM

CHARDONNAY

2020 EL DIABLO VINEYARD

98 Points, Wine Advocate
96 Points, Jeb Dunnuck
94 Points, Wine Spectator

2020 RITCHIE VINEYARD

97 Points, Wine Advocate
97 Points, Jeb Dunnuck
94 Points, Wine Spectator

2020 BANFIELD VINEYARD

97 Points, Jeb Dunnuck
94 Points, Wine Advocate
94 Points, Wine Spectator

2020 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

95 Points, Wine Advocate
93 Points, Wine Spectator
92 Points, Jeb Dunnuck

PINOT NOIR

2019 LUCKY WELL VINEYARD

97 Points, Wine Advocate
93 Points, Wine Spectator
93 Points, Jeb Dunnuck
93 Points, Vinous

2019 FERRINGTON VINEYARD

95 Points, Jeb Dunnuck
92 Points, Wine Advocate

2019 KANZLER VINEYARD

96 Points, Jeb Dunnuck
95 Points, Wine Advocate
93 Points, Vinous
93 Points, Wine Spectator

2019 RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY

94 Points, Wine Advocate
91 Points, Wine Spectator
91 Points, Vinous

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