



**August 2020**

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## **Grand Cru**

2014 Hartwell Cabernet Sauvignon Estate Grown Stags Leap District – 74.98

2014 Tommaso Bussola Valpolicella Classico Superiore TB – 45.98

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## **Sparkle**

Gratiot & Cie Brut Champagne Almanach No. 1 – 36.98

Sanger Champagne Brut Nature Voyage 360 - 39.98

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## **Ultimate Reds**

2016 Comartin Cellars Cuvee Cassidy – 44.98

2017 Marco Abella Loidana Priorat – 29.98

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## **Vintage Values**

2018 Sea Sun Pinot Noir, California – 19.98

2017 Kathryn Kennedy Sauvignon Blanc – 23.98

Refer to [www.vintagewinemerchants.com/blog/news](http://www.vintagewinemerchants.com/blog/news) for your notes.

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2014 Hartwell Cabernet Sauvignon Estate Grown Stags Leap District  
Napa Valley, California

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Hartwell Estate Vineyards is located on the west side of Silverado Trail in the famous Stag's Leap District. The inception of Hartwell Vineyards was in 1986, when founder Bob Hartwell (died in June 2016) purchased 90 acres on what is called Wappo Hill, a small section of coveted land rising from the valley floor in the Stags Leap District. Interestingly, this property used to be owned by Harry Sees of Sees Candy fame.

Hartwell sold the winery and caves and part of their vineyards to Realm Cellars in December 2015. Realm Cellars purchased a total of 20 acres leaving the Hartwell's still owning 70 acres. Hartwell continues to produce very limited production wines from the portion of the vineyard they retained for themselves – a two-acre vineyard next to the family home on the hill.

Hartwell's first vintage dates from 1990 from a clone that was given to founder Bob Hartwell (deceased in June 2016) by Dick Grace of the well known Napa winery, Grace Family Vineyards in St. Helena. Their early vintages were made at the tiny winery at Grace Family Vineyards until the Hartwell Winery was completed. Several prominent winemakers have come through their doors over the years including Andy Erickson and since 2006, Benoit Touquette.

This 2014 Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon is the absolute final vintage of this wine. Due to the sale of the winery and the Hartwell focus on only two wines going forward, this tried and true core Vintage Wine Merchants wine will no longer be offered after supplies are depleted.

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This up front and approachable 2014 Hartwell Estate Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits notes of blackcurrants, cassis, forest floor and chocolate. The palate is medium bodied with a lush and plush, fleshy texture that is captivating. You can enjoy this wine upon release or cellar for 12-15 years.

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2014 Tommaso Bussola Valpolicella Classico Superiore TB  
Valpolicella, Italy

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The Bussola family has been producing top-notch Amarone for decades. In a truly touching family tradition, some of the older wines are named “BG” after uncle Giuseppe Bussola who founded the estate and adopted a traditional winemaking style. Recent expressions are named “TB” after Tommaso Bussola who is responsible for winemaking since 1983 and represents a modernist style.

Originally trained as a stone mason, Tommaso took over over his uncle's Valpolicella estate—with its prized old vineyards in the heart of the Classico zone—in the mid-1980's. While vineyard work came naturally to him, he experimented relentlessly, and absorbed information and ideas from every source available. With each passing vintage, his wines came to show more polish, finesse, intensity, and personality.

By the late nineties, his style had matured, and his wines had become world-famous for their incredible intensity of fruit. Like other top Veneto winemakers, he uses new barrels, but any hint of new wood is hidden by cascades of lush, opulent fruit. The key is not only the age of his vines but the fact that they are nearly all naturally low-yielding ancient clones: Corvinone (40%), Corvina Grossa (25%) and Rondinella (20%).

The red wine known as Valpolicella is typically made from three grape varieties: Corvina Veronese, Rondinella, and Molinara. variety of wine styles is produced in the area, including a recioto dessert wine and Amarone, a strong wine made from dried grapes. Most basic Valpolicellas are light, fragrant table wines produced in a novello style, similar to Beaujolais nouveau and released only a few weeks after harvest. Valpolicella Classico is made from grapes grown in the original Valpolicella production zone. Valpolicella Superiore is aged at least one year and has an alcohol content of at least 12 percent.

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Intense aromas of smoked meat and dried spice give the wine a savory, rich quality. It's a big wine loaded with personality as it boasts generous depth and a sensuous perfume of dark plums, cherries, mocha and spices.

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Gratiot & Cie Brut Champagne Almanach No. 1  
*Champagne, France*

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Established in the early 1970's by Gérard and Claudine Gratiot, the champagne house is the result of 5 generations of winemakers dating back to Désiré Gratiot in 1868. The winemaking is now spearheaded by Rémy Gratiot, who is devoted to sustainable practices in the vineyard and winery. Severe pruning, specific grafting of rootstocks, regular soil analysis and vegetation cover all contribute to producing a quality harvest. All vines are hand harvested, with only the best grapes selected for pressing.

Every spring, the house collaborates with an oenologist, and the wines are blended for crisp and flavorful consistency. Vine age is an average of 30 years in the vineyards that stretch across seven villages within Charly sur Marne. The Maison cuvees are blended from the current harvest and reserve wines while all Millésimes are only bottled from an exceptional year's harvest. Non-vintage wines mature in cellar for three years while vintage wines mature in cellar for five years.

Champagne Gratiot & Cie cultivate 18 hectares of vines in the department of Aisne. The family vineyard is adequately representative of the region and is composed of 84% Pinot Meunier, 13% of Chardonnay and 3% of Pinot Noir. As the vineyard was developed, it seemed indisputable to produce Pinot Meunier, a robust and expressive variety of vine, ambassador of the brand around the world.

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85% Pinot Meunier, 15% Chardonnay. A fruity, powerful and generous champagne, which eloquently shows the nature and authenticity of our know-how and of our Terroir.

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Sanger Champagne Brut Nature Voyage 360  
Champagne, France

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Champagne Sanger is a very unique Champagne House. The House is in fact, the wine making school in Avize, and since 1952, students, professionals and the cellar master have been producing the Sanger range. The wine growers learning their trade at the school are taught the techniques and know how required to produce Champagne, and innovation is very much encouraged. The House has access to much of the terroir of Champagne and can call upon countless vineyards to select their grapes from. The grapes they use are often from Grand Cru villages and enable stunning Champagnes to be produced. Generations of students have started their champagne lives producing Sanger under the direction the cellar master but also learning from their peers. The school was officially set up in 1927 by the Government and today has a significant place in Champenois, training more than 80% of the winegrowers-to-be.

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The grapes are sourced from 42 villages in Champagne. It's equal parts Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, and Pinot Meunier vinified in stainless steel tanks with 70% base year, and 30% reserve wine. This bottle of sparkling joy is complex with notes of citrus and honey on the bouquet. Bursting with bubbles, the palate is dense with fruit, mineral driven, and bright. Finishes clean, yet nutty.

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## August 2020

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2016 Comartin Cellars Red Wine Cuvee Cassidy  
Santa Barbara, California

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Cuvee' Cassidy is a special barrel selection of Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre dedicated to Adam Comartin's youngest daughter, Cassidy. This carefully selected blend is the perfect balance of varieties to yield an amazing GSM.

GSM is an acronym for a wine consisting of the 3 grape varieties: Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvèdre, which are common varieties historically linked to the Rhone area in southern France. Thus, it is commonly referred to as a "Rhone Style" blend. More colloquially, a GSM is often referred to as, "Good Stuff, Man!" and, on occasion 'stuff' is interchanged with a common four letter word.

The wine was crafted from acclaimed vineyards in Santa Ynez Valley of Santa Barbara, including the famous Tierra Alta vineyard in Ballard Canyon and Camp Four vineyard in the East part of the valley. Santa Ynez Valley runs East-West with no mountain range blocking the valley from the Pacific Ocean, which enables the cool air and fog to penetrate the vineyard during the long summer days common to Santa Barbara. This is important because it allows for more even ripening and produces balanced flavors.

Each variety is hand-harvested, fermented, and aged sur lie in barrels separately. After extended aging, the perfect blend of varieties and barrels are selected. The Grenache gives the wines aromatics (floral, berry driven nose), while the Syrah gives color, body and concentration. Lastly, a touch of Mourvèdre gives structure and length.

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Cuvee' Cassidy is a special barrel selection of Grenache and Syrah, dedicated to our youngest daughter, Cassidy. The wine was crafted primarily with unique Grenache vineyards from Santa Barbara County and balanced with the perfect amount of Syrah, which adds depth and concentration.

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2017 Marco Abella Loidana Priorat  
Priorat, Spain

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Priorat is a Denominació d'Origen Qualificada (DOQ) for Catalan wines produced in the Priorat county, in the province of Tarragona, in the southwest of Catalonia. It primarily produces powerful red wines, which came to international attention in the 1990s. The area is characterized by its unique terroir of black slate and quartz soil known as llicorella. It is one of only two wine regions in Spain to qualify as DOCa, the highest qualification level for a wine region according to Spanish wine regulations, alongside Rioja DOCa.

Marco Abella wines embrace their rich legacy, geographic altitude, unique soil, and vineyard orientation to create harmonious products through biodynamic farming and expert wine making.

The Marco families have been wine growers in Porrera Spain since the 15th century. Porrera is part of the Priorat region and therefore enjoys its own special microclimate including dry, hot summers, cold winters, low annual rainfall, and extreme daily temperature fluctuations. As a result, the fruit takes more time ripen, allowing for more complex wines.

Marco Abella wines are clear expressions of the land from which they come. The Priorat soil is the source of unique minerality or earthiness of the region's wines. It is an arid soil characterized by the llicorella soil. Four different vineyards with four different orientations over 56 acres make up the Marco Abella vineyards. The vines are grown in terraced vineyards, or costers, on the area's steep hillsides, at altitudes ranging from ~1500' to ~2,300' above sea level.

Marco Abella practices biodynamic farming, which is much more than just organic. The aim of biodynamic farming is to produce high-quality grapes while respecting our planet's animal and plant life. Marco Abella focuses on quality at every stage: 100% Estate grown fruit coming from the highest altitude vineyards in all of Priorat, hand picking and sorting, non-interventionist wine making with only natural yeasts, no fining and low filtration. The wine is beautifully packaged with labels created by the internationally renowned Catalan abstract painter Josep Guinovart (Barcelona 1927-2007).

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55% Garnacha, 35% Carignan, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon. Red and black fruit flavors with delicate spice notes make this wine silky on entry, remaining harmonious throughout the finish. Its youth and freshness make Loidana the perfect companion to any occasion.

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### 2017 Kathryn Kennedy Sauvignon Blanc California

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In the man's world of wine 40 years ago, it wasn't easy to get into the wine business if you were a woman, and it was even harder to own a winery. However, Kathryn Kennedy proved that with hard work, knowledge and 8 acres of what turned out to be outstanding quality vineyards; you don't have to wear the pants in the family to take home the bacon.

Kathryn moved from Santa Cruz at the age of 15 to Santa Clara, and earned her degree at Stanford University, and from there with the first of four children, she moved to her Saratoga property in 1949 where she later planted the estate vineyard that now holds her name. Planted solely to Cabernet Sauvignon, Kathryn heeded the advice she received to plant the king of grapes while attending viticulture courses at UC Davis and used clone #8 vines from nearby David Bruce for her vineyard. Working hard and getting advice from the local vineyard owners, Kathryn's first vintages were sold off to Mt. Eden Vineyards in Saratoga, and finally in 1979 she was one of the first women in California wine history to own her own brand and label.

Kathryn's son Marty has been basically running the show since the early 1980's he has always had a passion for the small estate and while his mother was still alive he was able to cross a major hurdle in any agricultural business; achieving the status of Certified Organic, by the CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers) in 2007. It took ten years to transition out the old chemical based regime and to turn it into a sustainable and responsible way of growing grapes.

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Crafted from grapes from certified organic vineyards in Napa, Lake, Mendocino, and Sonoma Counties. A beautiful wine with a delicate texture and light haunting flavors. Hints of lemon creme, white peach, minerals and grapefruit.

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2018 Sea Sun Pinot Noir  
California

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The Wagner family comes from a long line of grape growers and winemakers, with a history in Napa Valley dating back to the 1850s. Through the years, they have embraced a hands-on work ethic and are constantly looking for ways to keep improving the quality of their wines.

It's been over 45 years since Chuck Wagner, along with his parents, Charlie and Lorna Wagner, founded Caymus Vineyards in Rutherford, Napa Valley. Chuck Wagner continues to make two world-renowned Cabernet Sauvignons under the Caymus label from Napa Valley. New generations of Wagners have brought us additional wine labels such as Mer Soleil, Conundrum and Belle Glos. Never ones to rest on their laurels (or sit still for long), the latest new addition to the lineup is Sea Sun.

Sea Sun Pinot Noir is created from the singular beauty and character of the California coast. Like Sea Sun Chardonnay, this wine is sourced from premier coastal regions of California.

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Deep dark red, almost black. It's a fuller richer Pinot Noir with mild acid. Smooth and easy drinking with lots of red fruit and caramel. This a brawny Pinot and not a finesse wine as it hits you in the face with rich, ripe black fruit.

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