



Issue 236 - USA, California, Santa Barbara: Recent and Forthcoming Releases

The 2016 vintage, blessed by winter and spring rainfall, marks a brief return to something resembling normality for Santa Barbara County. Crop set was good: somewhat below the region's historic average, but appreciably larger than the modest yields of 2015. The growing season itself was cool until a defining heat spike in September that precipitated a comparatively early harvest. The ensuing wines are more consistently excellent than the 2015s, generally displaying beautiful balance, bright fruit and excellent concentration. Across the whole range of Santa Barbara's broad stylistic spectrum, there are many outstanding wines to recommend.

-- William Kelley

Wine Code	Wine	Score	Notes
16BNOVPN	Tyler Bien Nacido Vineyard 'Old Vine' Pinot Noir 2016	94	The 2016 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Old Vine is lovely, wafting from the glass with a savory bouquet of sandalwood, red cherries, orange rind, rose hip and forest floor. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, ample and velvety with a generous core of succulent fruit that entirely cloaks its melting tannins. The finish is long and savory. Still youthfully primary, cellar this for a year or two before following it for a decade.
16S&BCH	Tyler Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Chardonnay 2016	94	The 2016 Chardonnay Sanford & Benedict Vineyard is lovely, wafting from the glass with a beautiful bouquet of pear, citrus zest and almond cream. On the palate, it's medium-bodied, pure and succulent, with nice mid-palate amplitude, a juicy core of fruit and tangy acids. The finish is mouthwatering and delicately chalky. This is an attractively pure, transparent rendition of Sanford & Benedict Chardonnay.
16BNNPN	Tyler Bien Nacido 'N Block' Pinot Noir 2016	93+	Revealing aromas of forest floor, black raspberries and peony, the 2016 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido N Block is a delicate, medium-bodied wine with an ample mid-palate, velvety tannins and a pure, fragrant finish. Of all Willett's Pinot Noirs, this is among the more reserved today, and while its polished structural elements and mouthwatering juiciness make it attractive today, I suspect the real interest will come with a few years of bottle age.
16BNWCH	Tyler Bien Nacido Vineyard 'W Block' Chardonnay 2016	93	The 2016 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Vineyard Block W is the most exotic of Justin Willett's Chardonnays this year, offering up a honeyed bouquet of musky peach and orchard fruit, suggesting there may have been a touch of botrytis in the vineyard this year. On the palate, it's medium-bodied, ample and saline, with an expansive attack but a bright, tensile core that wins out on the crisp, precise finish. This is another wine that I'd love to see again after a couple of years in bottle.
16LRPN	Tyler La Rinconada Vineyard Pinot Noir 2016	93	The 2016 Pinot Noir La Rinconada Vineyard offers up a pure bouquet of cherries, raspberries, candied peel and subtle spice. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, layered and succulent, with fine-grained tannins, a deep core of juicy fruit, and a long, mouthwatering finish. Right now it remains youthfully primary, but this Pinot Noir combines amplitude and energy which means it should be an interesting proposition for medium-term cellaring.
16LRCH	Tyler La Rinconada Vineyard Chardonnay 2016	93	The 2016 Chardonnay La Rinconada Vineyard is one of the more giving and expressive whites in Justin Willett's range this year, offering up aromas of green mango, orchard fruit and hazelnut cream. On the palate, it's medium-bodied, mouthwatering and avorful, with a bright, chalky nish. I'd expect more texture to appear with a year or two in bottle.
16DB5PN	Tyler Dierberg Vineyard 'Block 5' Pinot Noir 2016	93	The 2016 Pinot Noir Dierberg Vineyard Block Five is lovely, offering up complex aromas of crushed berries, citrus rind, potpourri and loamy soil. On the palate, it's medium to full-bodied, layered and sappy, with a juicy core of delicate dark fruit and a tangy, fragrant finish. It's one of the more youthfully expressive wines in the range, but it has deceptive substance too.
16LEPN	Tyler La Encantada Vineyard Pinot Noir 2016	93	The 2016 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard offers up earthy notes of red cherries, plums and raspberries that mingle with nuances of sandalwood and raw cocoa. On the palate, it's medium-bodied, ample and velvety, with juicy acids and seamless structure. The finish is long and savory. This is another of the more reserved wines in Willett's 2016 portfolio, so forget about it in the cellar for a year or two.

16DBCH	Tyler Dierberg Vineyard Chardonnay 2016	92+	Opening in the glass with notes of pear, yellow orchard fruit and honeycomb, the 2016 Chardonnay Dierberg Vineyard is a tight-knit, medium-bodied and acid-driven wine, with a lovely core of concentrated fruit lurking behind what are currently quite prominent structuring elements. It's a vivid, tensile wine which will need two or three years in the cellar before it begins to unwind.
16S&BPN	Tyler Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot Noir 2016	92+	The 2016 Pinot Noir Sanford & Benedict is quite youthfully reserved, opening in the glass with delicate notions of strawberries, rhubarb and orange rind. On the palate, it's medium-bodied, supple and texturally expansive, with bright acids and satiny, melting tannins. The finish is pure and tangy. I suspect this particular Pinot Noir is playing its cards quite close to its vest right now, so give it a few years in the cellar to unwind.
16SBCPN	Tyler Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 2016	90	The 2016 Pinot Noir from Tyler bursts from the glass with a pure and expressive bouquet of red plums, raspberries, rose hips and spice. On the palate, it's medium-bodied, supple and velvety, with an expansively textural attack, melting tannins, and succulent, mouthwatering acids. It's an elegant but flavorful Pinot Noir that's already drinking well but which should be interesting to follow for the next five years.
16SBCCH	Tyler Santa Barbara County Chardonnay 2016	90	The 2016 Chardonnay is lovely, wafting from the glass with aromas of honeyed citrus, white flowers and struck match. On the palate, it's elegantly glossy, medium-bodied and pure, with lovely cut and a chalky, mouthwatering nish. It's still showing a touch of sulfur dioxide after bottling, so if you plan on drinking this Chardonnay in the near future I'd recommend giving it a short decant.