



Santa Barbara: Better Than Ever

Santa Barbara is one of the most exciting and dynamic regions anywhere in the world. Each year, new vineyards, estates and projects pop up seemingly without end in the expansive pristine stretch of land that encompasses Santa Barbara County. The daring, innovative spirit embodied by the region's young producers and a vast range of first-class sites creates conditions that are ideal for the production of distinctive, pedigreed wines of the highest level. Best of all, with few exceptions, these wines remain under the radar and very fairly priced relative to global peers. On a strictly personal level, these qualities, along with the region's stunning natural beauty, make Santa Barbara one of my favorite places in the world to spend time in. For more, readers might enjoy revisiting my article *Santa Barbara: On the Road*, which delves into the region's history and geography.

Justin Willett made some of the most memorable wines of the 2015 vintage. His Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs are exceptional. It's hard to know where to start with this range, as quality is so high across the board. The appellation wines will give readers a very good introduction to these wines. As always, Willett's style is one of grace and understatement. Even in a freakish vintage like 2015, the personality of each site in the range is beautifully delineated.

-- Antonio Galloni

Wine Code	Wine	Score	Notes	Drinking Window
15BNNPN	Tyler Bien Nacido 'N Block' Pinot Noir 2015	96	The 2015 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard - N Block is an intense, almost overwhelming wine with huge aromatic presence and a crescendo of super-ripe fruit, all backed up by considerable tannic heft. It will need at least a few years to be at its very best but...what a wine!	2020-2035
15BNWCH	Tyler Bien Nacido Vineyard 'W Block' Chardonnay 2015	95	Tyler's 2015 Chardonnay Bien Nacido Vineyard - W Block is just as compelling from bottle as it was from tank last year. Soaring aromatics and intense fruit are two of the signatures, but it is the wine's overall balance that elevates it to the realm of the finest wines of the year. Weightless and yet intensely saline, the 2015 is superb. Don't miss it.	2019-2025
15BRPN	Tyler Bentrack Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015	95	The 2015 Pinot Noir Bentrack Vineyard is exceptionally vivid. Deep and richly textured, yet also translucent, the 2015 has a lot to offer. Bright red cherry, raspberry, rose petal, mint and chalk develop nicely in the glass. The flavors are wonderfully delineated throughout. Sadly, this is the last vintage of Bentrack from Tyler, which is a shame, as the wine is magically pure and one of the very finest expressions of this site in recent years.	2020-2030
15LRPN	Tyler La Rinconada Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015	95	The 2015 Pinot Noir La Rinconada Vineyard offers striking purity in its fruit and exceptional pedigree. Super-ripe red cherry, lavender, rose petal, hard candy, spice and floral notes race from this expressive, open-knit wine. The Rinconada is exuberant but also light on its feet. It will be virtually impossible to resist upon release, as it is the sexiest wine in this range.	2020-2030
15DBCH	Tyler Dierberg Vineyard Chardonnay 2015	94	Tyler's 2015 Chardonnay Dierberg Vineyard is brilliant and precise, with all the energy that is such a signature of Santa Maria Chardonnays. Creamy and pliant, but also wonderfully chiseled, the Dierberg is an exceptional wine in every way. A burst of lemon oil and white flowers on the finish leaves a lasting impression.	2017-2023
15S&BCH	Tyler Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Chardonnay 2015	94	The 2015 Chardonnay Sanford & Benedict Vineyard emerges from the oldest vines on the site, planted in 1971. Not surprisingly, the 2015 is a phenolic wine that plays more on structure than fruit. Intensely mineral- and slate-driven notes punctuate the finish. Readers should plan to cellar the 2015 for at least a few years, as it needs time to unwind. This is another superb wine from Tyler.	2017-2023
15BNOVPN	Tyler Bien Nacido Vineyard 'Old Vine' Pinot Noir 2015	94	The 2015 Pinot Noir Bien Nacido Vineyard - Old Vines is bold, pungent and super-expressive. It also has huge tannins that are going to need time to soften. The aromatics are beautifully lifted, but this is a virile, potent wine with real muscle behind its powerful, dense personality.	2020-2030
15DB5PN	Tyler Dierberg Vineyard 'Block 5' Pinot Noir 2015	94	The 2015 Pinot Noir Dierberg Vineyard - Block 5 is another drop-dead gorgeous beauty from Tyler. Dark and mysterious, containing a multitude of layers that are just waiting to emerge, the 2015 is fabulous. Readers should expect a virile, imposing Pinot that needs time to come together. Even with all of its intensity, the 2015 preserves remarkable focus as it captures the pedigree of this site.	2020-2030

15LEPN	Tyler La Encantada Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015	94	The 2015 Pinot Noir La Encantada Vineyard is one of the more ethereal of the wines in the range, largely because of the large quantity of stems (50-plus %) included in fermentation. Bright red stone fruit and mint are given an extra kick of aromatic lift from the whole clusters. Readers who find some of the 2015 Pinots too intense will admire the restrained style of the Rinconada.	2020-2030
15S&BPN	Tyler Sanford & Benedict Vineyard Pinot Noir 2015	93+	Tyler's 2015 Pinot Noir Sanford & Benedict Vineyard is another wine that shows the more restrained side of the year. Lifted, precise and delicate, the 2015 is a wine of grace and finesse above all else. The ripeness of the vintage comes through, but today the S&B is quite reticent, perhaps because the 33% whole clusters need to fully integrate. I would like to see the 2015 in another year or two. There is much to like here.	2020-2030
15LRCH	Tyler La Rinconada Vineyard Chardonnay 2015	93+	The 2015 Chardonnay La Rinconada Vineyard is similar in style to the Sanford & Benedict (which is right next door), but it is a little more available. Creamy and expressive on the palate, the 2015 offers striking depth of fruit and exceptional balance. Lemon confit, chamomile and lightly honeyed tones grace this very pretty and expressive Chardonnay from Tyler.	2017-2023
15SBCPN	Tyler Santa Barbara County Pinot Noir 2015	92	The 2015 Pinot Noir (Santa Barbara County) will give readers an idea of what to expect in this vintage. Powerful and deep in every way, the 2015 exudes richness. Succulent black cherry, plum, spice and new leather are pushed forward. Far from an easygoing appellation-level Pinot, the 2015 is going to need to shed tannin and come into its own.	2020-2030
15SBCCH	Tyler Santa Barbara County Chardonnay 2015	91	The 2015 Chardonnay (Santa Barbara County) is a terrific entry-level wine. Orchard fruit, baked apple, white flowers and mint are nicely delineated, but it is the wine's energy and pure, saline character that give tension and pedigree. What a gorgeous wine this is!	2017-2022
15ZFCH	Tyler Zotovich Vineyard Chardonnay 2015	91	The 2015 Chardonnay Zotovich Family Vineyard is another very pretty wine from Tyler. Here, the richness and radiance of the year seems to dominate over site character, but the wine is quite delicious if taken on its own terms. Readers should expect a juicy yet midweight Chardonnay that will drink well upon release.	2017-2023