

THE **tastingpanel** MAGAZINE

MODERN MOONSHINERS

INTRODUCING
OLE SMOKY MOONSHINE'S
NEWEST BRAND
AMBASSADORS



OLE SMOKY'S MASTERS OF MOONSHINE convened at the edge of the Great Smoky Mountains in May to immerse themselves in the history and culture of the Tennessee-based brand. Pictured clockwise from right are Carlos Ruiz, Kenny Strong, Madeline Bishop, and Ginny Edwards, Ole Smoky's first crop of Brand Ambassadors.

Anthony Dias

BLUE *REVIEWS*

Presented by  BLUE LIFESTYLE

In each issue, Editor-in-Chief Anthony Dias Blue selects a wide range of the best wines and spirits from among the more than 500 he samples over the course of a month. The reviews are subjective editorial evaluations, made without regard to advertising, and products are scored on a 100-point scale:

85-89: VERY GOOD

90-94: OUTSTANDING

95-100: CLASSIC

Once products are selected for publication, producers and importers will be offered the option of having their review accompanied by an image (bottle photo or label art) for a nominal fee. There is no obligation to add an image, nor does the decision affect the review or score in any way.

 The "twisty" icon indicates wines sealed with a screwcap closure.

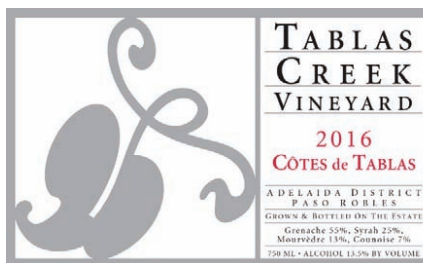
For additional Blue Reviews, go to www.bluelifestyle.com.


Prices are for 750 ml. bottles unless otherwise noted.

DOMESTIC



92 **Sangiacomo Family Vineyards 2016 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$55)** Juicy with mineral notes and ripe pear; elegant and balanced; long, fresh, and stylish with finesse and nuance; the first wine from the family farming this world-famous vineyard.



92 **Tablas Creek Vineyard 2016 Cotes de Tablas, Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$35)** Raspberry hue; spicy, smooth, and exuberant with lush and tangy fruit; dense and well-balanced with a lengthy finish. 

VINEYARD BRANDS

95 Testarossa Winery 2016
Barrel Selection Nielaire
Pinot Noir, California (\$90)

Bright ruby color; soft plum and berry nose; smooth, lush texture; meaty and rich with balance, depth, and complexity; another winner from this consistently underrated producer.

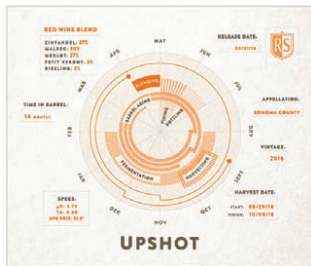
91 Tangent 2016 Stone
Egg Albariño, Paragon
Vineyard, Edna Valley (\$32)

Bright, flavorful, and tangy with racy acidity and a refined style; clean and luscious; produced from estate grapes fermented separately in a concrete egg-shaped tank.

92 Ponzi Vineyards 2015
Reserve Pinot Noir,
Willamette Valley, Oregon

(\$65) Meaty and dense with ripe cherry and savory notes alongside salinity and spice; another winner from this historic family winery, which celebrated its 45th anniversary during this vintage. ☺

VINTUS WINES



92 Rodney Strong Vineyards
2016 Upshot Red Blend,
Sonoma County (\$28)

Deep ruby red; smooth and weighty with notes of earth and chocolate; juicy and long with style and finesse; a product of an excellent winery that's become one of Sonoma's best.

IMPORTED

92 Bodega Chacra 2017
Barda Pinot Noir,
Patagonia, Argentina (\$30)

Lovely, bright cherry on the nose and palate; crisp, balanced, and fresh with tangy acidity; grown on slightly sandy soils in Chacra's youngest vineyards and aged ten months in French oak.

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

92 Tenuta di Nozzole 2013
La Forra Sangiovese
Riserva, Chianti Classico DOCG

(\$50) Deep earth and berry nose; polished and flavorful with complex structure and tangy fruit; another stylish Folonari success.

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

92 Château La Nerthe 2017
Châteauneuf-du-Pape,
France (\$60)

Smooth, dense, and luxurious with ripe aromas; a lovely, perfectly balanced Rhône blend of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne, Clairette, and Bourboulenc from one of the best producers in the region.

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

91 Benoît Mérias Montlouis
2014 Les Maisonnettes
Chenin Blanc, Montlouis-sur-Loire, France (\$27)

Produced from 100% organic Chenin aged on the lees in Burgundy barrels; bright and tangy with green apple notes; silky, fresh, and racy; crisp, long, and intense.

SHIVERICK IMPORTS

92 Craggy Range Vineyards
2015 Te Muna Road
Pinot Noir, Martinborough,
New Zealand (\$45)

Deep ruby color with an earthy and bright cherry nose; velvety, dense texture with aromatic berry fruit. ☺

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS



89 Rich Wine Company
2015 Rich & Spicy
Cabernet Sauvignon,
California (\$15)

Silky and bright with tangy plum and succulent spice; dry, rich, and deep; long and balanced. ☺

92 Tenuta di Nozzole
2015 Chianti Classico
Sangiovese Riserva, Chianti
Classico DOCG (\$30)

Smooth and lush with ripe berries and spice; tangy, racy, and complex with a long finish; another classic Folonari wine.

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

VALUE

90 Boutinot
Wines
Feudo Maccari
2017 Olli Grillo,
Terre Siciliane
IGP (\$20)

Typically used in the production of Marsala, this Sicilian grape proves it can make lovely table wine; clean, velvety, and aromatic with abundant flavor.

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS



BLUE REVIEWS

91 Fasoli Gino 2014 Pieve Vecchia Soave, Bianca Veronese IGT (\$21) Pleasing golden color; rich and mellow with ripe fruit; toasty, lush, and balanced with lasting acidity. 100% Garganega grown on sandy soil by a winery adhering to organic and Biodynamic practices.

M.M. IMPORTS

88 Château Chantal Celebrate Semi-Dry Sparkling, Old Mission Peninsula, Michigan (\$15) Despite committing the serious infraction of using the word “Champagne” on the label, this is a pleasant semi-sweet sparkler: clean, smooth, tangy, and long. ☺



88 Snowbirds Vintners 2016 Grüner Veltliner, Lake Chelan AVA, Washington (\$18) Crisp, refined, ripe, and dense from this “vacation-inspired,” sustainably made brand; polished, simple, and balanced; a nice domestic take on this Austrian variety.

90 Steele Wines 2015 Writer’s Block Syrah, Cana Springs Vineyard, Lake County (\$18) Dark, juicy, and fragrant with blackberry and spice. Jed Steele does it again with this clean, rich, and balanced wine.

90 Ponzi Vineyards 2017 Pinot Gris, Willamette Valley, Oregon (\$19) Elegant and bright with minerality and flavorful fruit notes that linger; a smooth and tangy winner from Oregon. ☺

VINTUS WINES

91 Domaine La Croix Montjoie 2014 Bourgogne-Vézelay L’Impatiente Chardonnay, France (\$21) Silky with tangy citrus, crisp, bright minerality, and elegant structure; 100% Chardonnay hand-harvested from clay- and limestone-based soil.

SHIVERICK IMPORTS

92 Domaine Raphaël Chopin 2015 Régnié La Ronze, Régnié AOC, France (\$24) Deep, dark ruby color; smooth and sumptuous with cassis and cherry, this is what Beaujolais should aspire to be. 100% Gamay manually harvested from schist and pink granite soil.

SHIVERICK IMPORTS

90 Baileyana 2017 Rosé of Pinot Noir, Paragon Vineyard, Edna Valley (\$24) Medium-light pink with a strawberry nose; smooth, dry, and crisp with racy acidity; smooth texture with a long finish. ☺

92 Silver Wines 2013 Cabernet Franc, Santa Barbara County (\$25) Creamy and juicy with lively plum and deep berry fruit; rich, elegant, and balanced; an excellent effort from this talented producer.



91 Pighin 2016 Estate Pinot Grigio, Collio DOC, Italy (\$18) Fresh, bright, and austere with minerality, citrus notes, fine structure, and length from a producer that takes this variety seriously.

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS

90 Tenuta Campo al Mare 2017 Vermentino Bolgheri, Bolgheri DOC (\$20) Lush and smooth with tangy acidity and fresh fruit; rich and balanced, it’s yet another lovely bottling from the Folonari family.

KOBRAND WINE & SPIRITS



90 Divum Wines 2016 Chardonnay, Grava Vineyard, Monterey AVA (\$20) Silky and bright with a soft and creamy texture; lush but showing a lively pineapple structure; a complex well-made wine at a good value. ☺

88 Château Souverain 2016 Chardonnay, North Coast AVA (\$14) Clean, balanced, and long from a California winery dating back to 1944; silky, fresh, and simple yet appealing.



91 Tiki Sound 2017 Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough, New Zealand (\$16) Fresh, spicy nose; crisp,

racy, and tangy; bracing and lively, this is a charming wine without the usual regional funk. ☺

WINE TREES USA

91 Bonny Doon Vineyard 2017 Vin Gris de Cigare, Central Coast AVA (\$18) A light pink blend of six Rhône varieties: 57% Grenache, 18% Grenache Blanc, 9% Mourvèdre, 6% Roussanne, 5% Carignane, and 5% Cinsaut. Tangy and bright with soft edges; a good impression of a Provençal rosé. ☺

SPIRITS



91 **Dos Eon 16-Year Rum, Dominican Republic** (\$50) Deep amber color with a highly aromatic, spiced nose; refined, complex, and dense; dry and spicy with a lasting finish.

RHINO GLOBAL ENTERPRISES



91 **Colina Colada Ron Con Horchata** (\$25) Pleasingly creamy with almond notes and lovely toast; balanced, long, and suave; made from a centuries-old family recipe blending Caribbean rum with fresh dairy cream, cinnamon, lemon, and other distinctive flavors.

RHINO GLOBAL ENTERPRISES

92 **Re:Find Cucumber Vodka, USA** (\$26) Fresh-cut cucumber nose with a crisp, clean base vodka made from grapes; smooth and floral; long and balanced.

92 **Alipús Mezcal Ensemble, Mexico** (\$65) Vivid nose with spice also strongly present on the palate; smoky, earthy, and textured; 80% Espadín agave and 20% semi-wild Bicuíshe.

CRAFT DISTILLERS



93 **Bulleit Rye Whiskey, USA** (\$28) Rich and toasted; spicy, deep, and lush with grass and caramel notes; a pure and classic rye from this top producer.

DIAGEO NORTH AMERICA



92 **1792 Full Proof Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey, USA** (\$45) Lush and nuanced nose; silky, sweet, and toasty with no hard edges; a mellow, dense,

and long cask-strength spirit.



95 **Caorunn Gin, Scotland** (\$35) Exceptionally smooth, rich, and deep with complex, dignified flavors; the Scots show the English how it's done with this Double Gold winner at the 2018 San Francisco World Spirits Competition. ■■

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