

8 California Pinot Noirs at 90+ Points

These outstanding reds show the Golden State's diversity with the variety, from Sonoma to Santa Barbara

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"There are nearly 800 miles between California's north and south borders, and more than 100 American Viticultural Areas (AVAs) in between. Many of those AVAs are situated near the state's massive coastline, and thus are well-suited to Pinot Noir, which thrives in cooler locales. California's vast reaches are on display in this week's selection, highlighting a variety of Pinot Noir styles from several notable regions, each notching 90 points or higher in recent tastings."

Starting in the south, we have two wines from Sta. Rita Hills: one from Santa Barbara winery Brewer-Clifton, and the other from Napa-based **Luna**. Both wines go through whole-cluster fermentations and used barrels, yielding balanced expressions of the grape, with structure, earth and spice notes.

Slingshotting to the far north leads us to Masut's Eagle Peak Pinot Noir. Brothers Jake and Ben Fetzer are among the few vintners with vines in this relatively new and mountainous appellation in Mendocino County. The high elevation of the area (between 800 and 3,200 feet) provides ample sun exposure, but also cooler nighttime temperatures, balancing fruit ripeness with fresh acidity. This results in rich and concentrated wines with crunchy acidity.

And don't miss everything in between. Not far from Eagle Peak lies Anderson Valley, where Kendall-Jackson makes a ripe and fruity style. Flowers and CrossBarn offer exemplary coastal versions. Acacia and Morgan also highlight their particular climates with a generous and spicy Carneros Pinot, and a juicy and finely textured version from Santa Lucia Highlands, respectively."

by Aaron Romano



LUNAVINEYARDS

Pinot Noir Sta. Rita Hills Winemaker's Reserve 2017

Score: 92 | \$45

WS REVIEW: Delicate, complex and lengthens out nicely with a mix of underbrush and dried berry flavors that are supported by firm acidity. Rich finish has dried meat and cedar accents, with some creamy hints. Drink now through 2023. 1,081 cases made.

—K.M."

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