

Model Farm

California

(California and WA DC regional sales only)



The Wines

- *Berger Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon*: Made from heritage vines planted on St. George rootstock in 1973, growing on an east-facing ridge of Sonoma Mountain. These old vines are farmed by Ned Hill, a 5th-generation grower with values in sync with those of Joanna and Sean. No herbicides or chemical pesticides are used, and mildew is controlled by natural and bio fungicides. The grapes are de-stemmed and ferment spontaneously in small wooden uprights without additives or commercial enzymes. Extractions are gentle. The wine is aged for 18 months in barrel, mostly neutral, and bottled without fining or filtration. This is old-school California Cab at its best. Production averages 200 cases.
- *Wildcat Mountain Vineyard Chardonnay*: Planted by Steve MacRostie in 1998 and farmed today by Ned Hill on the ridge that separates Sonoma Valley from Petaluma, some 1,000 feet in elevation. The soil is meager, full of volcanic rock on top of metamorphic bedrock, and MacRostie chose one of the windiest, ripening retarding sites in Sonoma Valley. The wine is made with whole clusters in small lots with native ferments in barrel (all neutral) for both alcoholic and malolactic fermentations. Élevage is 12 months in barrel, followed by six in steel barrels, entirely on fine lees without stirring or fining. Production averages 300 cases.
- *P.M. Staiger Vineyard Chardonnay*: Made from heritage vines planted on their own roots in 1973 high on a ridge in Boulder Creek, Santa Cruz Mountains. The cuttings came from David Bruce's original vineyard of Wente clone Chardonnay. It's a small, cold vineyard still somehow keeping phylloxera at bay while producing small yields at low sugars and excellent acidities. Élevage is 12 months in older barrels, followed by six in steel barrels, entirely on fine lees without stirring or fining. Production averages 180 cases.
- *Sonoma Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon*: This comes from younger vines planted at the Berger site in the 1990s. The grapes are harvested with the heritage grapes but fermented separately along the same lines as the heritage fruit. Production averages 200 cases.

- *Alta Heights Pinot Noir*: Compelling wines at compelling prices is the mantra here with Alta Heights. The appellation is legally and simply California, but qualified by Joanna and Sean as California Alpine Wine. The distinction is key: Alta Heights is not a product of valley floors but of mountain tops that make for singular wines of deep concentration and driving natural acidity. This wine is entirely from the rocky heights of Signal Mountain along the Mendocino coast ridge, the highest vineyard site in Mendo (Sonoma too for that matter, and tied for highest in Napa) at 2,742 feet in elevation, growing on 30%+ grades and planted to seven selections of Pinot Noir. The vines are dry-farmed and tended biodynamically, and the wine is made traditionally and aged in barrel for 12 months (in warmer years, some whole cluster is used during ferments; in colder years, the grapes are all de-stemmed and consequently as much as 10% new wood may be employed during the aging process). No fining and no additives whatsoever except minimal effective SO₂. Production averages 1,500 cases.
- *Alta Heights Chardonnay*: Like the Pinot above, this comes from the top of Signal Mountain. The vines are heritage clones of Wente, Mt. Eden and Hyde Wente that went into the ground in a planting overseen by Joanna in 2019. The grapes are whole-cluster pressed and all ferments are spontaneous. The wine is brought up in neutral barrels for 12 months and finished for six in stainless steel barrels on its fine lees without stirring or fining. The only additive is minimal effective SO₂. Production averages 1,500 cases.