$60 Wine Club Selections

**Easton, Zinfandel, Amador County, 2019**

About . . .
Bill Easton is one of the pioneers of Amador's modern winemaking era, founding his winery in 1984, and his wines still lead the pack in terms of quality. Easton's high elevation sites reach up to 3,200 feet and contribute to the complexity of the wines.

Easton puts his name on his non-Rhône varietals wines, those that have traditionally worked the best in Amador County and the Sierra Foothills: ancient and old-vine Zinfandel, Barbera, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Sauvignon Blanc. Under the Easton label he also bottles small selections of varietals new to the Sierra Foothills: Grenache Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Cabernet Franc.

Easton makes wines that are unique and site-specific with a sense of place all of their own. He farms and runs his winery sustainably, even relying entirely on solar power for his tasting room and winemaking facilities.

**THE AREA**

The grape varietal . . .

Red zinfandel is known for its rich, dark purple color scheme, medium to high tannin levels, high alcohol content, and medium acidity. While the red wine tends to be medium-bodied and medium dry, it is bursting with flavors and aromas of jam, raspberry, blackberry, cherry, plums, cinnamon, black pepper, and licorice all wrapped around various intensities of oak.

Zinfandel is one of the most popular wine grapes grown in California and is especially popular in northern California and the central coast. The vines like warm, sunny days but dislike intense heat, and the thin skinned-fruit is susceptible to rot. Good draining is key, making them good for planting on slopes. Zinfandel is typically grown in the summer and harvested as early as mid-August or well into fall, often called a "late harvest" zin.

Old vine zinfandels are red wines made from grapevines over 50 years old. These are prized for their intense color and balanced flavors and often fetch a high price. Old vines grapes are almost exclusively used to make red zinfandel.

### About the Amador wine region

The historical Amador wine region traces its roots back to the Gold Rush of the 1850s as settlers came looking for gold in the California foothills. Many of the prospectors were immigrants from Europe and brought with them their love of wine. Vineyards were planted and wineries opened to supply the thirst of the miners. Some plantings from the Gold Rush continue to thrive in Amador County today, giving producers access to some of the oldest vineyards in California. The region is home to 45-plus wineries and more than 3,700 acres of vineyards planted on rolling hillsides. Long a home of amazing zinfandels, growers have planted, and winemakers are now making wines from a diverse array of grapes including barbera, sangiovese and syrah in the reds and sauvignon blanc, pinot grigio and viognier in the whites, just to name a few.

The region has garnered acclaim for full bodied, rich fruit flavors in its wines with balance and harmony that pair well with numerous foods and cuisines. Award-winning restauranteurs and sommeliers seek out wines from the Amador region to complement their menus and enhance their wine lists.

**Tasting Notes:**Epitomizes fine Sierra Foothills Zinfandel, offering vibrant, briary raspberry, smoked pepper and wild sweet anise flavors that stretch out on the zesty finish.

**Food Pairing:** Red zinfandel pairs well with almost any meat—lamb, poultry, pork, beef, game, and turkey. Try pairing the flavorful red wine with grilled pork chops or roasted leg of lamb. The light sweetness in red zinfandel also works nicely with fragrant spiced dishes such as curried beef. Hard, flavorful cheese is best, such as cheddar or manchego.

luscious mouthfeel persists across a lengthy finish. Several vineyard sites throughout the

# **Domaine de la Chátaigneraie Gautier "Argilex" Vouvray Sec 2019**

Vouvray

Vouvray (“voo-vray”) is a white wine made with Chenin Blanc grapes that grow along the banks of the Loire River in the Touraine district of France. Wines range in style from dry to sweet, and still to sparkling, each with its own distinct character. Regardless of style, Vouvray is loved for its delicate floral aromas and boisterous taste that will pucker your lips and make you immediately wish for another sip.

Wines range in color from [medium straw](https://winefolly.com/review/complete-wine-color-chart/) (for sparkling wines) all the way to deep gold (for aged sweet Moelleux). Typically, the aromas are moderately intense, delivering flavors of pear, honeysuckle, quince, and apple (green or yellow). Often the wines display subtle notes of ginger and beeswax – hinting at the [presence of noble rot.](https://winefolly.com/tutorial/they-call-it-noble-rot-botrytis/) In terms of flavors, these wines range from lean, dry, and minerally, to fruity and succulently sweet, depending on the style.

* **Sec:**Dry (wines with less than 8 g/L of residual sugar). The driest style of Vouvray is typically bracing and minerally.
* Top of Form

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| Varietal: | Chenin Blanc - Also called Pineau de la Loire and Pineau d'Anjou. Chenin Blanc is an expressive white French varietal that makes beautiful dry, sweet and sparkling wines. Traditionally grown in the Loire Valley, the wines made from this varietal are typically labeled geographically. Vouvray Chenins are traditionally medium-sweet; Savennières Chenins are typically bright and crisp; Coteaux du Layon Chenins like Bonezeaux and Quarts de Chaume are among the world's most sought-after sweet wines, and the sparkling Chenins of Saumur are perfumed and delicious. What all of these iterations of the grape have in common is their ability to age, a gift bestowed upon them because of the grape's naturally high-acidity. |
| Country: | France - When it comes to wine, France stands alone. No other country can beat it in terms of quality and diversity. And while many of its Region, Bordeaux, Burgundy and Champagne most obviously, produce wine as rare, as sought-after and nearly as expensive as gold, there are just as many obscurities and values to be had from little known appellations throughout the country. To learn everything there is to know about French wine would take a lifetime. To understand and appreciate French wine, one only has to begin tasting them. |
| Sub-Region: | Loire - Of all of the French wine producing regions, the Loire might produce the greatest variety of wines. They range from still to sparkling, very dry and acidic to hearty sweet, and clear in color to a deep purple. The diversity of wine produced in this region is due in part to its dynamic climate, which ranges from Continental to Mediterranean. This region is best known for Sauvignon blanc, Chenin blanc and Cabernet Franc. The most famous areas in the Loire Valley may be Sancerre and Vouvray. |

* Bottom of Form

The Gautier domaine in Vouvray has been in the family for seven generations. The origins are known to date back to the 17th Century, from a document noting the presence of vines around the Gautier house in 1669. Benoit Gautier, the present viticulturer, took charge in 1981. He began the policy of domaine bottling, whereas previously the wines were sold to negociants. The domaine comprises 12 hectares of vines in the communes of Rochecorbon and Parcay-Meslay. The soil is the classic “Tuffeau” or limestone-chalk for which the central Loire is famous. The average age of the vines is 25 years. Gautier follows a policy of hand-picking The harvest takes place over a period of 20 days in late September and October. The grapes are pressed in a new pneumatic press and fermented and matured in temperature-controlled stainless steel cuves. The bottling takes place in April or May following the vintage, and the bottles are aged in a permanently cool cellars cut deep into the hillside. ARGILEX. It derives from white clay (argile) soil mixed with crumbled silex or quartz in specific vineyards; sloping parcels in the communes of Rochecorbon and Parcay-Meslay. The silex particles embedded in clay often glisten in the sunlight. The wine is vinified at cold temperature and fermented and aged in stainless steel tanks to highlight the bright, racy fruit. The fine lees are kept in suspension until bottling, as they impart complexity and nuance to the wine.

Tasting Notes:

The grapes for the Argilex are harvested by hand at the precise moment when ripeness and natural acidity are in optimal balance, so that the wines is as fresh, vivid and expressive as possible. Gautier's Vouvray Argilex is a sylish, fully dry Vouvray, with pear, apricot and citrus notes carried by a long, minerally finish.

**Cristia, Ventoux Rouge, Ventoux France, 2019**

**About the region**:

The Rhône Valley in France is a veritable treasure trove of wine. There's truly something here for every wine lover, whether it's a stately Châteauneuf-du-Pape red, or just an inexpensive, yet beautifully crafted regional wine.

Cristia is one of the hidden gems of the region: The Ventoux.

The Ventoux AOC is a gorgeous region, rich in biodiversity. The area is home to a wide variety of rare and endemic plant species in addition to a vibrant and diverse range of fauna including deer and birds of prey. On the slopes of Mt Ventoux, amid white oak, holm oak, cedar, beech, pine and larch, the Mediterranean and Alpine worlds meet in harmony.

Vineyards in this region share the land and mingle with groves of olive trees, fields of lavender and patches of garigue -- the wonderfully aromatic collection of scrubby flora that includes thyme, rosemary and savory.

**Ventoux** is a large wine region in the far southeast of the southern Rhône, on the border with Provence. The appellation was known as Côtes de Ventoux until October 2009. It is located 40 kilometers (25 miles) northeast of Avignon, in the Vaucluse department.

The wines made in the Ventoux [appellation](https://www.wine-searcher.com/technical-wine-terms-a-b.lml#appellation) are very similar to those of the [Côtes du Rhône](https://www.wine-searcher.com/regions-cotes%2Bdu%2Brhone%22%20%5Co%20%22C%C3%B4tes%20du%20Rh%C3%B4ne%20Wine%20Region%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) title and employ much the same combination of grape varieties. The classic southern Rhone red grape varieties of [Grenache](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-202-grenache), [Syrah](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-1651-syrah) and [Mourvèdre](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-298-mourvedre) are used in the production of most of these wines, with [Cinsaut](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-105-cinsaut%22%20%5Co%20%22Cinsaut%20Wine%20Grape%20Variety%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) and [Carignan](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-583-carignan) also used to a smaller extent.

The area does produce some white wines. These are made from [Clairette](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-106-clairette), [Bourboulenc](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-62-bourboulenc%22%20%5Co%20%22Bourboulenc%20Wine%20Grape%20Variety%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) and [Grenache Blanc](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-737-grenache-blanc), with the occasional use of [Roussanne](https://www.wine-searcher.com/grape-424-roussanne). Quantities of these are far outweighed by red and rosé wines.

Mont Ventoux looks down over the wine-producing areas of the [Rhône Valley](https://www.wine-searcher.com/regions-rhone) to the west and [Provence](https://www.wine-searcher.com/regions-provence) to the south and east. The mountain (often referred to as the Giant of Provence) stands alone from the Alps mountain range, of which it is technically a part, and towers over the landscape for miles around.

On the western slopes and foothills of this iconic mountain, in an area roughly 30 miles (50km) from north to south and covering 51 communes, are the vineyards of the Ventoux appellation. The Côtes du Luberon region lies on its southern border.

Wines have been made here since the 1st Century AD and have been consumed (and written about) by popes and kings throughout the centuries. The official Côtes du Ventoux appellation was created just before the harvest of 1973, for red, white and rosé wines.

The style of these wines varies according to the combination of grape varieties used and the [terroir](https://www.wine-searcher.com/technical-wine-terms-q-t.lml#terroir) from which they originate. The style is overall one of lighter, fruit-driven wines, compared with wines from neighboring regions. This reflects the increased [altitude](https://www.wine-searcher.com/technical-wine-terms-a-b.lml#altitude) and slightly cooler [mesoclimates](https://www.wine-searcher.com/technical-wine-terms-m-n.lml%22%20%5Cl%20%22mesoclimate%22%20%5Co%20%22%27Mesoclimate%27%20definition%22%20%5Ct%20%22_self) that the Ventoux slopes provide.

The intense southern French sunshine that covers the south- and west-facing slopes of Ventoux helps the wines to achieve a good level of phenolic ripeness, The cooler temperatures from altitude moderate this effect and grant the grapes extended hang time. Grapes grow so well here that the Muscat produced for table grapes has its own AOC Muscat du Ventoux appellation.

As with appellations and regions all over France, there has been a recent increase in investment and experimentation in the area, resulting in wines of higher quality from several Ventoux producers.

About the Winery:

Domain de Cristia was created by Etienne Granjon 70 years ago. Initially, the Domain was limited to only 2 hectares of vineyards, planted entirely with Grenache vines. Thanks to the driving force of Etienne's son Alain Grangeon, their vineyard holdings significantly increased. A passionate winegrower, Alain contributed to the expansion of the Domain, planting Syrah and Mourvedre to complement their Grenache holdings. In 1999, his son Baptiste and daughter Dominique joined Alain and continue to manage the family properties today.

Here's a quote from their website that nicely sums up their philosophy:

*"Above all, our aim is to produce wines that we are proud of. Of prime importance are finesse and elegance. From our Vin du Pays to our Châteauneuf-du-Pape, we invite you to discover the wines of Domaine de Cristia.*
*In addition, we offer a range of wines from the Rhône Valley, brought together under the*Cristia*Collection label."*

What's in the glass...

This medium-bodied best-buy Ventoux rouge is almost entirely Grenache with just a touch of Syrah and Mourvedre, lending an additional layer of finesse.  The family sources the fruit for this release from top properties all throughout the Ventoux and the end result sure shows it!

In the glass, it's all about savory red fruits, especially raspberry, framed with notes of garigue.  The smooth palate has great brightness and lift and there's just enough soft tannin present to be a winner at the dinner table. This is another perfect "Tuesday Night" wine that will shine with or without food and will be a go-to for Hammond me when the neighbors stop in for a glass.

On a side note, I'll have some of the Cristia domain wines in stock soon. They're beautiful wines, and while not in the bargain range, they're great wines for the weekend and special occasions. Keep an eye out -- especially for their Châteauneuf-du-Pape!

**$90 Wine Selections**

**Raymond Merlo, Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2007**

The Merlo Family Vineyards estate is located on the riverbanks of the wild and scenic South Fork of the Trinity River at the southern tip of Trinity County. Surrounded by 8,000 ft intercoastal mountains on all sides, these isolated vineyards are higher than most California vineyards at an elevation of 1,250 feet. Over 45 acres are currently planted with a variety of grape types using quality clone on terroir and site-specific rootstocks. Our vineyards include blocks of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel, and Syrah,.

The soils in Merlo Family Vineyards are of three distinctly different origins. The low-lying ground is young alluvial infill. Half of the vineyard is rock, gravel and sand deposited during the 1964 flood. This major event deposited over 30 feet of new material in the Pelatrue Creek Drainage. The creek spilled over into the Merlo Family Vineyard, eroding and baring old pastures. About 70% of the vineyard is infill deposited by the flood event. These soils are mixtures of rock, gravel, and sand base with decomposed granite silts deposited in varying depths on the surface.

The remaining soil is heavier native clay from shale origins that have been uniformly deposited from the shale cliffs behind the vineyard. All of the soils are well drained and are actively irrigated.

The vineyard is planted on 8’x6′ spacing and production is kept to 2½-4 tons per acre. Two shoot/fruit thinning passes are made each year to promote quality. The vineyard is thinned prior to verasion to adjust the overall crop load. A second thinning pass is made after verasion to remove fruit that is damaged or behind in maturity. Secondary crop, depending on the year, is removed at this time to stall or accelerate ripening.

In regard to soil management, Merlo Family Vineyards is actively cover-cropping to build organic matter resulting in increased nutrient and water holding capacities of the vineyard soils. As the soils are built, suitable nutrient cycles are planned with leguminous crops and the minimum of nutrient addition. The goal is to continue to use sustainable farming practices while improving grape quality. The Merlos are committed to responsible farming practices without losing focus on wine and grape quality goals.

**Winemaking on the Estate**

Merlo Family Vineyards was founded on the concept that quality wine is grown in the vineyard. “We are committed to making wines that are true expressions of the varietal fruit from which they are made," says Ray Merlo. The unique growing season of the Hyampom Valley produces exceptional fruit with a high natural acidity resulting in very structured wines with deep, elegant, and yet, fresh, fruit flavors. A minimalist approach is taken in the wine cellar, allowing the wines to clearly reflect the varietal character and distinct terroir of Hyampom Valley. The Merlo’s believe that the only way to truly make great wine is to grow great fruit.

Hyampom Valley has been a source of inspiration to the Merlo Family. “The fruit expresses such a strong sense of place. I want the unique characteristics of Hyampom Valley fruit to shine through, so that each wine is an elegant expression of the land." The Merlos have always believed that it is their job to showcase the unique character, vibrancy and concentration in the fruit – to carefully preserve the varietal character while layering in balance, structure and elegance. The result is wines boasting bold flavors and smooth tannins with elegant balance and acidity.

Hyampom Valley

Tucked away in the far reaches of Northern California lies Hyampom Valley – a remote river valley hidden amongst the towering 8000 ft. intercoastal mountains of Southern Trinity County. Hyampom, the Wintu Indian phrase for “plentiful valley", is a fitting name for one of the most remote and perhaps most ideal, winemaking regions in California.

Located roughly 100 miles north of Sonoma and Napa Counties, Hyampom Valley’s growing season is a full three to four weeks later than that of the wine country. This allows for a much slower ripening, increasing hang time and creating full concentrated flavors without over ripening or depleting natural acids. The valley’s wind-flow drives the terroir of the small mountain valley, causing the fluctuation in temperature and resulting humidity. Daily inland temperatures are regularly above 95 degrees F. Due to the strong coastal influences, each night the valley fills with cool moist air flowing downhill from the majestic, forested mountains that encircle the valley. This results in daily temperature fluctuations of up to 50 degrees F. The contrast in temperatures creates a rich and complex tannin structure that gives the wines strong backbone.

Hyampom Valley Ranch Soil and Geologic Description

The shaping of Hyampom Valley has been a fairly violent mixture of erosion and continental up-lift. It is composed of approximately 2000 acres of arable land and is isolated from the rest of the world by high mountains which surround it on all sides. The valley is spotted with coastal serpentines, ancient shales, unusual metamorphic rock and decomposing granites. A lead of carboniferous shale crosses the valley near the middle and croppings of coal are found in the river and on the hillsides. The best exposure occurs in the bed of the river which lies between the vineyard and the airstrip. Hyampom’s rough mountain topography, combined with the large seasonal flow of local streams, carry liberal quantities of mineral soils and large aggregate to the valley floor. The result is a cornucopia of soil variability.

Oak Knoll: The Oak Knoll District is famed for growing grapes with deep dark fruit flavors and silky complex tannin structures. This vineyard is nestled at the cooler base of the Mount Veeder foothills thus sustaining ample black cherry fruit and vanilla oak characteristics.

***Considered nearly perfect vintage for Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.
Wine Spectator rated the vintage 99 on its 100-point scale.***

### The Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley is probably one of the lesser-known sub-AVAs within the Napa Valley proper, sitting at the southern end of the valley.  This southern location puts it closer to the San Pablo Bay, moderating temperatures and resulting in wines that may be a bit lighter than those from vineyards further north.  The result is wines that are beautifully balanced, with great potential for aging, and that pair wonderfully with food.  Today's offering from R. Merlo Vineyards provides a wonderful example of Cabernet Sauvignon grown in the Oak Knoll District.**Tasting Notes:**

The 2007 Raymond Merlo Oak Knoll Cabernet Sauvignon is deep ruby in color.  The nose shows typical Cabernet aromas of black cherry, leather, and pencil lead, with an intriguing blueberry note.  The palate starts with more cherry, joined by spicy, tobacco notes and cassis.  Medium bodied and vibrant, this classic Cabernet looks to have a long life ahead of it.

Food Pairing: Serve with stone hearth rotisserie Cornish game hen accompanied by tomato basil risotto with roasted red bell peppers and a dessert of Tiramisu.

**Lachini Vineyards, Grape Republic Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley, 2017**

### **ABOUT THE PRODUCER**

Driven by a yearning for the old world and passion for Pinot Noir, Ron and Marianne Lachini planted their first vines in 1998. In 2001 they began to produce their premium, single vineyard Pinots and embraced their patient pursuit of world-class wines. Lachini Vineyards respects the time-honored principles of uncompromising desire for quality and long-term stewardship of the lands from which they harvest. Their commitment began as growers as they cultivated fruit that bear measurement to the test of time and other leading wines of the world. The Lachini Vineyards team brings years of experience and is committed to retaining the essence of our terroir along with each vintage’s character.

**Philosophy and Purpose**

Many in Oregon share our philosophy — “Respect the land and treat it well for generations to come.” Lachini Vineyard is hand-farmed using sustainable agriculture and organic practices. Sustainable viticulture not only protects and renews soil fertility but also minimizes adverse impacts on natural biological cycles such as health, safety, wildlife, water quality and the environment. Every farming method we practice, create or implement is meant to increase the vitality and potential of each grapevine.

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As of 2008, we have committed to Biodynamic and Organic practices and are currently seeking certification. Through sustainable agriculture and organic farming principles, we are at work within the vineyard daily — pruning in the winter months, bud break in early spring, verasion in summer, and harvest in early fall. We limit crop yields to extremely low levels (approximately 2 tons/acre); and through several stages of leaf, canopy and soil management we are able to harvest extremely ripe fruit, which gives us more consistently complex, age worthy and classic Pinot Noirs.

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Our tradition, innovation, low-impact winemaking and sustainable farming practices ultimately guide us to craft a continuity of quality that are distinctly Lachini. Our commitment and dedication is inspired by our lifelong journey to pursue a dream and way of life for generations to come.

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**The Willamette Valley**

Chehalem Mountains

[The Chehalem Mountain AVA](https://www.chehalemmountains.org/) is in the northern [Willamette Valley](https://www.willamettewines.com/) that hosts approximately 150 family-owned vineyards. The elevations of each vineyard range from 200 to over 1,000 feet. The vineyard is at the southeastern edge of the AVA with the western vines bordering the ribbon ridge AVA.

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Their sloping Estate Vineyard is comprised of Willakenzie series soils-ranging from 18 to 48 inches in depth. The shallow, fine silt loam over sedimentary rock has lower water capacity due to its sandy consistency and forces each vine to develop deep root systems.

The emerging terroir of these dark-brown to yellowish-brown soils reveal Pinot Noir wines with consistent earthy notes, darker fruits, chocolate, and a definitive flavor of anise and spice.

**TASTING NOTES:** Red fruits with subtle hints of dried flowers, spiced tea and wild mushrooms.

Cheers!

Shelli & Maverick