**January $60 Tasting Notes**

**Praxis, Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, 2015**

**100% Pinot Noir**

'Praxis makes perfect!' Praxis Cellars is a small [Sonoma County](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/wine-region/sonoma-county-region) family winery that was founded by Bill Arbios and his wife Susan in 2000, seven years after they established their first winery brand, the reputable Arbios Cellars. *Praxis* is derived from the Greek word for *practice*, as a doctor or lawyer practices his craft. The word *Praxis* was also a pre-Arts and Crafts philosophy in Europe, emphasizing the importance of striving for perfection, while knowing that it will never be achieved. It has been a fitting name for the wine label, as it offers Bill Arbios the opportunity to 'practice' his craft with different [wine varietals](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/varietals) from various [wine regions](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/regions) in California. Praxis wines are never blended, and instead, are intended to showcase specific varietals from single vineyards. Today, the rather successful sister label offers an incredibly diverse and exciting portfolio of wines produced from California's top wine regions.  
  
Bill Arbios has been an artful and innovative winemaker for over forty years now, but he happened upon his career by chance. While pursuing his childhood dream of becoming a veterinarian at UC Davis, he took a summer job at a vet's office where he soon realized that being a vet was more emotionally challenging than he had expected (and he risked caring for a backyard full of unwanted dogs and cats). While surveying the University catalog, Bill noticed a class called 'Introduction to American Wine,' and knowing that UC Davis is one of the best enology schools in the world, he thought he might as well learn something about wine while trying to figure out what he *really* wanted to do. Soon after Bill began studying the subject, he fell in love with winemaking, and he was thrilled that is encompassed chemistry, biology, physics, and bacteriology, as well as art and creativity. He was hooked!  
  
After graduating in 1973, Bill immediately embarked on his career in the wine industry. Prior to launching his first label (Arbios Cellars) in 1993, Bill held winemaking and consulting positions for several well-known [wineries](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/wineries) throughout [Napa Valley](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/wine-region/napa-valley-ava), Sonoma County, and the [Central Coast](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/wine-region/central-coast-ava), including stints at Château Soverain, Lyeth, Fieldstone and [Jarvis](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/winery/jarvis-estate-napa-valley-ava). In addition to his winemaking and vineyard management skills, Bill also gained extensive experience designing wineries from the ground up. While Bill enjoyed his successful career making wine for many prominent estates, he always felt somewhat restricted working for large wineries and yearned for his own roots. With the creation of Arbios Cellars and Praxis Cellars, Bill's dream of expressing his own vision and creating something lasting is now being realized. While Bill handles the role of winemaker, his wife Susan is responsible for much of the business side, including direct sales. Together, they have earned great respect in the industry and couldn't be happier for Arbios and Praxis' cult status success. We are ecstatic to present their limited-production 2015 Pinot Noir to our [*Gold PLUS! Wine Club*](https://www.goldmedalwineclub.com/wine-club/gold) members!

Tasting Notes: The Praxis 2015 Pinot noir comes from a vineyard in the southern end of the Sonoma Coast appellation, where the cool climatic conditions of San Pablo Bay influence the slow grow and even ripening. Ruby red in color, this soft, beautiful wine offers aromas of raspberry, cherry and mushroom-earth notes that fill the glass, along with hints of violet and vanilla. Flavors of cranberry, raspberry, red currant and plum are complemented by a touch of allspice. This Pinot Noir is balanced and alluring with bright acidity and a rich, velvety mouthfeel.

**Sempre Vive, Chardonnay, Napa Valley, 2013**

**Why We're Drinking It** The Disney-owned vineyard that produced this fruit must have been sprinkled with fairy dust. The wines from this single vineyard-sourced bottling are truly magical and always rank highly with our Tasting Panel. Light, yet vibrant with citrus, pineapple, and crunchy green apple, this 2013 also shows refreshing acidity and pleasing palate depth.

Winemaker Alison Green-Doran, one of California’s first female winemakers, grew up on a vineyard and trained with one of the wine world’s greats. A veteran, with 30+ years in the industry, it’s no surprise that her wines get high marks with critics -- and huge praise from fans.

**Things to Know:** Pedigree: Romeo Vineyards sources fruit for this Sempre Vive Chard from Silverado Winery’s vineyard (owned by the Disney family) in the prestigious Stags Leap AVA.

Serious winemaking chops: UC Davis-trained Doran (whose father purchased Simi Winery in 1969), counts the renowned Andre Tchelistcheff as a mentor. Stints in Alsace, Paso Robles, and Santa Ynez Valley further honed her talents.

Great value. Production of this single-vineyard Chard is teeny tiny (only 250 cases of the 2013 were produced). Kudos to our Sourcing Team for scoring this great juice for a song! .

**Tasting Notes** Tropical fruit and fresh lemon citrus flavors meld on the palate with patisserie, sweet spice, and subtle vanilla notes. Crisp acidity and judicious use of oak give this a polished structure which along with its clean, fruit-forward character makes it a perfect partner for a range of foods.

PRODUCTION 250 cases

**Merlo Family Estate Vineyards, Blackbird Red Blend, Trinity County**

**50% Syrah, 50% Zinfandel**

**About Merlo Family Vineyards:** Tucked away in the far reaches of rugged Northern California lies Hyampom Valley. Merlo Family Vineyards is located along the banks of the wild and scenic South Fork of the Trinity River that runs through Hyampom. This wholly unique setting helps create wines that speak to the power and beauty that is Hyampom Valley. Influenced by the idyllic growing season and climate of this small pocket valley, the fruit produced in the Merlo Family Vineyards expresses a strong sense of place. Based on the concept that quality wine is grown in the vineyard, a minimalist approach is taken in the cellar, allowing the wines to clearly reflect the varietal character and distinct terroir of Hyampom Valley.

Merlo Family Vineyards produces a rare collection of richly flavored and expressive wines. Unlike many California wines, these deep, complex wines are not high in alcohol, nor overripe in flavors. Rather, the wines are naturally big and bold, yet refined and beautiful.

Unlike most California wines, MFV wines are deep and complex yet not high in alcohol, nor overripe in flavors. Rather, the red wines are rich, dark and bold with very smooth tannin structure. The white wines display bright vibrant flavors with crisp natural acidity.

Blackbird is the name for our Mediterranean style red wine blend. The base of this blend is Syrah from our estate vineyard in Hyampom Valley , blended with the high-toned fruit notes of our estate Zinfandel. The result is a very rich and full-bodied wine with notes of cedar and spice, and a very complex finish.

**Tasting Notes:** The estate Syrah and Zinfandel combine to become a rich and full-bodied red with notes of black cherry, cedar and spice, and a very complex finish. Truly a Mediterranean style red table wine.

The Blackbird is the perfect accompaniment to richly flavored foods like stews and cassoulet or at casual gatherings with BBQ ribs, pizza, or burgers on the grill with family and friends.

**$90 Tasting Notes**

**Alma de Cattleya, Red Blend, Sonoma County, 2018**

**55% Syrah, 35% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon**

Bibiana González Rave crafts her Alma de Cattleya wines to showcase the splendor of California.

Currently focusing on Sonoma County, Napa Valley and the overall Wine of California appellation, each glass embodies the soul of the vineyards, orchards, and farms that make up this bucolic California landscape.

Bibiana cherishes the land from which her wines emerge; so much so, she wanted a way to share it with her native country of Colombia. During an annual visit home, a casual conversation among friends sparked an idea: she could bring her wine to Colombia, blending both versions of her life with the same care she uses to blend her wines. In 2012, she created her first label, Cattleya, as an homage to her home country, naming it after the national flower of Colombia. Her newest venture, Alma de Cattleya, represents the soul of the land that gives life to her wines as well as her own soul put into each drop of wine that makes it to the bottle.

**Tasting Notes:** Blackcurrant, blackberries and notes of cedar enticing with a generous and depth mouthfeel, finishes with succulent flavors of cocoa and graphite.

**Macauley Vineyard, Old Vine Zinfandel, Napa Valley, 2016**

**About Macauley Vineyard:** The MACAULEY VINEYARD label was originally established in St. Helena in the early 1980s by Ann Macauley Watson and for several years produced a very well received late harvest Sauvignon Blanc with help from renowned winemaker, Ric Forman.

In the late summer of 2000, Ann’s son Mac went to work for Rudd Estate in Oakville. After several months of winery work and education he was inspired to revive the family label, and, working with winemaker and childhood friend Kirk Venge, crushed his first grapes in October 2001.

Mac and Kirk have one goal: to source the highest quality fruit in Napa Valley and make wines of extraordinary depth and personality. The grapes they choose showcase the terroir of the vineyards and create a remarkable wine-drinking experience.

**About the Winemaker:** Second-generation winemaker Kirk Venge grew up in the Napa Valley. At his father's side, he learned about farming and winemaking, feeling at home in the cellar at an early age. While pursuing his enology degree at the University of California at Davis, Venge worked at Mumm Napa Valley for five years in their experimental division. Upon graduation, Venge sought to expand his winemaking knowledge by traveling to New Zealand and working harvest in the southern hemisphere. Equipped with a broader sense of viticultural techniques, Venge returned to Napa to partner with his father in the creation of Venge Vineyards. Today, Venge brings his skill and passion to Macauley Vineyard. Those who know Kirk Venge will attest to his acute palate. His wines reflect balance and finesse. Because Kirk believes that wines are made in the vineyard, he is relentless in his quest to find the very best vineyard locations and sources of fruit.

**An outstanding new Zinfandel discovery from Macauley and winemaker Kirk Venge.**

**Winemaker Notes:**  "This is perhaps the smoothest, silkiest and most seductive tasting Zinfandel I’ve ever made. I would strive to produce this exact bottling every year were it so easily done. The color is an amazing and dark garnet followed by richness and ripeness found in Zins that come only ever so often. The aromatics are well stacked in the glass beginning with sweet red fruit and flowed by barrel vanillin and sweet cocoa. Lastly the typical Zin white pepper and spice finds its place in the furthermost layers of the nose. Moving from the aromatics to the first taste, getting to enjoy this wine is a much-anticipated event. The flavors are a pleasant twist of blackberry, vanilla, cassis and sweet density from old vine age supported by the oak. Tannin and acid are interlaced as well offering plenty for this rich Zinfandel to support itself upon. The overall is a polished and pleasing wine that rides the fine line of ripeness with textured mouthfeel and finish that satisfies for over 45 seconds after the first taste. I would anticipate this wine drinking well from inception to 2020 and well beyond." – Kirk Venge

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