

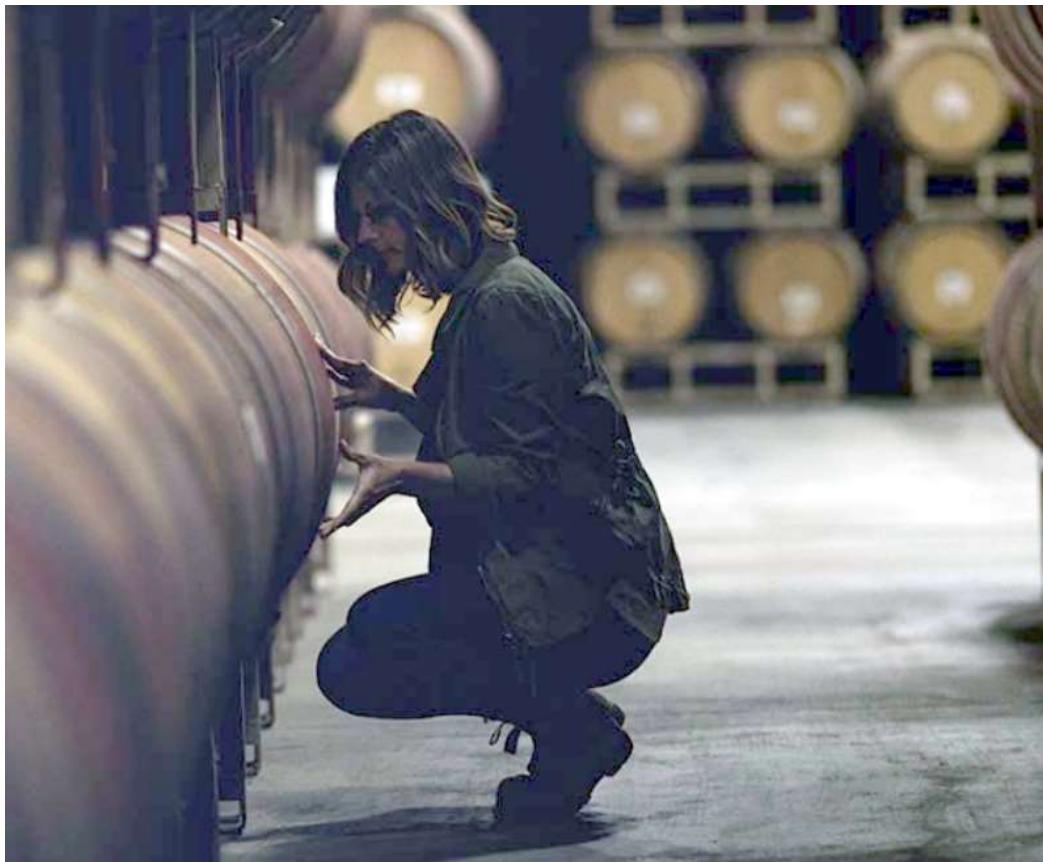


A Taste For Single-Vineyard Wines

By

[MoreAboutWine.com](#)

-
May 24, 2020



Dana Epperson - Migration Winemaker



Dana Epperson says people who visit Duckhorn's California tasting room "geek out" over her single-vineyard chardonnays made under the Migration label. Although consumers can opt for a much less expensive chardonnay that blends grapes from several vineyards, it's the chardonnay that comes from a specific vineyard that makes a visitor swoon.

"They definitely have their favorites," she says.

The independence of a vineyard contradicts Aristotle's notion that "the whole is better than the sum of the parts." In other words, blending chardonnay from four vineyards creates a mighty complex wine, but separating them into individual wines gives profound uniqueness that accents the terroir of each site. The distinction is not lost to those lucky enough to taste them side by side, as we recently did.



Dana Epperson

Epperson is a third-generation Russian River Valley resident who is in charge of Migration's chardonnay and pinot noir program – two grape varieties that lend themselves to single-vineyard productions. There are four chardonnay vineyards in the Santa Maria Valley, Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast regions.

The Dierberg Vineyard, for instance, is located on a windswept mesa where the fog from the Pacific likes to linger. Epperson says it's more challenging to grow decent grapes here, particularly because she has to fight off mold from the fog. However, the clone she uses here gives good concentration, texture and acidity.

The Bien Nacido Vineyard just a couple of miles down the road sites on flat land and the bigger berries from a different clone offers bright citrus fruit and delicacy.

Running Creek Vineyard, owned by Duckhorn, presents other challenges because it's dry farmed.



Heintz Vineyard

The prize property, the Charles Heintz Vineyard, is 900 feet in elevation and the vines are 40 years old. It has lush honeydew and floral complexity with good palate weight and viscosity. It's a very big wine – our favorite of the four.

Epperson is quick to point out that rootstock plays a pivotal role in these vineyards. Clones are important, too, but the rootstock is critical to a vine's survival in, say, a dry-farmed vineyard where rainfall is scarce and where the grapes struggle to ripen.

Jen Walsh, a winemaker for La Crema's chardonnay program, also believes soil and rootstock play a greater role than clones in distinguishing a wine.

"Each vineyard is different. We don't want to make shades of gray. We want distinct wines from distinct vineyards," she says.

Many of you probably drink chardonnay that is a blend of many vineyards and most likely is similar in style year after year. However, there is a whole new world of chardonnay when you open the door to the unique expressions of single-vineyard wines. Here are several we have recently tasted:



- **Migration Santa Maria Valley Bien Nacido Vineyard Chardonnay 2018** (\$56). This chardonnay from Santa Maria Valley is a stunner. Lemon and apple notes with a bit of pineapple. Bright acidity and luxuriously textured.
- **Migration Russian River Valley Running Creek Vineyard Chardonnay 2018** (\$56). We love the liveliness of this aromatic and layered chardonnay. Peach and lemon aromas with stone fruit flavors and hint of vanilla. Long in the finish.
- **Migration Santa Maria Valley Dierberg Vineyard Chardonnay 2018** (\$56). A windswept mesa overlooking the Santa Maria River produces small berries in the Dierberg Vineyard. The result is more intense aromas. Pear and citrus flavors and a mineral finish dominate a beautiful wine.
- **Migration Sonoma Coast Charles Heitz Vineyard Chardonnay 2018** (\$56). We were palate shocked by the huge dose of tropical fruit flavors in this delicious and silky chardonnay. Rich and structured with lush pineapple notes and a hint of vanilla and coconut.
- **La Crema Saralee's Vineyard Russian River Valley Chardonnay 2017** (\$45). Bright acidity and light oak make this a good food wine. Apricot and citrus aromas with apple, pear flavors. Long finish. This wine slow to evolve in the glass, so don't over-chill it.



- **La Crema Durell Vineyards Sonoma Coast Chardonnay 2017 (\$50).** Melon and white peach flavors highlight this medium-body chardonnay with bright acidity and fresh fruit character.
- **Cuaison Kite Tail Chardonnay 2018 (\$50).** This chardonnay from low-yielding vines in Los Carneros has just the right touch of oak for us – obvious but not overbearing. Good concentration and peach and nectarine notes and a dash of almonds. Aged 16 months in oak.
- **Chappellet Grower Collection Calesa Vineyard Petaluma Gap Chardonnay 2018 (\$49).** Building on long-term relationships with grape growers, Chappellet created a series of “grower collection” wines that focus on terroir. Made in small quantities from favorite blocks of each vineyard, the chardonnay and pinot noir are equally expressive. This chardonnay from grower Oscar Renteria brings together five clones. Generous tropical fruit flavors and soft mouthfeel with hints of citrus and spice.
- **Chappellet Grower Collection El Novillero Carneros Chardonnay 2018 (\$49).** We enjoy chardonnay from Carneros where the cooling fogs bring relief to the grapes. This small collection features grapes from the Sangiacomo family. Rich in style, the chardonnay has tropical fruit and tantalizing lychee aromas similar to what you find in exotic Gewurztraminers. Stone fruit flavors.

Wine picks



- Lohr Carol's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2016
Lohr Carol's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2016 (\$60). A portion of the proceeds from the sale of this wine go to a fund for mammograms for women who would otherwise be unable to afford them. More than 7,800 tests have been done to date. It is a tribute to Jerry Lohr's wife who died from breast cancer in 2008. Besides "Touching Lives" being a good cause, it is also a good wine with loads of lush black cherry fruit and aromas of currants and cassis.
- **Domaine Antugnac Chardonnay 2018** (\$13). In a flight of four chardonnays, this one was the least expensive – and the most expressive. A great value from France's Languedoc region, it has balance and restrained oak flavors. Floral aromas and apple, citrus flavors.

<https://southfloridareporter.com/a-taste-for-single-vineyard-wines/>