



The dramatic vineyards of Hermitage.

Controlled Intensity in the Northern Rhône

TASTING THE ELEGANTLY CHISELED 2023 VINTAGE OF **DELAS FRÈRES**

Certified organic, Delas Frères has the advantage of owning some of the most treasured parcels in the Northern Rhône. Lieux-dits on steep slopes lay the foundation for the producer's incredible expressions of Syrah, shaping the wines' texture and tight definition. Granite soils drain slowly, imparting more balance, restraint, precision, and mineral tension than those with excess water.



Delas Frères enologist and technical director Jacques Grange with enologist and winemaker Marco Beckmann, who calls 2023 "an exceptional vintage where power meets finesse, revealing beautifully layered aromas and a remarkable sense of balance."

Delas Frères 2023 Domaine des Tourettes, Hermitage AOC, Rhône Valley, France (\$100)

This youthful cuvée was made with fruit from two lieux-dits planted at different altitudes on Hermitage hill. Malolactic took place in barrel, and after 18 months of aging, it was placed in stainless steel for three months prior to bottling. Displaying a linear frame, it's savory and earthbound, with notes of dried herbs, graphite, and forest floor. Blackberry skin accents its sinewy texture with a slight tannic grip. **94**

Delas Frères 2023 Clos Boucher Condrieu, Condrieu Appellation AOC, Rhône Valley, France (\$105)

Viscous flavors of baked pineapple join barrel-derived notes of sweet, charred lemon peel in this perfumed, peachy, and undeniably ageworthy Viognier. A concentrated floral core offers an acacia-tinged lift. It aged on the lees for 12 months with regular bâtonnage, and after racking, it was kept in stainless-steel tanks for six months on fine lees before bottling. **96**

Delas Frères 2023 Seigneur de Maugiron, Côte-Rôtie AOC, Rhône Valley, France (\$120)

Sourced from vineyards ranging in elevation from 500 to 1,000 feet, some reaching an incline grade of 60%, this Syrah represents the northernmost reaches of the Rhône Valley. Mouth-filling notes of chocolate, cherry, rose petal, and sweetmeats are lusciously seasoned by cinnamon, clove, and dusty minerality. Subdued white pepper makes way for those cherished violets to bloom. Aged 18 months in (20% new) oak. **98**



Delas Frères 2023 Les Bessards, Hermitage AOC, Rhône Valley, France (\$239)

This red upholds Hermitage's greatness with an electric, austere character magnified by the region's granite soils. Satiny notes of white pepper wash over plum, licorice, soil, and graphite. Grilled meat gives way to savory tones of roasted coffee bean, and exotic incense with hints of boysenberry and violets wafts over the lengthy finish. **99**

Delas Frères 2023 Ligne de Crête, Hermitage AOC, Rhône Valley, France (\$239)

At an elevation of 1,066 feet, this plot, called Les Grandes Vignes, is the highest in Hermitage. It's yielded a youthful, tense, and enigmatic red with a *sauvage* character that's musky and earthy. Violets and aged prosciutto enter midway, joining tart cherry, plum skin, and a hint of umami on the back of the tongue. **96**



Delas Frères 2023 La Landonne, Côte-Rôtie AOC, Rhône Valley, France (\$260)

New leather and graphite give this elegant, aromatic, and satisfyingly mouth-filling Syrah an almost primal character. Lavender smooths out notes of salted meat as bright black cherry bathes in sweet, sun-drenched soil and coffee slathers the palate. **100**

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES

Sparkle Motion

"Sometimes I doubt your commitment to Sparkle Motion," moans one frenzied pageant mom to another in a scene from cult classic *Donnie Darko*. Well, don't doubt ours. In this column, we at *The Tasting Panel* rate the most notable sparkling wines that cross our desks and lips each issue. Given the wide range of production methods, styles, and price points the category covers, we've devised the following system to score each on its own merits.

1 BUBBLE

Simple but satisfying.

2 BUBBLES

Satisfying and a little more complex.

3 BUBBLES

A strong example of its kind.

4 BUBBLES

A superb example of its kind.

5 BUBBLES

Stellar by any standard.

For details on submitting wines for review, contact COO/marketing & sales Bill Brandel at bbrandel@tastingpanelmag.com.



La Vieille Ferme Sparkling Blanc, France (\$15) Expressing its origins in limestone soils, this blend of 90% Chardonnay and 10% Ugni Blanc is fresh as a daisy—or gardenia, in this case, which shows on the nose along with the tangy green and yellow apple, lemon marmalade, and young pineapple that alight on the lifted palate before a squeeze of lime gives the finish a zing. **90**

VINEYARD BRANDS



La Vieille Ferme Sparkling Rosé, France (\$15) Like its Blanc counterpart, this blend of Grenache Noir (40%), Cinsault (40%), and Pinot Noir (20%) is built for everyday enjoyment, being equal parts fruit-forward and refreshing. Aromas and flavors of peach, Honeycrisp apple, and grilled lemon are highlighted by a sprightly acid profile and a pop of strawberry. **89**

VINEYARD BRANDS



Three Henrys Blanquette de Limoux, Languedoc, France (\$20) The vinous equivalent of a watercolor painting, this traditional-method brut of Mauzac reveals light brushstrokes of bruised apple, white peach, and lemon dappled with chalky minerality and sourdough toast—all framed by a frothy, almost delicate mouthfeel. **90**



Nino Franco Rustico Prosecco Superiore Valdobbiadene, Italy (\$29) Name notwithstanding, this Prosecco is quite nuanced. Clean, fresh fragrances of linen, young apricot, honeydew, and spiced pear bounce from the glass, nimbly leading the way to a supple palate of more Anjou pear, star fruit, and makrut lime leaf. A dash of saltiness enlivens the finish. **92**

TERLATO



Hampton Water Bubbly, Languedoc-Roussillon, France (\$30) Made by Gérard Bertrand, this Charmat-method blend of 47% Pinot Noir, 30% Grenache, and 23% Chardonnay is as splashy as the label illustration of a diving beauty suggests, especially for the price. Undertones of papaya and lilac sachet flesh out classic aromas and flavors of strawberry and blood orange without encumbering the crisp mouthfeel, edged by a savory note of rosehip tea. **92**



André Delorme Crémant de Bourgogne Terroirs des Fleurs Blanc de Blancs, France (\$31) Based on the name, you'd expect this blend of 93% Chardonnay and 7% Aligoté to be pretty, and it is. But it's also got some pluck. Spending about a year and a half on the lees, it smells of potpourri and all things pear—blossom, fresh, dried—plus a soupçon of nuttiness while tasting of succulent golden apple and peach deftly strewn with hawthorn. Tangy acidity rounds out its chic profile. **93**

TERLATO



Nino Franco Brut Prosecco Superiore Valdobbiadene, Italy (\$37) Intense notes of cider apple and pear enhanced by acacia flower, honey, almond blossom, and nectarine flow from the nose to the citrus-edged palate of this super-crisp yet nicely structured Prosecco. A bitter-almond finish completes the scintillating picture. **93**

TERLATO



Roederer Estate 2021 Apple Alley Vineyard Sparkling Wine, Anderson Valley, Mendocino County (\$55) Classically styled and highly polished, this medium-bodied blend of 80.3% Chardonnay and 19.7% Pinot Noir (which fermented in 22% oak and spent three years on lees) is the complete package. From aromas of freshly baked bread and bright notes of green and yellow orchard fruit to a whiff of forest air and captivating hints of white fig and pine nut, it's a serious wine that nonetheless affords pure pleasure. **94**

MAISON MARQUES & DOMAINES



Champagne Palmer 2018 Blanc de Blancs, Champagne, France (\$130) If this 100% Chardonnay from the Montagne de Reims is any indication, the heralded 2018 vintage in Champagne will be the gift that keeps on giving. It's already generous in most every respect, from the aromas of fresh bread, baked apple, dried fig, macadamia nut, and above all dazzling citrus—including Buddha's hand citron—to a palate that, while not without weight, is focused by salinity and flintiness as well as a smattering of nutmeg, gingerroot, and anise. **94**

QUINTESSENTIAL

Publisher's PICKS



Kith & Kin 2023 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$50) Super-ripe boysenberry jam and chalky tannins connect within the restrained, plush mouthfeel. Mocha, cherry, and chocolate enter on the midpalate with lifted, drying notes of white-peppered tobacco leaf. The richness of the wine never fades. **94**



optik 2023 Valdigué, French Camp Vineyard, Paso Roble Highlands District (\$50) Tracing its roots to Southern France, Valdigué is a lesser-known variety that flourishes under the California sun. Floral undertones enhance raspberry gelée and earthy spices. Bright acidity results in a vibrant persona with lingering minerality on the finish. **93**

MILLER FAMILY WINE COMPANY



Belle Glos 2024 Dairyman Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$55) Crushed black cherry swims in melted milk chocolate, creating a dense mouthfeel that avoids being jammy thanks to bright, sun-kissed acidity. A hint of thyme and candied violets is a lovely treat that sets this red apart. **94**

COPPER CANE WINES & SPIRITS



Jordan 2022 Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, Sonoma County (\$60) A lower alcohol level of 12.8% unveils this wine's elegant nature, demonstrated by well-defined black fruit and an herbaceous grip. Though precise and measured, it's also more intense than other vintages we've tasted, with a backbone of graphite and spiced sandalwood; plush tannins; and a composed finish of black cherry, nutmeg, and cassia. **95**

In Pursuit of Paso Happiness

TASTING ANITA AND VARINDER SAHI'S COPIA WINES

PHOTO COURTESY OF COPIA VINEYARDS



While they established their first vineyard in the Willow Creek District, Anita and Varinder Sahi acquired their second estate in Paso Robles' Adelaida District (pictured here) in 2022. "We transformed a conventionally farmed property into a 20-acre organic, sustainably farmed vineyard," says Varinder. "We replanted the site primarily to Rhône and Bordeaux varietals, including five white varietals—a first for Copia."



Copia 2023 The Cure, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (\$70) Deep, alluring, and beautifully balanced, this blend of 45% Syrah, 30% Grenache, and 25% Mourvèdre spent 20 months in French oak. Wild strawberry wafts from the glass with dark chocolate, giving way to a plush mouthfeel. Notes of cured meats are noteworthy, followed by a dash of sage on the finish. "I am inspired by the great Southern Rhône wine appellations Châteauneuf-du-Pape and Gigondas when approaching this wine blend. With that said, this is wholeheartedly a Paso Robles GSM, with a focus on letting the vintage dictate [the result]," says Copia proprietor and winemaker Varinder Sahi. **95**



Copia 2023 The Anchor, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (\$70) Lavender and mocha charm with cool mineral undertones in this plush, dense, and inviting blend of 75% Mourvèdre, 15% Syrah, and 10% Tempranillo. It exhibits midpalate notes of dark chocolate and sandalwood surrounded by sweet earth and concentrated blackberry. **94**



Copia 2023 The Source, Willow Creek District, Paso Robles (\$75) Black pepper and graphite prove worthy partners in this inky black-crimson Syrah. It's dusky and sultry, with satin-lined tannins, a muscular structure, and notes of black plum and tilled soil that add texture and complexity. **97**



Eponymous 2023 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$60) Elegance is on display as the liquid flows gently across the palate, offering freshness and clarity via juicy blackberry. Black tea enters midway, adding length to notes of plum skin and a pinch of black pepper. **94**

QUINTESSENTIAL



Merry Edwards 2023 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$60) Concentrated and earthy, with black tea and plum blossom riding along on silky tannins. Tobacco, dried lavender, and persimmon create a complex network of flavors. **95**

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES



X NOVO 2023 Pinot Noir,
X Omni Vineyard, Eola-
Amity Hills, Willamette
Valley, Oregon (\$100)

Equal parts dynamic, juicy, concentrated, and luxurious, this is one of the most exciting full-bodied Pinot Noirs I've tasted. Rich, mocha-kissed notes of crushed cherries meld with cinnamon tea and peony. **97**



Chateau Margene 2023
Cabernet Sauvignon,
Stella's Vineyard, Creston
District, Paso Robles

(\$100) Blended with some Merlot and Malbec, this compact and dense red offers polished tannins and a generous bath of boysenberry,

red currant, sage, and dusty chocolate. Elegant and bold, it's got backbone and a meaty mouthfeel. **97**



Merry Edwards 2023 Pinot
Noir, Meredith Estate,
Russian River Valley,
Sonoma County (\$100)

Focused and tense, with floral refinement and racy acidity. Plum and cherry notes are accented by white pepper and sandalwood. Umami settles on the finish with pleasing salinity.

96

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES



Dylan's Ghost 2023 Hell
Hollow Proprietary Red,
Napa Valley (\$105) Despite its name, this is a heavenly red, powered by new leather, baking spices, sweet soil, and firm tannins. It's chewy and meaty, with expressive notes of brambly blackberry and dark

chocolate. **95**

ATC NAPA

What's New at Tablas Creek Vineyard

TABLAS CREEK—a Paso Robles pioneer of Rhône varieties and the world's first Regenerative Organic Certified winery—has made some personnel changes in the cellar; with Chelsea Franchi appointed director of winemaking and Craig Hamm promoted to winemaker. Both are longtime members of the Tablas Creek team, ensuring continuity and deep institutional knowledge as the estate enters its next chapter.

With the exception of the two Patelin de Tablas wines, which are sourced from neighboring Rhône-focused vineyards, the expressions below hail from the estate's Regenerative Organic Certified vineyards.



Tablas Creek 2025 Vermentino,
Adelaida District, Paso Robles (\$35)

Between the juicy sumptuousness of peach nectar and the dry mouthfeel of flint, a spectacular combination of texture and flavor is exhibited in this 13% ABV white. Lemon verbena adds zing on the midpalate, but the liquid's acidity level and electric energy are what steer the ship to a focused finish. **95**



Tablas Creek 2025 Patelin de Tablas
Rosé, Paso Robles (\$28) Spiced apricot and a pinch of salted celery form the profile of this blend of 71% Grenache, 21% Mourvèdre, 5% Vermentino, and 3% Cunoise. Intense acidity and a flinty middle appear against a backdrop of opulent peach and rich peanut brittle. **94**



Tablas Creek 2024 Patelin de Tablas,
Paso Robles (\$28) A pinch of salt creates a stirring entry as it attaches to rhubarb, sweet tobacco, and red tea in this superb blend of Syrah, Grenache, Mourvèdre, and Cunoise built for food pairing. Hibiscus, dark cherry, and mocha linger on the midpalate as balanced acidity and inherent minerality shine on the finish. **93**



Tablas Creek 2025
Dianthus, Adelaida District,
Paso Robles (\$40) This rosé is a blend of four estate-grown varieties: 42% Mourvèdre, 40% Grenache, 13% Cunoise, and 5% Cinsaut, which were propagated from budwood cuttings from the Château de Beaucastel estate in the Rhône



PHOTO COURTESY OF TABLAS CREEK

Tablas Creek Vineyard winemaker
Craig Hamm with director of
production Neil Collins and director of
winemaking Chelsea Franchi.

Valley with a nod to Tavel and Bandol. Dark salmon in color, it's named for dianthus flowers, known for their deep pink hue. Stunning chalky minerality weaves through fresh raspberry, watermelon, and hibiscus in this sunlit gem, conveying the vineyards' limestone soils and cooling coastal influence before pressed rose petal leads to an elegant arc of orchard fruit on the finish. **96**



Tablas Creek 2024 Côtes
de Tablas, Adelaida
District, Paso Robles (\$40)

This blend of four Rhône varieties—47% Grenache, 28% Syrah, 13% Cunoise, and 12% Mourvèdre—features spiced notes of cured meats and vibrant Morello cherry, mocha, and salted plum that revel on a

platform of chalky minerality. Tilled soil and raspberry are streamlined on the vibrant finish. **94**



Tablas Creek 2024 Esprit
de Tablas Blanc, Adelaida
District, Paso Robles (\$75)

With a luscious mouthfeel, this blend of 40% Roussanne, 26% Grenache Blanc, 17% Picpoul Blanc, 11% Bourboulenc, and some Picardan and Clairette Blanche is alive with gardenia, jasmine, green tea, and toffee. Its

richness is lifted and gentled by tangerine sorbet and sweet basil. Minerality knits it all together. **97**



Alvaredos-Hobbs 2024 Codello, Ribeira Sacra, Spain (\$35) This charming, exotic blend of 93% Godello, 5% Loureiro, and 3% Alvarinho aged 15 months sur lie in (24% new) French oak barrels and 2,500-liter thick-stave foudres.

Its perfume of fresh pear and white peach leads to a graceful, streamlined, herb-tinged palate surrounded by leesy notes of caramel apple. A finish of lime blossom and chamomile adds sensuality. **95**

PAUL HOBBS SELECTIONS

Crgich Hills 2025 Miljenko's Selection Rosé, Napa Valley (\$35)

Without lacking for elegance, this blend of 41% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Zinfandel, 21% Merlot, and 2% Cabernet Franc is borderline exuberant on the nose, as notes of ruby grapefruit, white peach, and strawberry mingle with a bite of bubblegum and a wisp of smoke. On the supple, almost billowy palate, they join forces with red currant and an earthy finishing touch of white tea. **93**



Napa Valley Quilt 2024 Chardonnay, Napa Valley (\$35) Here's just the right balance of acidity, flavor, and texture. Notes of oak, baked apple, and cinnamon-sprinkled pear add to the broad, generously enveloping mouthfeel, while the soft caress of

toffee on the finish is memorable. **92**

COPPER CANE WINES & SPIRITS



Domaine Les Astrelles 2022 Coteaux Bourguignons Terreau Thomas, Bourgogne, France (\$38) This 100% Chardonnay aged 15 months in oak and ceramic vats is light and lithe, with notes of green apple and a persistent perfume of white flowers. Refreshing acidity partners with crushed seashell and vibrant pear before a hint of barrel texture appears on the finish. **95**

VINEYARD BRANDS

Eden Dale 2022 Chardonnay, Sonoma Coast (\$38) On entry, dusky sweet oak and charred maple claim the palate of this medium-bodied wine, whose sultry character is refined by high-toned notes of melon, baked apple, and vanilla bean. **92**

SANGIACOMO WINES



Sean Minor 2025 Invited Series Denmark Street Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma Valley (\$44)

Fermented with native yeast in amphorae (70%) and stainless steel (30%), this vintage is a bit more quietly alluring than the 2024 we tasted. The fragrance of guava and pineapple, accented by a sprig of basil, gives way gradually to flavors of orchard fruit—peach and pear—within a silky body punctuated by brûléed grapefruit. **92**



Thistledown 2023 Walking with Kings Roussanne, Grenache Blanc, McLaren Vale, South Australia (\$50)

Dusty vanilla, peanut brittle, honeyed mango, banana, and crushed stone are delightfully layered flavors in this structured, well-balanced white, whose texture is round and satisfying. **95**

SOUTHERN STARZ



Jeremy Nickel Cellars 2025 Sauvignon Blanc, Napa Valley (\$50)

The perfume of lime zest, grapefruit, and thyme is sensational, while the thrillingly brisk acidity, a squeeze of fresh grapefruit, and mineral tones maintain intrigue from start to finish. **95**



Merry Edwards 2024 Russian River Valley Sauvignon Blanc, Sonoma County (\$50) Aged sur lie for six months in (15% new) French oak, this is a fleshy, succulent expression of its variety.

Following self-possessed aromas of grapefruit blossom and pear subtly flecked with slivered almond and fresh-cut grass, it positively springs to life on the palate, where ripe apricot, mango, and star fruit plus a dash of white pepper show staying power. **93**

MAISONS MARQUES & DOMAINES

Domaine de la Rivière 2023 Next Door Neighbor Chardonnay, Russian River Valley, Sonoma County (\$68)

Aged for 11 months in (33% new) French oak, this Old Wente clone Chardonnay is as soft and smooth as could be for all its spice. Entwined with linden flower, vanilla- and nutmeg-sprinkled scents of young pineapple and pear reconvene fluently on the palate with a dollop of lime curd. **92**

Grand Napa Vineyards 2025 Chardonnay, Los Carneros, Napa Valley (\$75)

Elegant and poised, with a slight French accent, this wine shows stunning clarity. Honeysuckle, lemon drop, chamomile flower, and pineapple sorbet attend the smooth-as-glass mouthfeel along with a burst of salinity. **95**



Lorenzi Estate 2023 The Sugarland Block Estate Chardonnay, Temecula Valley (\$75)

Owner/winemaker Don Lorenzi calls this "a white for red wine drinkers." Fermented and aged for 18 months in French oak, it's certainly bold and rich, but it's not without nuance. Pineapple upside-down cake and fresh, juicy white cherry take the lead on both nose and palate, where the tang and creaminess of lemon curd are seasoned with a pinch of saffron on the finish. **93**



Three Sticks 2024 Chardonnay, Durell Vineyard, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$75)

Steeliness meets leesy richness and a bounty of plump stone fruit. Underlying flinty notes meld with a creamy quality accented by lemon blossom, brioche, and burnt orange peel. **97**



Tr3smano 2024 Albillo Mayor, Ribera del Duero, Spain (\$100)

Notes of crushed stone and lemon twist are sleek and clean, exhibiting the attributes of the Albillo Mayor variety from 60- and 100-year-old vines, which aged in French oak for nine months. The wine's leesy character highlights the fresh pineapple that settles on the palate with a touch of white tea flowers. **95**

ABCK CORP