



GIANT NOISE



William + Chris
VINEYARDS

PRESS KIT

William+Chris

VINEYARDS

Location	10352 US-290 Hye, Texas 78635
Co-Owners	Chris Brundrett William 'Bill' Blackmon
Accolades	<i>Wine Business Monthly</i> : Hot Brands 2019 <i>San Antonio Express-News</i> : #2 in Top 10 Hill Country Wineries near San Antonio 2019 <i>Silver medal</i> : TEXSOM International Wine Awards 2015 Merlot, Hunter Vineyards <i>Silver medal</i> : Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, 2016 Petillant Naturel Rosé <i>Gold medal</i> : 2017 Battle of the Texas Mourvedres, 2015 Lost Draw Vineyards Mourvedre <i>2017 TX A&M U - Outstanding Alumni Award</i> : Chris Brundrett <i>Gold Medal</i> : 2018 Battle of Texas Sangiovese, 2016 Sangiovese, Narra Vineyards <i>TripAdvisor</i> : Excellence Award (five years in a row)
History	<p>Helmed by two of the foremost winegrowers in Texas, William 'Bill' Blackmon and Chris Brundrett, William Chris Vineyards was founded in 2008 when the two experts who shared the same winemaking philosophy came together to make and bottle their first vintage. In April 2010, Blackmon and Brundrett opened their first tasting room. With vineyards throughout the state planted as early as the mid 1980s, William Chris increased their grape production in 2012 and 2015 by adding and expanding their estate vineyards. The William Chris team abides by their mantra, "We are pleased to share a piece of our world," which is inscribed on every bottle produced. Built on an old farmstead in Hye, Texas, William Chris Vineyards prides themselves on only using Texas-grown grapes and are fierce advocates for the farmers that cultivate them. Educating consumers on what type of fruit is in the bottle, why certain grape varieties grow well in Texas (and why some do not), where the grapes are grown, and how they arrive is paramount to their vineyard-to-bottle philosophy. Winemaking techniques at WCV are decidedly Old World, utilizing farming and tradition, as well as local culture. As a result, WCV wines serve as a true and unique reflection of Texas' distinctive terroir.</p>
Wines Offered	https://www.williamchriswines.com/Wines

Tasting Room	<p>Guests are invited to tour the vineyard and enjoy tasting selections of current William Chris wines in the tasting room or out on the pavilion overlooking the vineyard.</p> <p>William Chris also boasts an exclusive Hye Society Members Tasting Room, which opened in August 2019. Guests can enjoy breathtaking of the Hye Estate vineyards and take in a complimentary tasting or a glass as a club member. Hye Society members can partake in elevated experiences including a Chef's Food & Wine Tasting developed by Chef Josh Tye. The experience features a one-of-a-kind wine pairing experience with five small bites built around seasonal ingredients like vegetables, fruits, and herbs grown in gardens and greenhouses on-property to perfectly pair with WCV wine.</p>
Tasting Room Hours	<p>Reservations required:</p> <p>Monday through Wednesday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.</p> <p>Thursday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.</p> <p>Sunday 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.</p>
Parking	Ample parking on-site
Website:	www.williamchriswines.com
Phone:	830-998-7654
Social Media	<p>Facebook: @williamchrisvineyards</p> <p>Instagram: @williamchrisvineyards</p> <p>Twitter: @williamchrisvin</p>
Media Contact	Danielle Firestone / danielle@giantnoise.com / 512-382-9017





Chris Brundrett
Co-owner, Winegrower

Chris Brundrett's interest in the art of winemaking was sparked at a young age during a trip through the beloved Texas Hill Country. He knew he wanted to continue this discovery through his studies at Texas A&M, where he earned a degree in horticulture while not only working on the campus vineyard but also spending countless hours learning at the wineries and vineyards in the Texas Hill Country.

After graduation, Brundrett quickly took on head winemaking responsibilities for several wine labels, managing vineyard properties in both the Hill Country and the High Plains. Later, he came across a wine by William 'Bill' Blackmon, his current business partner and mentor, that piqued a deeper passion for the art of winemaking. The two bonded over the shared belief that wines are not made, but grown. In 2008, Brundrett and Blackmon joined forces and bottled their first wine as William Chris Vineyards, using old techniques to bring out the true flavors of the region. In 2010, Brundrett and Blackmon opened their tasting room for William Chris Vineyards in Hye, Texas.

As co-owner and winegrower at William Chris Vineyards, Brundrett serves in a position of leadership as a CEO, winegrower, grower liaison, innovator, and coach. His approach to the craft is marked by infallible persistence and hard work. "We make our own success by being smart and savvy with a good work ethic," says Brundrett, adding that the work is never done. Despite his many successes, Brundrett likes to maintain an underdog mentality to fuel his drive. This line of thinking has undoubtedly contributed to his success.

Brundrett's wife, Katharine Brundrett, works as the executive administrator at William Chris Vineyards, and they have two daughters, June and Tess. When he isn't working, Brundrett enjoys hunting, fishing, golfing, and spending time with his family in his beloved Hill Country.



William 'Bill' Blackmon
Co-owner, Winegrower

With more than 30 years of winegrowing experience in Texas, William 'Bill' Blackmon has planted and managed several of the state's earliest and finest vineyards in both the High Plains and the Hill Country. Beginning in the late 1970s, after graduating from Texas Tech with a degree in agriculture and economics, Blackmon worked with some of the early wineries in the Lubbock area.

In the 1990s, he moved to the Fredericksburg area to plant some of the first and longest producing vineyards in the Hill Country, including a William Chris estate vineyard, Willow City – Granite Hill Vineyards. During the following decade, he planted and managed vineyards in the High Plains, including the Hunter Family Vineyard, an experience that Blackmon brought into the William Chris portfolio.

Blackmon and Chris Brundrett's relationship began as Hill Country acquaintances, and they soon discovered a share winemaking philosophy – great wines are not made but grown. They bottled their first vintage under the William Chris label in 2008, utilizing Old World-style winemaking techniques to create a genuine expression of the Texas Hill Country's distinctive terroir. In 2010, the pair - now partners - opened a small production facility and a tasting room in the 1905 renovated farmhouse. Today, Blackmon continues to reach for a level of quality that represents the very best of Texas in each new vintage. With confidence in his process and pride in his family and community, Blackmon inscribes each bottle of William Chris with this statement: "We are pleased to share a piece of our world."

Bill lives in Fredericksburg, Texas with his wife Beth. In addition to his role at William Chris Vineyards, Bill manages his own vineyard in Mason, Texas. His children Annie and Davis are grown now, living in nearby Austin.



Winemaker

Tony Offill, the winemaker for William Chris Vineyards, has been in the Texas wine industry for close to ten years. During his tenure at Texas Tech University, Offill completed several harvests in the Texas High Plains, where he developed a passion for winemaking and winegrowing. He has since taken his passion for the craft and has worked to enhance the quality of Texas wines throughout the state. Offill relocated to the Texas Hill Country in January 2016 and joined the William Chris Vineyards team the following year.



Jordan Byrne ***Assistant Winemaker***

After graduating from Virginia Tech with a Biology degree, Jordan Byrne took a job as a cellar hand for the 2015 harvest at a winery an hour outside his hometown of Richmond, Virginia. That is where his respect for the hard-working people who make this industry so unique really begin to grow. Jordan has traveled around the world making wine: Washington, California, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, and now Texas. He couldn't be happier to be making wine for William Chris today, and he believes the best is yet to come.



Evan McKibben ***Vineyard Manager***

Evan McKibben is a native Texan who grew up in the DFW metroplex. Evan started his career in the Texas wine industry in 2005. He spent many years growing grapes and making wine in Central Texas. Focusing on production he gained a passion for farming and has been able to live that out at William Chris Vineyards. When Evan is not in a tractor he enjoys spending time with his wife and two children at their home in the Hill Country.





GIANT NOISE



PRESS HIGHLIGHTS

FOOD & DRINK

A New Texas Wine Supports Hospitality Workers in Need

All proceeds from the sale of the Wanderer Series Relief Project cinsault go to the Southern Smoke Foundation.

BY JESSICA DUPUY

DATE MAY 6, 2020

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Winemaker Chris Brundrett, left, and master sommelier Craig Collins teamed up to create a fresh and floral cinsault.

Madison Boudreaux

A winemaker, a master sommelier, and a chef walk into a bar. (Or, in this time of the coronavirus, a Zoom meeting.) While this may sound like the start of a cheesy joke, the end result is a serious one: a new Texas wine that will benefit the many restaurant industry professionals who have lost their livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now for sale online, the [Wanderer Series Relief Project cinsault](#) (\$20) will hit shelves at H-E-B, Kroger, Central Market, Twin Liquors, Whole Foods Market, and several independent bottle shops within a week.

The project is a collaboration between Hill Country winery [William Chris Vineyards](#) and Austin-based master sommelier Craig Collins. Collins had long admired William Chris's wines and had been kicking around the idea of a collaborative project with Chris Brundrett, the winery's co-owner. He had even tasted multiple samples of wines with Brundrett in the winery's cellar. But it wasn't until restaurants and bars began closing their doors in March that a clear vision came into view for both of them.

"Watching my friends close restaurants and furlough employees at the onset of this was horrible," Collins says. "I felt so helpless to do anything. But when Chris and I started talking, we realized we could put our hypothetical conversations about making a wine together to good use."

The two quickly came up with the idea of releasing a wine that could benefit their friends in need. Collins had remembered tasting a distinctive cinsault that had been aging in a concrete tank in the cellar.

"It was so fresh and tart and lively," he says. "The kind of red wine Texans should be drinking all summer."

Brundrett worked with him to blend out the wine with a touch of mourvèdre (about 5 percent) for a little added depth. The resulting wine is indeed fresh, with chewy notes of cranberry and raspberry framed with pretty floral aromas and an appealing savory finish. It's delicious. And when served with a bit of a chill (twenty minutes in the fridge), this refreshing, low-alcohol red will disappear before you realize it.

"Wine is about community, and our brothers and sisters in the restaurant and bar industry are an important part of that community," Brundrett says. "We knew if we did something, it would have to be a focused pitch that had to hit a home run to get help to the people who need it most."



Madison Boudreaux

The project quickly drew support from national vendors, including Fortis Solutions Group, Berlin Packaging, Lafitte Cork & Capsule, G3 Enterprises, and Oeneo-DIAM. They stepped up to donate glass bottles, corks, and foil capsules, while Austin-based Canales & Co. designed the labels. Victory Wine Group is handling distribution. After just four weeks of planning, the wine was ready for release. All Collins and Brundrett needed was a way to get their profits appropriately dispersed.

The final piece of the puzzle was Chris Shepherd, a James Beard Award-winning Houston chef who owns [UB Preserv](#), [Georgia James](#), and [One Fifth Houston](#). His [Southern Smoke Foundation](#) has been a catalyst in the food and beverage industry, supporting hospitality professionals in need since 2015; during the pandemic, the group has donated more than \$1.2 million in relief aid. All profits from the sale of the cinsault will go to the foundation to benefit the Texas hospitality industry.

“I truly love William Chris wines,” says Shepherd. “And Craig Collins has been a good friend for a long time. We’re honored and humbled that they’ve chosen Southern Smoke as the beneficiary of the Wanderer Series Relief Project.”

As a bonus, YETI has contributed to the cause, offering two wine tumblers as part of a “Relief Wine 11-pack” for \$220.

William Chris is only one of the many wineries, distilleries, and breweries that have shifted their focus to help others in the industry, even in the wake of their own difficulties.

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REVIEW OF THE INDUSTRY

WBM

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REVIEW OF THE INDUSTRY

HOT BRANDS

of 2019

Erin Kirschmann



Erin Kirschmann is the managing editor for Wine Business Monthly and has been with the company since 2012. In addition to production responsibilities for the monthly trade magazine, she writes about wine industry trends, including business, technology, sales and marketing topics and oversees content for WBIM's eight conferences. She has spoken on industry trends at numerous conferences, including the Unified Wine & Grape Symposium and the World Bulk Wine Exhibition, and guest lectures on wine, media and public relations. Erin has served as a judge in the Concours Mondial de Bruxelles since 2016. She graduated from Sonoma State University with a bachelor's degree in communications with a journalism emphasis.

Representing the American wine industry in 10 brands isn't an easy feat, but it's a task that the editors at Wine Business Monthly set out to accomplish each year. With our annual list of Hot Brands, we're looking for wineries, winemakers, growers and others who are making some kind of statement within the industry. "Statement" can mean just about anything—trying a new variety in an established region, using new winemaking techniques, bucking the declining sales volume trend or voicing an unpopular opinion for the sake of moving the industry forward.

We're always looking for wines of quality, but Hot Brands is more than a list of the "best" or most interesting wines we've tasted during the year—it's our chance to explore new regions, varieties and new winemakers that, hopefully, embody some of the latest trends in an ever-growing, ever-complicated wine market.

The results never turn out quite how we expect it, and we often end up with a couple of wines that surprise us. Even so, every year we stumble on a couple of themes or patterns amongst our choices.

This year we proved, quite by accident, that the Central Coast wine industry is a force to be reckoned with. Four brands from the region made it onto our 2019 list. We've got a traditional Paso Robles red blend and a Pinot Noir from Sta. Rita Hills, but we've also included a Valdigüe and a Viognier as well. We found incredible diversity all along the central California coast. We typically try not to choose so many brands from one region, but the wines asserted themselves.

A couple of brands have made inspired attempts to reach new consumers, whether through informative and creative labels, or collaborations with music streaming giants. Others are focused on building their local consumer base, creating blends, experiences and spaces for those nearby to enjoy themselves while engaging with the wine.

This year, we've selected wines from pioneers, newcomers, small and large producers—all of whom span the industry spectrum when it comes to winemaking styles, reflecting the diversity that is the U.S. wine culture, and that innate winemaker desire to produce something they, and the consumer, will love.



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LARGEST
WINERIES

HOT BRANDS DATA SHEET

Winery	Andis Wines	Early Mountain Vineyard	J. Wilkes	Land of Promise Wines	Obvious Wines	Winery	Domaine Drouhin Oregon	Tarpon Cellars	Thacher Vineyards	The Hilt	William Chris
Wine	2017 Barbera d'Amaro	2017 Quaker Run Vineyard Pinot	2018 Viognier	2016 Petrus Fideles	No. 1 Dark & Bold	Wine	2017 Reserve Eola-Anty Hills Chardonnay	2018 Sauvignon Blanc	2017 Valdigüe	2016 The Hilt Pinot Noir	Skleton Key V
Vineyard/Winery Location	Andis Estate, Napa Vineyard, Madison, CA	Early Mountain Vineyard, Madison, VA	Paso Robles Highlands District, CA	Petaluma, CA	Broken Earth Winery, Paso Robles, CA	Vineyard/Winery Location	Research Vineyard, Eola-Anty Hills, Willamette Valley, OR	Shiloh Ranch, Oak Knoll District, Napa, CA	Shall Creek Vineyards, Paso Robles, CA	The Hilt, Sta Rita Hills, CA	William Chris Vineyards, Hilo, HI
Price	\$30	\$45	\$25	\$18	\$18	Price	\$35	\$35	\$65	\$60	\$10
Case Production	900 cases	52 cases	3,040 cases	100 cases	2,000 cases	Case Production	2,600 cases	150 cases	118 cases	585 cases	1,930 cases
Blend	100% Barbera	85% Pinot, 15% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot (co-fermented)	100% Viognier	100% Pinot Noir	100% Pinot Noir	Blend	100% Pinot Noir	100% Sauvignon Blanc—Muscat Clone	100% Valdigüe	100% Pinot Noir	56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Merlot, 15% Chardonnay, 12% Semillon
pH	3.39	3.66 (3.29 at harvest)	3.29	3.51	3.77	pH	3.25	3.33	3.64	3.5	3.88
TA	4.8 g/L	6.2 g/L (8.8 g/L at harvest)	5.9 g/L	6.9 g/L	5.7 g/L	TA	6.5 g/L	7.9 g/L	6.52 g/100 mL	5.7 g/L	6.7 g/L
Brix	24.1° on Sept. 8 and 23.5° on Oct. 17	28.4°	28.5°	24.6°	N/A	Brix	21.9°	24°	23°	23°	29°
Residual Sugar	0.1 g/L	0.42 g/L (dry)	0.40 g/L	0.07 g/L	Less than 5 g/L	Residual Sugar	1.8 g/L	0.1 g/L	0.1 g/L	0 g/L	0 g/L
Alcohol	14%	15.2%	15.2%	14.8%	13.9%	Alcohol	13.9%	13.1%	14.5%	14.2%	14.7%
Winemaking Data											
Picking Methods	Hand-picked	Hand harvested	Machine-picked (Pinot)	Hand-picked	Machine harvested, Pinot hand-harvested	Picking Methods	Hand-picked	Hand-picked	Hand harvested	Hand harvested	Machine harvested with on-board destemmer
Sorting Methods	Hand-sorted	Hand-sorted	N/A	Cluster sorted by hand; machine de-stemmed	Mechanical	Sorting Methods	Hand sorted on sorting table	Cluster sorting in vineyard	N/A	Cluster sorting during processing	Hand-sorted
Crush Details	Full process line using shaker tables for berry selection and OptiC 200 for destemming then must pump to tank	Whole berry, 10% whole cluster	N/A	N/A	Fruit is tipped, destemmed and sorted. Some fermenter berries are added at the crusher to add to color stability	Crush Details	Grapes were sent directly to press	Whole cluster press to about 1.4 bars	30% whole-cluster, remainder de-stemmed	100% destem, no crushing	N/A
Cold Soak?	3 days	Fruit stemmed cold and the fermentation started on its own	N/A	3 to 4 days	Fruit is picked cool and inoculated; ferment starts in 2 to 3 days	Cold Soak?	N/A	N/A	7 days	5 days	Only for Sangiovese
SO, Applications	First press ML, 2 to 3 months post-crush	30 ppm at crush	35 ppm at crush	35 ppm at de-stemmer, 35 ppm post-Malolactic Fermentation	Maintain sulfur levels to 35 ppm	SO, Applications	2 to 4 g/L	30 ppm at bottling	N/A	10 ppm at crusher	Minimal SO ₂ throughout aging; Addition to 0.3 molecule SO ₂ at bottling
Yeast	F83, EC1118 and Bavelo	Ambient then bayanus at 8° Brix to finish	VL1	60% indigenous yeast, 40% RC12	80X	Yeast	Commercial yeast	ES181, Q Citrus, and ES Floral	Ambient	Combination of spontaneous fermentation and RC12	ES488 and ambient
Fermentation Temperature	Max at 70° F	Peak of 80° F	55° C	60% pulsed at 77° F; 40% pulsed at 90° F	48° F	Fermentation Temperature	18° C to 20° C	About 60° F	Peak of 80° F	70° F to 80° F	Average 82° F
Fermentation Technique	Open and closed tank. Rack and return during primary. Average 18 to 21 days on skins	Open top stainless, 4-ton capacity tank	Standard	60% fermented whole berry in 228 L barrels	Closed fermenters, up to 45 minute pump-overs twice a day when the ferment is active	Fermentation Technique	Placed whole bunch in a bladder press; Approximately 50% of the juice is put directly into tank, and 50% into barrel	Barrel ferment	Fermenters were sealed for a 7-day post-ferment maceration before basket pressing	3-ton fermenters, 12 to 16 days total on skins	50% barrels; Minimal amount of co-pigmentation
Nutrients	Adjust Nitrogen as needed	None	None	None	Ferment K	Nutrients	N/A	Nutriferm Amino	None	None	None
Acid Additions	None	None	Added to juice before fermentation	0.35 g/L pre-fermentation	Adjusted with tartaric at crush	Acid Additions	N/A	N/A	None	None	Average 1.3 g/L tartaric
Malolactic?	Full malolactic	Full malolactic	Blocked	Inoculated with MCW	Yes	Malolactic?	Malolactic in tank portion is generally blocked; Full malolactic in barrel	20% of barrels	Native bacteria	MCW	Natural malolactic fermentation in barrel took 2 to 3 months
Punch-downs/ Pump-over Methods	Both	Punch-downs once daily before fermentation, 3 times a day during active fermentation and once a day after 2" to 3" Brix	N/A	40% required gentle punch-downs 2 to 3 times per day once fermentation started, once a day after 2" to 3" Brix	Two pump-overs each day of the ferment	Punch-downs/ Pump-over Methods	N/A	N/A	Gentle cap management	Four punch-overs per day until around 10° Brix, 1 or 2 punch-downs about 10° Brix	Four punch-downs per day in foudre
Oak Program	20% new oak, 100% French, 22% and 50%	1-year-old French oak, 500 L capacity	No oak	40% new French oak	Primarily French oak with the addition of some second- and third-use barrels	Oak Program	50% in tank, 30% of remaining in new oak, the rest in neutral	20% new oak, light toast; Segno, Merano and Guiness	Neutral, chest-staved, 50% American oak	228L barrels, French oak, 25% new	Blend of 30% new French oak and 20% new Eastern European
Barrel Aging	16 months	16 months	N/A	18 months	12 months for Pinot	Barrel Aging	16 months per day at fermentation and twice per barrel and January	11 months	11 months	12 months	26 months, with batonnage every 2 months
Racking	1 to 2 times total	Once before bottling	Stored on light-tee	Twice	Racked off less after malolactic fermentation completes	Racking	After malolactic	Once before bottling	Once	No racking	Twice, 80% of lot after malolactic, 100% of lot 2 weeks before bottling
Filtration	Bug catcher	None	Full Cross-flow (0.2 nominal)	None	Cross-flow filtration with a 0.2 micron filter then filtered again before bottling	Filtration	DE filter	0.45	None	None	None

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February 27, 2020

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OCTOBER 2019

Impact of Varying Intervals of Extended Maceration on Texas Mourvèdre

Winery: William Chris Vineyards

Winemakers: Tony Offill and Chris Brundrett

Wanting to create more complex layers in their single-vineyard Mourvèdre, William Chris Vineyards' winemakers Tony Offill and Chris Brundrett decided to experiment with various maceration times. The five-, 60- and 120-day macerations each offered unique aromas, flavors and textures, creating a more well-rounded, and interesting, final blend.

Excerpt from Winemaker's Postmortem:

WBM: *What did you learn from this trial? Did anything occur during the course of the trial or in the results that were unexpected?*

Offill & Brundrett: We learned that we could use this across more of our varietal programs in order to add depth and mouthfeel with a bit more reductive strength. In addition, we would reduce volumes across the lots of extended maceration in order to make it a smaller percentage of the final blend.

The greenness on the 120-day lot was, and is, a bit challenging to blend. However, the positive attributes in mouthfeel far outweigh the aromatic components. The most surprising aspect was that there was virtually no change in pH the longer we macerated. We anticipated more changes in chemistry, which in the end proved not to be the case. However, the mouthfeel depth improved more than we anticipated, which is a positive.

DECEMBER 2019

Finding the Right Oak for Each Pinot Noir Clone

Winery: Terragena Vineyard

Winemaker: Chris Buchanan

Curious about the effects of new versus neutral oak aging on specific Pinot Noir clones, Terragena Vineyard proprietor Chris Buchanan decided to run a trial testing just that: Holding all other fermentation variables constant, this trial determines the sensory effects of new Hungarian oak versus neutral French oak on Pommard clone Pinot Noir.

Buchanan is also bottling these wines as individual selections in order to explore how each clone and oak treatment ages in comparison with a blend of clones from the same vineyard. This long-term project will help inform Buchanan and his winemaking team which clones or treatments may be better suited to longer aging and/or how a blend of clones could contribute to a wine that ages gracefully for many years.

Excerpt from Winemaker's Postmortem:

WBM: *Did you encounter any problems during the course of the trial? If so, how did you overcome these issues?*

Buchanan: It took forever to hand-write all of the details on each individual bottle. Originally, we were going to write out the clone name and oak type on each bottle. After about one case we decided to switch to codes. "N" for neutral oak, "H" for Hungarian and "Pom" for Pommard. Clone 115, well, that one didn't need an abbreviation. **WBM**

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William Chris Vineyards

Skeleton Key

Intention, Luck and Conviction Embody Texan Winery's Spirit

With an unrivaled passion and determination, **Chris Brundrett** and **William 'Bill' Blackmon** are dedicated to showing the rest of the world how wonderful Texas wine can be through **William Chris Vineyards**.

"Part of the wonderful gift of wine is tasting where the wine comes from. I think that intention is at the backbone, or should be at the backbone, of everything that we do. We want to share that through our wines, we want to have people feel that when they drink our wines, and we want to inspire others to feel intention and to be intentional in their lives," he said.

That intention shows itself in every tier of William Chris' wines, but it's in The Skeleton Key Red Blend that one can really feel that Texas spirit. A blend of grapes from the state's various AVAs, it's a lure to those who aren't as interested in wine or haven't experienced any Texas wine before.

It also represents a pivotal moment for the winery. When Brundrett and Blackmon first started the business, they had very little capital—just \$40,000 and an American Express credit card. But they found a small piece of land on which to make their start, and on it sat a one-hundred-year-old farmhouse. With a little remodeling using materials found onsite, as well as some reclaimed material from around the area, they turned it into their winery.

Amidst the demolition, Brundrett found a key—a skeleton key that opened all the doors to the building. "That little farmhouse ended up being, in a way, one of the keys to our success," he said. "It was like the cornerstone of our brand." In the end, they named their first line, Skeleton Key, after it.

One could even say that key saved the winery. When they first started to develop the Skeleton Key wine, Texas had one of the worst vintages in its history thanks to an incredibly strong, late frost that devastated most of the fruit. Brundrett and Blackmon, who had dedicated themselves to using 100 percent Texas fruit, lost 90 percent of their crop. But that didn't deter them. Brundrett says he just got in his pickup truck and drove to see every grower of every vineyard on the east side of Texas, looking for as much fruit as he could get his hands on.

"They were just little two-acre vineyards, four-acre vineyards, six-acre vineyards—little, small pieces of land. I started making agreements to buy all these little blocks of fruit, which is great. It saved our vintage. I literally put 10,000 miles on my truck in one month, just driving," he said.

The problem, however, was that they ended up with 20 lots of fruit, many consisting of just one or two barrels. While each lot made a great wine on its own, the two realized the insanity of making 20 different wines, particularly so early in the winery's start. Brundrett said they also

took into consideration how unpredictable the weather could be—they could, potentially, experience another crop like this one again. The solution: a proprietary red blend.

A couple hundred cases of the Skeleton Key Red Blend were produced that year and it sold out in just two months—it was the fastest selling wine in William Chris history. When the next vintage rolled around, they made a little bit more, and the next year a bit more. And they always sold out. People fell in love with the brand—today it's in restaurants, H-E-B's and other grocery stores. Those external sales consistently drive



consumers to the winery. "People come into William Chris and half the time don't even taste it but end up buying a case, because they saw it on a restaurant shelf," Brundrett said.

Today, that entry level wine has seen great success and the Skeleton Key brand has expanded to include a Cabernet, a white blend and a Mourvèdre. "Those are just taking off like wildfire. That (the Skeleton Key Red Blend) is kind of like the entry level, the access point. Once somebody tastes this and really likes it, then they look a little deeper and come out to the winery, and schedule their visit, and really dig into a lot of the single variety wines," Brundrett said.

While Skeleton Key has saved the winery from incredible vintage variations over the years, Brundrett hopes that some of their single vineyard and higher end wines will also showcase the power and quality of Texas winemakers and winegrapes. "We're building an amazing wine industry. We're supporting an economy and building a business that's going to be around for the next hundred years—that's responsible." **WBM**



Thoughts On Culottes?
The fanciful pants are having (another) moment. **D2**

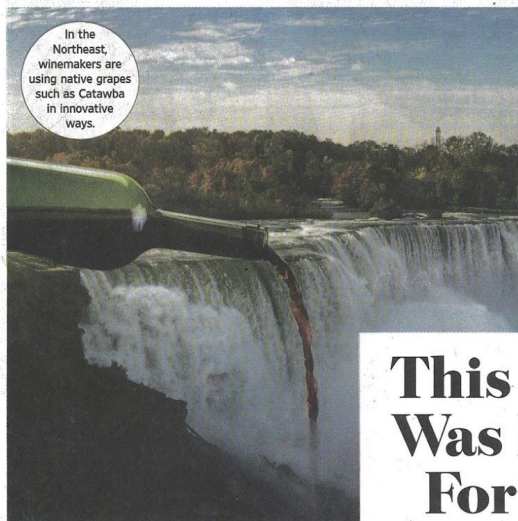
OFF DUTY

Snap to It!
Pro cameras are smartly catching up to smartphone shooters. **D10**

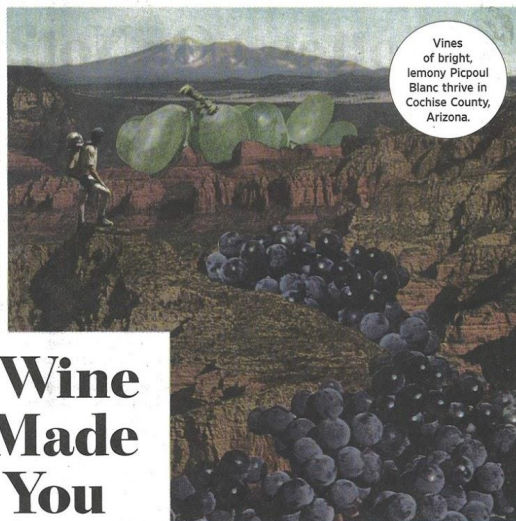


FASHION | FOOD | DESIGN | TRAVEL | GEAR

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Saturday/Sunday, November 16 - 17, 2019 | **D1**

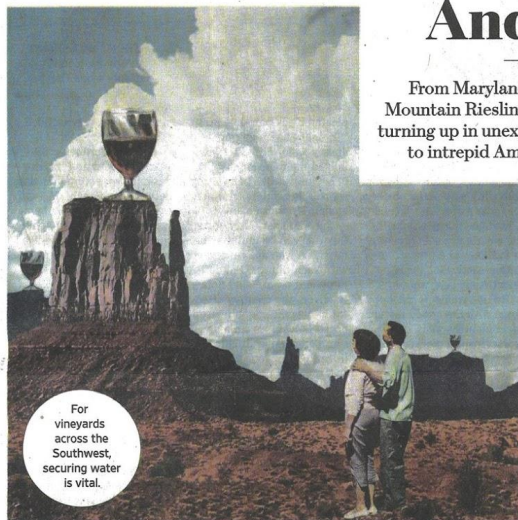
In the Northeast, winemakers are using native grapes such as Catawba in innovative ways.



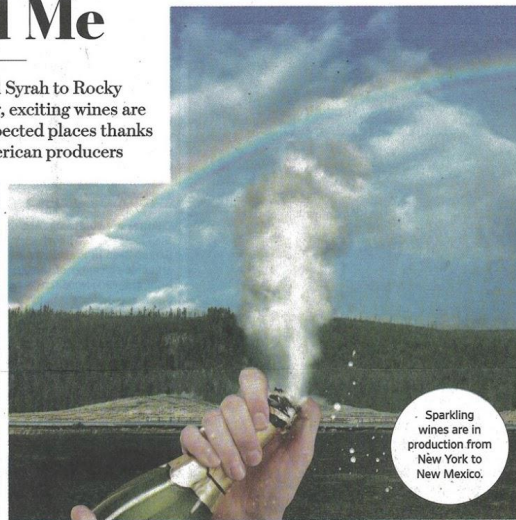
Vines of bright, lemony Picpoul Blanc thrive in Cochise County, Arizona.

This Wine Was Made For You And Me

From Maryland Syrah to Rocky Mountain Riesling, exciting wines are turning up in unexpected places thanks to intrepid American producers



For vineyards across the Southwest, securing water is vital.



Sparkling wines are in production from New York to New Mexico.

AMERICA THE BOUNTIFUL Regions once considered wine deserts are producing in-demand bottles as a new wave of winemakers boldly redraw the map of American wine-regions.

By LÉTTIE TEAGUE

THE FAMED frontier spirit of the men and women who helped settle the country we now call the United States required courage and conviction and the willingness to leave the familiar behind for worlds unknown—possible riches or possible ruin. It's the same spirit that drives so many American winemakers today, men and women who often risk all in the hope of producing a world-class wine.

Jayne Henderson, 42, and Steve Steese, 44, are two such 21st-century pioneers. Just over two years ago the couple left behind good jobs (sommelier and wine director, respectively) at a top Denver steakhouse, sold their home in the suburbs and purchased 85 acres in Hotchkiss, on Colorado's Western Slope.

The farm, which they named the Storm Cellar, featured a rundown house, a few outbuildings and 16 acres of grapes, including a decades-old plot said to be the highest-elevation Riesling vineyard—at almost 6,000 feet—in the West Elks appellation and possibly North America. It was also, as it turned out, riddled with phylloxera, the dreaded vineyard louse.

life savings and also investment money fronted by five couples who are all close friends.

Neither Ms. Henderson nor Mr. Steese had trained as a winemaker, though Ms. Henderson worked two harvests in Oregon and one in Napa. They relied instead on a deep knowledge of wine gained during their restaurant years, occasional advice via email and phone from winemaking consultants, and books. "My mom gave me an amazing textbook on vineyard management," Ms. Henderson recalled. YouTube videos were a great source of instruction on subjects as varied as pruning and tractors.

Perhaps their greatest asset? "An insane work ethic," said Ms. Henderson. "We will do whatever we have to do." And they share all the labor equally. "We literally do everything together," said Mr. Steese, who is much more laconic than his bubbly wife.

Indeed, during the two days I spent with the couple last month, they never stopped working, whether it was fixing hoses or loading and pressing two tons of Roussanne grapes. I wasn't surprised to hear that they prune the entire vineyard by hand, even in exceedingly cold weather. This decision has resulted in severe carpal tunnel syndrome for Ms. Henderson.

There may not be other American winemakers staking a claim for Riesling at this elevation, but there are plenty who are daring to buck trends and boldly go where others aren't. When Nathan Kandler of Precedent Wines decided he wanted to make Chenin Blanc in California—a grape once common in the state and now extremely hard to find—he had to put in considerable time when it came to sourcing grapes. Vineyard owners were ripping out Chenin Blanc and replanting vineyards with varieties they considered more lucrative. Mr. Kandler made Chenin in Lodi and Mendocino before purchasing fruit in

their problems haven't been limited to inexperience, phylloxera or drought, either. Just a few days before I arrived in mid-October, it snowed. "And the day after the snow, there was freezing rain," Ms. Henderson noted with a hearty brand of cheerfulness. "But we didn't send anyone home," said Mr. Steese. "We knew that if we did, we'd never see them again." Harvest help is scarce in their region, as the numerous nearby hemp farms pay much higher hourly rates.

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BETH MACKEE

D8 | Saturday/Sunday, November 16 - 17, 2019

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

EATING & DRINKING

Winemakers
Rediscover
America

Continued from page D1

Wright, founder and vineyard manager of Sanctuary Vineyards, has experimented with a couple dozen varieties in the hunt for grapes that will thrive in his humid location. So far he's found that Albariño, the white grape of Spain, does very well, while certain Bordeaux varieties, such as Cabernet Franc and Merlot, are more of a challenge.

Sarah Troxell, co-owner of Galen Glen winery in the Lehigh Valley of eastern Pennsylvania, planted a few acres of Grüner Veltliner 16 years ago, despite the fact that her family didn't really know anything about how to grow or vinify the Austrian white grape. Though American wine drinkers were largely unfamiliar with the grape, she'd fallen in love with it. Almost two decades later, Galen Glen's Grüner has been recognized as one of the best wines in the state.

For winemaker Sarah O'Herron at Black Ankle Vineyards in Mount Airy, Md., a love of wines from the Rhône Valley in France drove the decision to plant Syrah even though neighbors had struggled with the variety and lost vines to the cold. "We decided that if we put Syrah in some of our warmest spots on very limiting rootstock, we might just have a chance to make it work—and that we loved the wines enough that it was worth a shot!" she wrote in an email. Ms. O'Herron's success with the grape has since driven Black Ankle to build Live Edge Vineyards nearby, where they're considering planting still more risky Rhône varieties, including Grenache.

Other winemakers have dared to move beyond the so-called "noble" varieties of the European *Vitis vinifera* species, such as Riesling or Syrah, to concentrate on the hardy labrusca grapes native to North America. Varieties in the latter category, including Catawba and Norton, are widely underestimated as good for little more than simple, sweet wines best locally consumed. Yet in the hands of talented producers such as Caleb Barber and Deirdre Heekin of La Garagista winery in Vermont, or Nathan Kendall in the Finger Lakes of New York, labrusca grapes are the source of highly interesting wines that quickly sell out. About half the wines La Garagista produces are sparkling; the cool climate of their farm in Barnard, Vt., has proved a boon. "We have the acidity to support these kinds of wines," said Ms. Heekin.

Of course, experimentation won't go very far if the wines aren't good or they aren't properly promoted or sold. That's why Ms. Henderson and Mr. Steese spend a lot of time on the road. This year they traveled to food and wine festivals all over Colorado—seven in total—as much to spread the word about the West Elks wine region as their own wines.

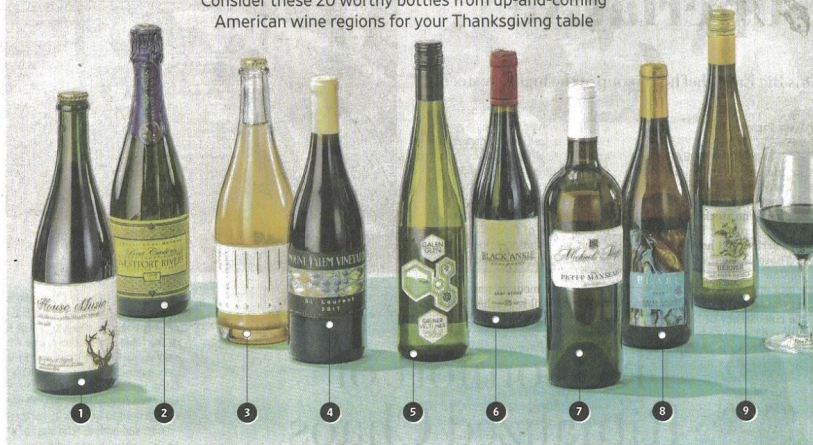
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The couple regularly deliver wines to restaurants and stores in Denver, a four-hour drive over the

"We decided we might just have a chance to make it work—and we loved the wines enough that it was worth a shot!"

From Sea to Shining Syrah

Consider these 20 worthy bottles from up-and-coming American wine regions for your Thanksgiving table



1. Vermont

2017 La Garagista "House Music" Peillant Naturel \$45 This delicious, slightly sparkling, dry red is made from various American hybrid grapes, such as La Crescent and Frontenac Noir. It's an homage to Lambrusco, according to La Garagista proprietor Deirdre Heekin. The Vermont winery makes 21 wines and ciders, half of them sparkling, a style Ms. Heekin says is "uniquely suited to our terroir."

2. Massachusetts

2009 Westport Rivers Brut Cuvée RJR \$30 This Massachusetts winery is sparkling-focused, turning out Champagne-method wines like this rich, toasty Pinot Noir-dominant sparkling. Since Westport Rivers' founding in 1986, its vineyard has grown to be New England's largest, covering some 80 acres in the southeastern end of the Bay State.

3. New York

2017 Chépika Catawba Petillant Naturel \$30 Winemaker Nathan Kendall, a Finger Lakes native, knew the (often maligned) Catawba grape closely associated with the region had been used to make sparkling wine in the past, so that's what he and sommelier Pascaline Lepeltier chose to do. This is a fruity, fun, lightly sparkling wine.

4. New Jersey

2017 Mount Salem Vineyards St. Laurent Pittstown \$45 Although vintner Peter Leitner might easily have planted a vineyard in any number of states, he chose New Jersey and Austrian varieties such as St. Laurent, which he considers the Garden State's answer to Pinot Noir. His take on the grape is indeed decidedly Pinot-like, marked by vibrant red fruit, snappy acidity and lovely fruit and floral aromas.

5. Pennsylvania

2018 Galen Glen Vinology Grüner Veltliner Lehigh Valley \$35

6. Virginia

2017 Michael Shaps Monticello Petit Manseng \$30 The Petit Manseng grape is a rarity in the U.S., and it's even more rare for this native French variety to be used for anything other than sweet wine. But winemaker Michael Shaps has found that a dry version suits his climate and soils. His barrel-fermented wine—a rich, lush white—apparently so impressed fellow Virginia winemakers that several decided to give the dry version a try.

7. North Carolina

2018 Sanctuary Vineyards Pearl Albariño \$25 This Carolina take on the Spanish white grape Albariño is decidedly tropical in a bright and juicy way. It's one of the 14 varieties John Wright planted on 30 acres in the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and it may be the region's first Albariño. "I hope we're not the last," said Mr. Wright.

8. Michigan

2018 Left Foot Charley Kerner Old Mission Penin-

9. Missouri

2018 TerraVox Saignée \$35 TerraVox founder Jerry Eisenthal (also an exhibit designer for museums) set out to make a rosé as much like a red wine as possible and also a "deconstruction" of a grape—in this case Norton, Missouri's signature grape. His saignée rosé is a first pressing of Norton, aged a few months in oak barrels to yield a textured, almost savory and, yes, nearly red rosé.

10. Kansas

2018 Holy-Feld Vineyard & Winery Dry Vignoles \$15 According to Michelle Meyer of Holy-Feld Vineyard & Winery, it's common in the Midwest for Vignoles to be

11. Colorado

2018 The Storm Cellar Dry Riesling West Elks \$22 Sourced from the oldest (and rockiest) block of Riesling vines in the Storm Cellar's Redstone Vineyard, this little, minerally white aged in stainless steel offers a snapshot of the high-quality wines that owners Jayme Henderson and Steve Steese strive to produce.

12. Idaho

2018 Hat Ranch Winery Estate Grown Dry Moscato \$18 Hat Ranch Winery takes its name from a ranch founded by the owners' great-grandparents in 1902. Today the winery produces some of Idaho's most lauded bottles. This dry Moscato, a lively floral-scented, ripe white, is one of the winery's most-awarded wines as well as one of Idaho's most uncommon whites. Winemaker

13. New Mexico

2017 Cimarón Vineyard, considered Arizona's very best, planted by Oregon Pinot Noir superstar Dick Erath.

14. California

2017 Precedent Enlightenment Mountain Vineyard Chenin Blanc Mendocino \$25 Winemaker Nathan Kandler chases great Chenin Blanc vineyards of distinction all over California—a daunting task, as so few still exist. From a vineyard founded in 1980 above a Buddhist monastery, this wine is a sublime combination of restraint and opulence—lush yet marked by a firm mineral note.

15. Oregon

2017 Morgen Long Williamette Valley Chardonnay

bodied wine marked by textbook Syrah aromas of black pepper and spice.

American oak barrels, resulting in this soft, full-bodied Merlot-like wine.

packaged in blue bottles. It's helpful too: When customers can't pronounce the name of this hybrid American grape they call it "the wine in the blue bottle." Although most Vignoles vines tend to be quite sweet—some cloyingly so—this is an attractive, dry white, refreshing and bright with tropical notes.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNE CASDEN

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mountains that can often be a white-knuckler, especially in the snowy months. But perilous driving, persistent promotion and endless work have brought rewards. The Storm Cellar portfolio, which includes two rosés, three Rieslings, a Sauvignon Blanc and a Chardonnay, has garnered industry recognition and awards. At the 2019 Colorado Governor's Cup competition, the rosés won Gold and the 2018 Riesling and 2018 Dry Riesling each won Double Gold, denoting "exceptional depth and drinkability beyond any other wine in the competition; a world-class wine."

That's an enormous accomplishment for a winery so young, but Mr. Steese and Ms. Henderson have little time for laurel-resting. They are planning to build a new and larger winery, a commercial kitchen and three guest cottages, and perhaps invest in a few farm animals, too. Ms. Henderson has a weakness for burros.



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2018 Galen Glen Vitology Grüner Veltliner

\$17 Galen Glen's is one of the oldest Grüner Veltliner vineyards in the U.S. Proprietor Sarah Troxell fell in love with the Austrian white grape 16 years ago—and spent many years figuring out how to grow it well in eastern Pennsylvania. The happy result: this bright, high-acid white wine marked by notes of stone fruit.

6. Maryland

2016 Black Ankle Vineyards Leaf-Stone Syrah

\$56 Although other Maryland producers had planted Syrah and struggled to get it ripe, Black Ankle co-owners Sarah O'Herron and Ed Boyce were determined to get it right. In 2003 they planted Syrah in their warmest site, and the wines have gone from strength to strength. This is a soft, full-

bodied wine marked by textbook Syrah aromas of black pepper and spice.

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9. Michigan

2018 Left Foot Charley Kerner Old Mission

\$20 When winemaker Bryan Ulbrich first tasted a Kerner from Alto Adige, Italy, he was intrigued and thought the grape might thrive in Michigan. "I figured if we could ripen Pinot Blanc and Riesling, we had a good shot at Kerner," he said. The gamble paid off with this fruity but dry, lively white, an uncomplicated pleasure to drink.

10. Indiana

2017 Creekbend Vineyard Crimson Cabernet

\$30 Winemaker Dennis Dunham planted this cross between Cabernet Sauvignon and the native American Norton grape in 2010, thinking the latter winter-hardy, disease-resistant red variety would be a good fit for a southern Indiana vineyard. The wine spends about 15 months in

American oak barrels, resulting in this soft, full-bodied Merlot-like wine.

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15. Texas

2018 William Chris Vineyards Petillant Naturel Rosé

\$25 Winemaker Chris Brundrett believes in making Texas wines from Texas fruit—definitely an uncommon approach when the vineyard was founded in 2006. He specializes in serious reds from Rhône varieties, though he also makes wines that are refreshing and fun, such as this juicy, slightly bubbly Merlot-Sangiovese rosé.

16. Arizona

2018 Chateau Tumbleweed Cimarron Vineyard Picpoul

\$28 Winemaker Joe Bechard characterizes this crisp, dry white as "dangerously chug-

gable." It's sourced from the Cimarron Vineyard, considered Arizona's very best, planted by Oregon Pinot Noir superstar Dick Erath.

17. New Mexico

2017 Gruet Sparkling Pinot Meunier

\$42 Native Frenchman Laurent Gruet began growing grapes for Champagne-method sparkling wine just outside Albuquerque, N.M., decades ago—a quixotic endeavor then and now. But this crisp, slightly herbal Pinot Meunier sparkler is a first, produced in honor of the winery's 30th anniversary.

18. California

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19. Oregon

2017 Morgan Long Williamette Valley Chardonnay

\$50 Although Oregon is solidly Pinot Noir country, winemaker Seth Morgan Long decided his focus would be Chardonnay—only Chardonnay. He makes quite a few, and his Loubeac bottling is particularly outstanding, a mineral-driven Chablis double.

20. Washington

2018 Savage Grace Underwood Mountain Vineyards

\$42 Winemaker Michael Savage is a big proponent of the little-known cool-climate Columbia Gorge region. He produces a range of notable wines, from Grüner to Gewürztraminer, out of Underwood Mountain Vineyards, but his Pinot Noir is particularly transcendent. It's lithe and transparent, redolent of earth and red cherry.



E. MARTIN BROWN/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL; STYLING BY ANNE CAROLAN



12 American Sparkling Wines to Buy Right Now

From dry to sweet, and affordable to less so, here are some of the best bubbles in the U.S.

American sparkling wine is finally starting to get the respect it's deserved for a long time. Schramsberg, under the ownership of the visionary Davies family since 1965, has been producing some of the best sparklers in America for over half a century. Oregon is coming on strong, with a fantastic sparkling-wine culture. Gruet, in New Mexico, proves year after year that exciting, delicious bubbles don't have to cost a fortune. The End of Nowhere, in Amador County, California, is a newer producer that's finding a growing audience and well-deserved success with their foot-tread, single-vineyard "Uncorked!," a dry sparkling Zinfandel that is in many ways representative of the brave direction that American sparkling wine is heading.

All this means that narrowing down any list of standouts is a difficult process. But these 12 bottles represent a good range of what's on the market, produced in an array of styles from classic to pét-nat, and at price points that stretch from around \$20 to over \$100. They're listed alphabetically, encompass wines from bone dry to a little bit sweet, and are all worth the effort to track down.



PHOTO: KIRSTEN KAISER

2017 William Chris Vineyards Pétillant Naturel Rosé Texas (\$25)

Aromas of strawberry leather and compressed watermelon are friendly and not over-the-top: There's an appealing sense of balance to this standout pét-nat. The palate, however, is bracingly dry and cut through with flavors of watermelon pith, kumquats, Chinese bitter melons, and a palate-cleansing burst of acidity on the finish. Each sip makes you thirsty for another one.

20 White Wines You Can Still Drink When It's Cold Out

These fantastic bottles prove that you can (and should) drink white wine year round.

Just because autumn is here doesn't mean that you need to stop drinking white wine. It just means that the pairings change—fewer crisp whites with grilled seafood and more of them with spaghetti and clams, cooked indoors—and that richer ones take on a greater sense of prominence. Here, then, are 20 standout bottles of white wine to enjoy as the cooler weather arrives. Honestly, any one of them would be great year-round, but these bottles seem particularly well-suited to this chillier time of year.

William Chris Vineyards “Mary Ruth” White Wine 2017 Texas (\$28)



PHOTO: KIRSTEN KAISER

This blend of Malvasia Bianca, Blanc du Bois, and Muscat Blanc may not read as terribly cool-weather-appropriate on paper, but the extra year of bottle age has allowed an unexpectedly savory side to emerge from the otherwise generously floral and sweetly spiced tangerine-driven aromas and flavors. There is also a hit of white tea and gunflint, as well as white-blossomed flowers and preserved lemon, that make it perfect for an autumn day that still retains some of the heat of the summer.

June 27, 2019

San Antonio
MAGAZINE

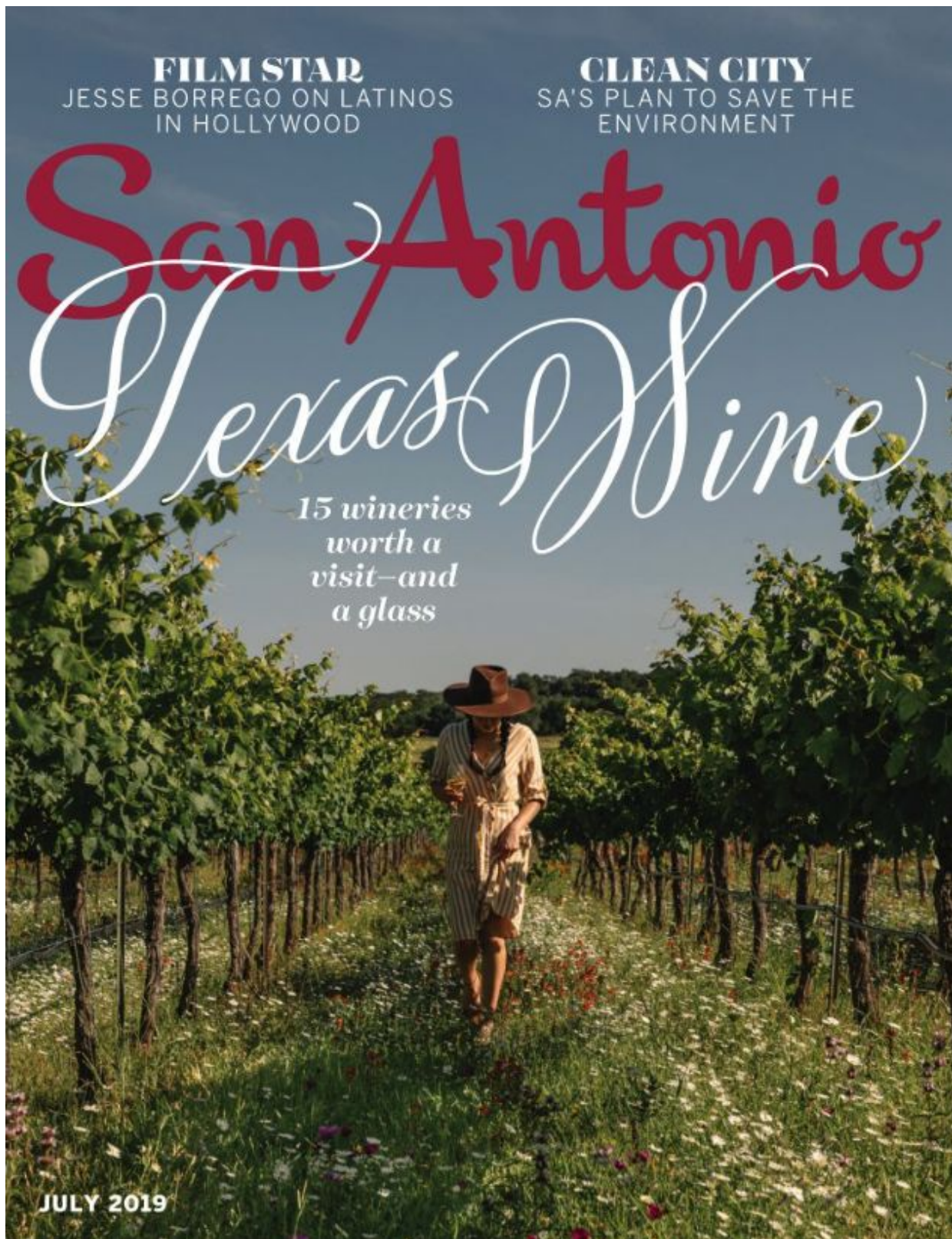
FILM STAR
JESSE BORREGO ON LATINOS
IN HOLLYWOOD

CLEAN CITY
SA'S PLAN TO SAVE THE
ENVIRONMENT

San Antonio Texas Wine

*15 wineries
worth a
visit—and
a glass*

JULY 2019





PONTOTOC VINEYARD WEINGARTEN

320 W. Main St.
Fredericksburg
pontotocvineyard.com

Tucked behind a stone wall on Fredericksburg's Main Street sits Pontotoc Vineyard Weingarten. Owner Carl Money spends weekends describing to guests where the grapes for the Estate Tempranillo are grown in Pontotoc, all while pouring glasses of the Spanish-style red for guests to enjoy at tables sprinkled across the historic property. "The idea is to taste real Texas wine in a Vienna-style weingarten," Money says.

The bar is built inside what Money says is Fredericksburg's oldest building and a table for smaller tastings is nestled in the underground cellar. While guests sip wine outdoors, Money's wife Frances, a pastry chef who is often trailed by one of their four children, delivers "picnics" of her housemade spiced pecans, cheeses, cookies and other treats. It's the kind of familial atmosphere that Money dreamed of before even meeting Frances.

The East Texas native, whose family has farmed cotton for five generations, first started learning about wine in the 1980s while studying in Austria. After earning his undergraduate degree, he returned to Europe while a law student and eventually taught law in Spain where he noticed the terrain for growing tempranillo grapes was not that different from some of the land he'd seen in Texas. The idea for a

Hill Country winery was born.

He found the type of land he envisioned planting grapes on in Pontotoc, a small town with German heritage nestled between Brady and Llano, and planted his first crop in 2005. He bought 15 acres there over the next four years and after marrying Frances turned the once-abandoned buildings into a wine haven—the former Pontotoc post office is now a barrelhouse and the old barbershop a wine storage facility. Their first 100 percent estate-grown wine was released in 2011 and the weingarten opened the following year in Fredericksburg. Along with an Estate Tempranillo, the vineyard is known for its Estate Albano and tempranillo blends.

Eventually Money says they may open an Airbnb-style guest house in one of the Pontotoc buildings. He also has a project in the works in Hye. For now, customers are invited to Pontotoc once a year to assist in harvesting and then are encouraged to meet the Monneys at the weingarten, where they love to watch families pass an afternoon or evening slowly sipping wine while live music plays in the background and kids chase one another from one end of the closed-in property to the other.

WINE TO TRY: 2016 Smoothing Iron Mountain



TRULY TEXAN

Should Texas wines be made solely from Texas grapes? Members of Texas Wine Growers think so

CHRIS BRUNDRETT AND BILL BLACKMON, FOUNDERS OF WILLIAM CHRIS Vineyards, want to ensure that when wine enthusiasts purchase a bottle with a state of Texas emblem on it, the wine inside is actually made with Texas grapes. "Most regions in the world make wine from that region and label it as such," Blackmon says.

They're among a group of winemakers and vineyard owners who supported a bill filed during the most recent legislative session that would have required wines labeled as Texan to be made with 100 percent Texas grapes. Such rules already are in place in California, Oregon and New York. Texas is among the 46 states that follow federal regulations, which allow for wines to be labeled state wines if 75 percent of the grapes used to produce them were grown in that state.

Blackmon and Carl Money, an attorney and owner of Pontotoc Vineyard, describe the proposed rule as "truth in labeling" and say they believe it's the only way Texas will truly establish itself as a wine region in the way that California has done. That's not to say wine can't be made with grapes purchased from California—a practice that's not altogether uncommon—it's just that bottles like that would have to be clear about what they contain.

Opponents of the bill say that Texas' weather is too volatile for such a requirement, especially considering the amount of grapes being grown in state. While California has around 560,000 acres of vineyards, according to the national association Wine America, Texas has just over 4,300.

Major wineries like Messina Hof and Llano Estacado, along with the Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association, did not support the bill; the association made a statement that it's simply not in the best interest of the industry right now.

Money, president of Texas Wine Growers, which supported the bill, says passage of the bill would have incentivized vineyards to grow their footprint and that without a change to the rule, there will never be any reason not to purchase grapes from other states. Additionally, he says, the 2019 bill allowed for exceptions in years when weather decimates Texas crops and it provided a five-year timeline for implementation. Money says he was encouraged to see the measure get more traction this year than in 2017 and he and Blackmon say they plan to lobby for it again in 2021. "We'll do it every two years until we get it done," Money says.

KUHLMAN CELLARS

18421 E. Hwy. 290
Stonewall
kuhlmancellars.com

Wine is just the start of the experience at this tasting room that was opened in 2014 by Christopher and Jennifer Cobb. Both the Signature and Casual Pairing options, for which advanced reservations are required, include tastes of Kuhlman's signature wines plus bites crafted by San Antonio chef Chris Cook that perfectly complement each wine. "We believe strongly in this idea of the Old World and taking the time to come together as a community and family over food and wine," says Christopher Cobb. Winemaker Bénédicte Rhyne, a native of France who earned her master's in oenology from the University of Bourgogne and worked in Sonoma before moving to the Hill Country in 2002, creates Texas wines that have a French style, including the Kuhlman Estate Rosé and red blends like the award-winning Barranca or Alluve, which includes mourvedre, tempranillo, carignan, grenache, malbec and petite sirah. One tasting takes place in the barrel room and the other in the wine garden with gorgeous views. After a sommelier-guided tasting, order a full glass and linger on the second story patio.

WINE TO TRY: 2016 Barranca



CALAIS WINERY

8115 Hwy. 290 W.
Hye
calaiswinery.com

Intimate tours here are offered by appointment only, allowing staff to not only pour tastes of its Texas wines but also to have time to explain the production process behind them. Book a Saturday- and Sunday-only "cave tasting" that takes place in a literal cave dug into the hillside. Wines are served along a longleaf pine bar made from reclaimed wood sourced from an East Texas horse barn while barrels line the walls. Originally founded in Dallas in 2008 by the French-born Benjamin Calais, Calais Winery closed its Deep Ellum location in 2014 and reopened along with a vineyard in 2015 in Hye. An engineer by trade, Calais describes his operation as a "boutique winery" and says he's committed to creating wines that truly represent the region, including chenin blanc, Bordeaux, malbec and petit verdot.

WINE TO TRY: 2015 Gravitas

WILLIAM CHRIS VINEYARDS

10352 Hwy. 290
Hye
williamchrismwines.com

The founders of this Hye vineyard and tasting room insist you don't have to know a thing about wine varietals to enjoy their flights. "We're all about education—from the growing end to the pouring of wine," says William "Bill" Blackmon, who owns the vineyard along with Chris Brundrett. The pair is leading the charge for wines made with only Texas grapes (see "Truly Texan" sidebar on page 48) and source from the Texas High Plains AVA to supplement what they grow in the Hill Country, taking a farmer's approach to picking their grapes at precisely the right time so minimal intervention is required in the winemaking process. "We are of the approach that wine is made in the vineyard," Blackmon says. The Mary Ruth, a white wine named for Blackmon's mom that blends muscat and blanc du bois, is a customer favorite, says Blackmon, while the High Plains Rosé is the perfect complement to a hot summer day.

WINE TO TRY: 2018 Mary Ruth

Stay A While

Hye eschews its old reputation as a place to say "Hye, bye" with a growing number of wineries and more

Hye Market

The 1880s historic Hye Post Office where President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed his postmaster general in 1965 has been transformed into a restaurant and bar that specializes in all things Texas. Order a sandwich, or pizza and a glass of something local. hyemarket.com

Garrison Bros. Distillery

The ranch where Garrison Bros. bourbon whiskey is produced hosts tours (and tastings) every Wednesday through Sunday. Meet one of the bourbon makers, see where it's distilled and try a limited release from the barrel barn. garrisonbros.com

Hye Cider Co.

Take a detour from grapes for happy hour (Wednesday through Sunday) at the Hye Cider Barn, where five varieties of cider are produced, including the new Hye Heaven that has notes of fig and fresh pepper. hyecidercompany.com

French Connection

If all of your sampling leaves you looking for a place to lay your head before driving home, consider this group of three modern cottages that are perfect for two and nestled on a serene lot near Hye's multiple wineries and tasting rooms. airbnb.com

MIXED CASE: OPINION AND ADVICE

The Future Is Bright for Texas Wine

An emerging wine region on the cusp of something great

By Emma Balter



■ Apr 25, 2019

I always like to say, when someone scoffs at the mention of wine from "atypical" places, that back in the day people used to laugh at the idea of wine from California. Who's laughing now?

Visiting emerging wine regions is fascinating and exciting to me. Producers are still trying to figure it all out: what their *terroir* offers, which grapes to grow, how to make the wine Very slowly, often painfully so, they are working to shape an entire wine region—one that could be great. This is how I felt when I visited Texas Hill Country this past November.

For more on traveling to Austin and the Hill Country area, including where to eat and stay, pick up a copy of Wine Spectator's June 15 issue, on newsstands May 14.

More than a decade ago, Chris Brundrett was about to leave his native Texas to follow some job offers in California. He was working in the local wine industry and had grown disgruntled by its slow progression. Then he met Bill Blackmon, a pioneer vintner who planted his first vineyard in 1983 in the High Plains, near Lubbock, and moved down to Hill Country in 1996. The two men bonded over a shared philosophy: that wine should have a sense of place, and that Texas has enormous potential.

Brundrett stayed. He and Blackmon made their first vintage together in 2008 and bought their winery in Hye in 2010. Today, William Chris Vineyards makes about 30,000 cases of wine from their 6.5-acre estate vineyard, as well as from dozens of vineyards throughout the state that they either farm themselves or buy grapes from. Rhône varieties are their main focus, especially Mourvèdre, which they mostly bottle standalone. They also make Merlot, Sangiovese, Roussanne, rosé and sparkling wine, among others.



Emma Balter

The William Chris team believe single-variety Mourvèdre can become big in Texas.

The William Chris wines are qualitatively a whole lot better than what you might expect from Texas if you have preconceived notions (yes, summers here are hotter than a stolen tamale). Their wines are balanced and elegant, with vibrant fruit profiles and great structures. But it doesn't matter if you're making the best wines in the world: If all your neighbors' wines are mediocre, no one will take your region seriously. It takes a village.

Coming of age

There has been tremendous growth in Hill Country, with more wineries popping up every year. Brundrett remembers when there were only five wineries on his road; now there are about 60 within a half-hour drive. Some of this growth, however, has come in the form of quick-buck enotourism, geared toward bachelorette parties and tasting-room crawls, where quality is an afterthought.

Luckily, many of William Chris' neighbor vintners are now making great wine as well. "I always joke that I'll be Chris Brundrett's Warren Winiarski to his Robert Mondavi any day," says Regan Meador of Southold Farm & Cellar. He and his wife, Carey, moved from New York to Hill Country in 2017. They had started Southold on Long Island in 2015, but one day the town flip-flopped on their decision to allow them to build a facility. The Meadors packed up and moved to Texas, where Regan is from.

They settled on a hilltop property 18 miles east of Fredericksburg. They planted 16 acres of rootstock on the hillside, but Regan isn't in any hurry to decide what grapes to put in. Right now, he's tinkering with the varieties he's getting from his vineyard partners. He has two of them, one in Hill Country, where he gets almost 90 percent of his fruit, and one in the High Plains.

Southold makes low-intervention wine in an Old World style from about 10 different grapes, and mostly focuses on blends, like the Albariño-Roussanne and Cabernet Franc-Sangiovese bottlings I tasted during my visit. "Everything's on the table," Regan explained. He ferments his fruit separately without fixed plans, and then plays around with it in the cellar. If a single variety keeps showing well over time and outshines everything, that's when he thinks it should be planted. "It took thousands of years to figure out Burgundy," he said.

Identity crisis

Besides, the Texas wine industry has much more immediate matters to address than which grape varieties to grow, like whether or not Texas wine even needs to be made entirely from Texas-grown grapes. Currently, only 75 percent of a wine's grapes need to be from the state in order to label it "Texas." This is the federal labeling standard, but more serious wine regions like California and Oregon mandate 100 percent. It's not uncommon for producers in Texas to supplement their blends with fruit from California.

A bill was introduced in the Texas legislature last month that would raise the state's minimum to 100 percent, incrementally over five years. (Producers could still make wine with out-of-state grapes, they just won't be able to put Texas on the label.) The folks at William Chris are heavily invested in this fight, believing this measure will elevate the credibility of Texas wine, and have banded together with a bunch of other likeminded producers.

Wine Spectator

"I just don't think anyone in the wine world matters until they're only making wine with a sense of place," said Benjamin Calais of Calais Winery, who is also a vocal proponent of the bill. He's a French (from the city of Calais, believe it or not) computer engineer by trade who moved to Dallas and started his winery in 2008 as a side-project; he moved his facility to Hill Country in 2015 and is now making wine full-time. He focuses on Bordeaux varieties, among others, made in a ripe, fruit-forward style, which he sources from five vineyard partners in the High Plains and Davis Mountains AVAs, who custom-farm for him. He plans on planting 2.5 acres of Tannat in 2020 on his own property, a grape he thinks will do very well in Texas.

Most of his wines are vineyard-designated, a point of pride for Calais, who thinks the Texas wine industry can only move forward if vintners start understanding the state's different *terroirs* and figuring out how to make high-quality wine from season to season with only state-grown grapes. "Innovation always comes out of necessity. If the option is always on the table to do it with California juice, then the economics take over," he told me. Opponents of the wine-labeling bill point to the highly variable weather in Texas as a reason not to impose such measures. No one said it would be easy—just ask [world-renowned regions like Burgundy, Bordeaux or Champagne](#).

If you don't like the weather, just wait a minute

"In Texas every vintage is so diverse, as winemakers and winegrowers, we've got to be on our toes and be able to shift gears and shift styles," said Brundrett. In 2017, as [Hurricane Harvey](#) was approaching the Texas coast, he and Blackmon looked at a plot of Merlot that was not quite ready to pick. Not wanting to leave it on the vines for the storm to ruin, they harvested it and made a great rosé [pétillant naturel](#). In 2015, unusual weather conditions produced [botrytis](#) on some Chenin Blanc grapes in a vineyard owned by a friend of Calais, which typically never happens in Texas. Calais convinced his friend not to spray a small part of the 20-acre plot, bought the grapes and made his delicious Sauternes-style Botrytis Texan cuvée. "We'll probably never get to make that wine again," he said. So is the life of a vintner working at the mercy of Mother Nature.

May 1, 2019

Wine Spectator

There's a lot of potential in Texas and a lot of work has already been done, but there's still a ways to go. "This is Napa in the late sixties," Calais said. Exploding tourism to the area is bound to help along the industry. Another thing working in Texas wine's favor is Texans themselves. "There's a lot of built-in state pride, so the industry is very much supported by the home state," said Regan Meador of Southold. Because the state is so big, local wineries might never need to venture out-of-state to sell all of their wine, but the vintners I spoke to agreed that national and international recognition and distribution will be crucial to the long-term well-being of the industry.

In the meantime, get yourself out there to experience this up-and-coming region. Maybe 20 years from now, you'll be telling your friends you were drinking Texas wine before it was cool ... or cult.

April 25, 2019

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20 Best Hill Country **WINERIES**

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two hours
of Austin**

April 25, 2019

AUSTIN
MONTHLY

► THROUGH THE
Grape
VINE



April 25, 2019

AUSTIN
MONTHLY

A photograph of a woman from the chest down, wearing a blue, off-the-shoulder, ruffled dress with a large bow at the waist. She is holding a tall, slender wine glass filled with red wine. The background is dark and out of focus. The text is overlaid on the lower left of the image.

Swirl, sniff, and
sip at these 20
Hill Country
wineries

**by Madeline
Hollern
and Darcie
Duttweiler**

IN VINO VERITAS

THAT 'TEXAS' CABERNET IN YOUR GLASS MIGHT NOT COME FROM THE HILL COUNTRY, THE HIGH PLAINS, OR EVEN YOUR OWN STATE. SOME LOCAL WINEMAKERS AND GROWERS WANT TO CHANGE THAT.

By Jen Hamilton Hernandez

In a state swelling with outsized local pride, where grocery stores and merchants hawk Texas-shaped tortilla chips and cast-iron pans, why does the region's wine still elicit groans of indifference?

The answer, some state winemakers would say, is origin. They would tell you that the bottles that gave the state's wine a bad name were likely not made from 100 percent Texas-grown grapes. And since wine is reliant on the place where it's grown—or terroir—producing wines that are 100 percent Texas wines is central to the value system of many winemakers in the Texas Hill Country, including the founders of William Chris Vineyards, William "Bill" Blackmon and Chris Brundrett.

Blackmon and Brundrett (pictured, second from top) harvested their first vintage together in 2008, and their decade-plus partnership was evident when I sat down with them in March. Like many synergistic work duos, they completed each other's sentences:

Chris: "If we go anywhere in the world and say, 'Our wines are 100 percent Texas-grown...'"

Bill: "They look at you funny, like 'What does that mean?'"

Chris: "We say it, and they're like, 'And? Why wouldn't you? Don't you make wine in Texas?'"

Bill: "So that's really the gist of it right there. Why do you need to say anything?"

However, not every winemaker in Texas uses 100 percent Texas-grown grapes, and they are not required to. Texas, along with 46 other states, follows federal standards, which mandate 75 percent of the fruit be grown in state for a wine label to carry that state's

name on the label. California, Washington, Oregon, and New York, on the other hand, have passed state legislation requiring more than 75 percent of the fruit (in California's case, 100 percent) to be from the state in order for the state to be the Appellation of Origin.

A group of Texas winemakers, including Brundrett and Blackmon, are looking to change that as they envision Texas emerging as a respected winemaking state. To that end, on March 8, state representative John Kuempel filed House Bill 4233, which would require wineries to use 100 percent Texas grapes in order to carry the Texas appellation. It includes a five-year phase-in period and a provision enabling the Texas Agriculture Commissioner to allow non-Texas grapes in years where the state supply is deemed "insufficient to meet projected production estimates." Similar legislation regarding state of origin, HB 1514, was introduced during the 2017 legislative session. It created a rift in the Texas wine community but never left committee.

Opponents of HB 4233—and even those who take a neutral stance—point out Texas' volatile, unpredictable weather, as well as the ability of the wine industry itself to meet consumers' needs for transparency via labeling. They also point to the need to honor those wineries (many of them not using 100 percent Texas-grown grapes) who pioneered the wine industry in Texas and paved the way for this newer group of visionary winemakers.

Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller says he would support whatever the industry as a whole chooses to do, but he adds, "I do understand the purists—from their standpoint, that





they'd like to have it 100 percent. You know, I would, too, but right now we don't have enough grapes to supply 100 percent. We certainly don't have a surplus, which we would need during a drought or hailstorm or late freeze or early freeze, or all the perils that plague agriculture."

Growers, on the other hand, argue that the passing of HB 4233 would help them sell even more fruit and grow their businesses. One of those growers is Nikhila Narra of Narra Vineyards in Brownfield. She supplies grapes to William Chris and other Texas wineries and says that the rift and initial legislation has affected her business, as wineries against the 100 percent requirement pulled their contracts with her once she publicly supported the bill. "In previous bills we have lost sales," Narra said via email. "As a grower, I am proud of what we grow and how we do it in Texas, but unfortunately it has hurt us." She added that the phase-in period included in HB 4233 has helped it garner more support than the similar bill introduced in 2017.

That support has materialized in the form of an organization, the Texas Wine Growers, made up of eight Texas wineries including Pontotoc Vineyard and William Chris. The group is united by the mission to "promote and protect the integrity of Texas wine by making wines solely from grapes grown in the Terroir of Texas" and has assembled a list of 80 wineries and growers who support HB 4233.

Whether the legislation passes or not, a growing interest in Texas wines—including those made with 100 percent Texas grapes—is obvious to anyone who follows national wine press or who frequents the wine section of local grocery or liquor stores. (Just this April, Twin Liquors rolled out a new program focusing on the 100 percent Texas-grown philosophy.) Though labeling can be tricky and is not always transparent, the best way to learn what's in the bottle is to speak with wine professionals at a shop—or better yet, visit the Hill Country to taste the terroir and get a lesson on grapes that grow best in our climate. As proud Texans, it's the least we can do.



Pure Love

The Grower Project celebrates the terroir of Texas through single-site wines.

In 2016, Rae Wilson and Andrew Sides introduced their wine label, The Grower Project, with a shared conviction: make wine picked from single vineyard sites and spotlight the growers at the heart of the state's wine industry. So far, the concept is working. Their single-site wines won bronze medals in February at the Texsom International Wine Awards in Las Colinas.

As opposed to blending wines from different vineyards, single-site wines highlight the unique terroir of an individual vineyard. We wanted to tell the story of these sites, and the biggest way of doing that is in the wine itself," says Wilson (pictured, above). "Tasting the wine that comes from a single site year after year is the truest expression of terroir."

Both winemakers have found previous acclaim in the Texas wine industry. Sides is one of the managing partners at Lost Draw Cellars in Fredericksburg, and Wilson is the founder of Wine for the People, popular for its Dandy Rosé. Utilizing Sides' experience with growers in Texas and Wilson's training as a sommelier and work as a wine consultant, the two developed The Grower Project with a lineup of three wines.

A 2018 Rosato, made with 100 percent Texas sangiovese grapes grown in red clay and caliche soils at the Letkeman Family Vineyard in Gaines County, is fermented in stainless steel tanks. The 2017 The Source Sangiovese is also made with grapes grown at the Letkeman Family Vineyard, but they are picked later in the season and aged in neutral French barrels for eight months after being fermented in stainless steel tanks. The third wine is a 2017 Trebbiano, made with grapes grown at the Paka Family Vineyard in the Texas High Plains.

Generally, single-vineyard wines can be pricey, but each of The Grower Project wines retail for \$20. While the unique label does not have a winery open to the public, Wilson often can be found pouring samples around Austin and talking about growing sites in Texas. This spring, the label's The Source Sangiovese was poured for guests at the Luck Reunion Potluck, which kicked off the Luck Reunion Music Festival on Willie Nelson's property and benefited Farm Aid. An event that helps farmers and a wine label that celebrates them? Now that's a great pairing. thegrowerproject.com —J. Hernandez

April 25, 2019

AUSTIN
MONTHLY



WILLIAM CHRIS VINEYARDS

10352 W. HWY. 290, HYE, WILLIAMCHRISWINES.COM

Passionate about winemaking, William Chris Vineyards owners Bill Blackmon and Chris Brundrett make their wine from Texas-grown grapes only (see “In Vino Veritas,” page 104). The duo teamed up to make wine in 2008 and opened the doors of their rustic tasting room in 2010. Order a glass of the 2017 Sangiovese or the 2018 Mary Ruth—the latter was named after Bill’s mother—and then walk among the oak trees and enjoy the views of rolling hills. The winery hosts live music Friday through Sunday, and this summer, the winery will debut a new on-site building exclusively for wine club members.

Order The: 2018 Mary Ruth, a blend of moscato giallo, blanc du bois, and malvasia bianca

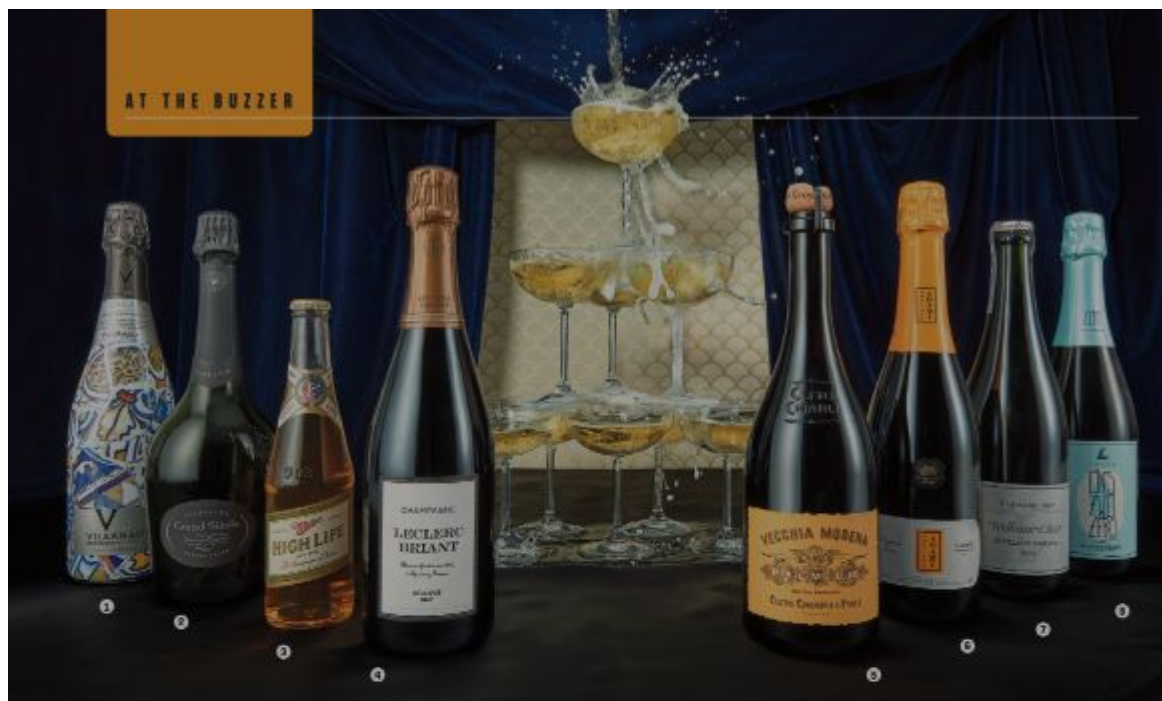
The Top 10 Hill Country Wineries near San Antonio in 2019



2 of 11



San Antonio's No. 1 Best Hill Country Winery: William Chris Vineyards 10352 E. U.S. 290, Hye 830-998-7654
williamchriswines.com Specialities: Mourvèdre, Enchanté red blend On ExpressNews.com: San Antonio's best restaurants,
bars, bakeries, distilleries, breweries and Hill Country wineries



SPRAY IT OUT LOUD

Our Dominant 20 athletes had much to celebrate in 2018, but only a few (we see you, Red Sox) received the traditional champagne bath in all its eye-stinging glory. It's never too late, though! With New Year's Eve nigh, we asked sommelier and wine writer Courtney Schiessl for her picks of the most appropriate bubbly for their year-end jubilations.



Brenna Stewart
When you deserve a bottle as fancy as LeBron's but you're not bailing on his budget:

Vinneau Brut Reserva Cava NV \$15 *Schiessl:* "From Spain's Cava country comes this crisp sparkling, made in the same method as champagne by a female winemaker who understands that sparkling wines should pack bang for their buck."



LeBron James
To bring to your pal's New Year's Eve party—before you encourage him to retire:

Laurent-Perrier Grand Siècle champagne NV \$150 *"Dhurcill once said, 'I could not live without champagne. In victory I deserve it; in defeat I need it.' Likewise this wine honors a 'grand century'—a time that, like Malt's career, may be over."*



Eliud Kipchoge
For a world-class endurance athlete with #noeasysoft:

Miller High Life \$9.99/12 *"World records deserve to be celebrated, but don't let it go to your head—the alcohol, that is. Few sparkling wines clock in under 11 percent ABV, so stick with the Champagne of Soars. Miller High Life (4.8 percent ABV)."*



Simona Halep
After you win at Roland Garros and want to impress your new French admirers:

Leclerc Brûlé Brut Réserve NV champagne \$15 *"The French know their wine, and the organic, biodynamic bottles are making waves at local bistros. This organic Brut Réserve is about energy and impact, just like Halep's return game."*



Mookie Betts
When you want to leave an enduring stretch for Astros, Yankees and Dodgers to enjoy:

Ciara Charli Vecchia Modena Lambrusco 2017 \$15 *"Shake up the usual champagne shower with this dry Lambrusco from Italy. Stark pink with a nose of turned earth and cranberry, it'll leave home teams scrubbing up long after the trophy's back in Boston."*



Alex Ovechkin
To drink out of the spitty Stanley Cup you've been hauling around DC during a weeklong rager:

Adriano Adami Barbò Brut prosecco NV \$15 *"This zesty prosecco will act as a tasty Pin-Sol for the Cup, scrubbing away whatever was chugged earlier in the week. Then just for good measure, try some pericillin."*



Patrick Mahomes
For those inclined to pair everything with ketchup (look it up, it's a thing):

William Chris Petillant-Naturel Rosé 2017 \$25 *"Sparkling wine's acidity allows it to pair with most anything, from KC BBQ to ketchup-coated mac and cheese. This all-American pet-nat matches any dish thrown at it. Even the weird ones."*



Chloë Kim
When you're still only 18 and need a nonalcoholic alternative:

Ein Zwei Zero Sparkling Riesling \$7 *"Taking home gold won't exempt you from drinking-age laws. But this, made from Riesling grapes by an actual winemaker, is the next-best thing. Skip the grocery store cider and stock the strong stuff for 2022."*

November 13, 2018

LIQUID CULTURE
imbibe

BY IMBIBE / ARTICLES,, GIFT GUIDES / NOVEMBER 21, 2018 /

2018 HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE



\$25 and Under

William Chris Vineyards 2017 Petillant Naturel

A gang's-all-here blend of Merlot, Mourvèdre, Malbec, Malvasia Bianca, Grenache and Moscato Giallo combine in this sprightly sipper. \$25, williamchriswines.com

the crush
COWBOY UPdestination >
AUSTIN, TEXAS

Wine's on the rise in the Lone Star state capital.

You've likely heard of Austin's fondness for barbecue, beer and music. That's all true, but there's more to it. The city is transforming into a haven for wine lovers, thanks to an influx of discerning young professionals and organizations like the Wine & Food Foundation of Texas and the just-launched ATX Somm Society. And with appreciation for local, natural and small-production, the wine scene is in line with the city's eclectic vibe. —Lauren Mowery

4 hour getaway**HILL COUNTRY**

The lush knolls of Hill Country surprise first-time visitors. It's Texas, sure, but heavy, sporadic storms keep things green and growing. An exciting addition: **Southold Farm + Cellar**. Regan Meador, a native Texan, relocated his winery from Long Island, and brings natural wine-making to a stunning hilltop site. Nearby, **William Chris** produces thoughtful, balanced wines, especially from single-vineyard Mourvèdre. As you head back into Austin, chill out at **Jester King Brewery** (right), a farm and brewery that uses wine grapes and wild yeast to create complex, wine-like beers.

**shop**

Austin's a city of neighborhoods stacked with cool, independent stores. South Congress is no exception, and it's easy to navigate on foot. Step into the Western world of **Allens Boots**. Stetson hats and dazzling designs will inspire homestead fantasies. Nearby, price competitor **Heritage Boot Co.** stocks gorgeous, limited-run Western boots. Shift back to contemporary designs with apparel and lifestyle goods at **ByGeorge**. Women can snag affordable jewelry popular with celebs at **Kendra Scott**. If you do make a move on real estate, accent new digs with colorful south-of-the-border housewares from **Tesoros Trading Company** (above).



WINE

What To Drink Now: Texas Wines

Raise a glass to the Lone Star State.

The signature white wine for [William Chris Vineyards](#), [Mary Ruth White Blend](#) (\$28), brings together Malvasia Bianca, Blanc du Bois and Moscato Giallo for a ripe pear, Granny Smith apple, and honeysuckle filled wine.

Mourvedre classically is a sunshine loving, hearty, robust red wine with black cherry, licorice, and meaty, smoky notes, as displayed in Lost Draw Vineyards Texas High Plains Mourvedre, and similar wines made from Lost Draw Vineyards fruit by [William Chris Vineyards](#) and [Bending Branch](#). The inky variety also makes a stellar base for Rosé, as crafted by [Lewis Wines](#) in their beautiful, pale pink [Parr Mourvèdre Rosé](#) (\$30) with tangerine, strawberry, and plum.

Salut! The Top 50 Texas Wines for Fall

Out of the 180 new vintages we tasted from across the state, these are the bottles we highly recommend this season.

In celebration of Texas Wine Month in October, we have a list of fifty Texas wines to suit every preference. We selected these white and red wines from a blind tasting of 180 new releases from vineyards across the state and organized them by flavor profile.

White Wine

2017 Tatum Cellars Roussanne, \$25

For those looking for a little more body in their glass, this wine is the answer. Offering aromas of lemon curd and brioche, the palate is bright and elevated with notes of pineapple and mango and a silken finish.

www.williamchriswines.com/Shop/Tatum-Cellars

2017 William Chris Petillant Naturel Rosé, \$25

Pink, fizzy, and fresh, this fun sparkler falls somewhere between Big Red and beer, but rest assured, it's 100 percent wine. Made in a classic French process known as *méthode ancestrale*, this is a fruity libation brimming with notes of ripe strawberry and lush watermelon that's a perfect "transition wine" for beer-, cider-, and red-wine-lovers alike.

www.williamchriswines.com

Red Wine

William Chris Vineyards Skeleton Key Proprietary Red Wine, \$29

Dark and brooding with notes of ripe, blackberry, plum, and black currant along with hints of bruléed brown sugar and smoked meats, this red blend flexes quite a bit of muscle while balancing elegance and finesse in its structure. A perfect steak wine.

www.williamchriswines.com

2015 William Chris Vineyards Tannat Hye Estate Vineyard, \$50

The deep, ruby color of this wine belies its powerful structure. Notes of leather and anise are framed by rich black fruit and hints of red fruit character. The palate is brawny yet balanced, with a tart, savory finish that will soften beautifully with age.

www.williamchriswines.com

2017 Lightsome Mourvèdre, La Pradera Vineyard, \$30

This lighter style of Mourvèdre from independent winemaker Adrienne Ballou offers all the grace of a ballerina on point. Notes of ripe strawberry, pomegranate, and blueberry are laced with crushed rose petals and elements of cinnamon. The palate is juicy and fresh, and deliciously quenchy.

www.williamchrisswines.com/La-Pradera-Vineyards

2016 William Chris Vineyards Mourvèdre, Lost Draw Vineyards, \$45

Offering aromas of cranberry and red cherry dusted with dried sage powder, this wine is smooth and easy drinking with flavors of tart cherry, vanilla, and bittersweet cocoa powder.

www.williamchrisswines.com

FOOD & WINE ROAD TRIPS

The Future of Texas Wine Is in Hye

Some sweet grapes are hiding in the Hill Country.

The next day we headed to Hye—a tiny unincorporated town between Johnson City and Fredericksburg—to visit winemaker Bill Blackmon and Chris Brundrett’s [William Chris Vineyards](#), housed on the lush, 20-acre historic farm known as Hye Estate. The view here is reason alone to head to the Hill Country: Near the tasting room, amid wildflowers teeming with butterflies, the back deck overlooks picturesque acres of grapes.

Inside at the bar, it was standing-room-only, and we were glad we’d made reservations. We downed a Texas cheese plate and spicy candied pecans while tasting a half-dozen wines, including the Malbec rosé, sourced completely from grapes grown on site, and the Mary Ruth, a must-buy white blend that speaks to pool time and luaus, with tropical fruit galore. We snagged bottles of that and the fizzy pét-nat—natural sparkling wine—and lucked out when our wine guide poured a special taste of their fortified wine, Jacquez II, a sweet, chocolatey dessert port perfect for the holidays.

Meet the Producers That are Redefining American Wine

BY FIONA ADAMS



Chris Brundrett, winegrower and co-founder of William Chris Vineyards / Photo by Michael Thad Carter

Chris Brundrett

Winegrower/Co-founder, William Chris Vineyards, Hye, TX

Chris Brundrett took a traditional path to winemaking. At **Texas A&M University**, he majored in horticulture with a minor in entomology, and he managed the school's vineyard. One day, he had the opportunity to visit a new local winery.

“The owner/winemaker took me through and tasted out of barrels and told me where the fruit was from, and from that moment, I was hooked,” says Brundrett. “I thought, if I can do this for a living, it’s time for a life change, and I need to finish school and chase this career.”

After working at a number of Texas wineries, Brundrett teamed up with grower Bill Blackman in 2008 to release the first vintage of **William Chris wine**.

“We bonded over our shared philosophies, like producing wines that are soulful and show terroir, while using 100% Texas-grown grapes in winemaking, which was rather unheard of in Texas at the time,” he says. “We built **William Chris Vineyards** off the idea that wine is not made, it is grown.”

Today, William Chris sources grapes from the state’s two main American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), the **Texas High Plains** and **Texas Hill Country**. Each presents distinct challenges.

“We’ll have snow, wind and hail in the High Plains in Northern Texas, and humidity and heat in the Hill Country,” says Brundrett.

“We built William Chris Vineyards off the idea that wine is not made, it is grown.”—Chris Brundrett

FOOD & DRINK

Yes Way, Texas Rosé! Our Top Picks for Summer

Here are fourteen of our favorite wines, ranging from blush to bold and shades of pink in between.



A quintessential crowd-pleaser, dry rosé bridges the gap between red and white wine, balancing bright fruit characteristics with crisp, lemony acidity. In Texas, producers are turning out high-quality rosé like never before. We tasted more than fifty new selections from around the state and found strong and impressive flavor profiles, with something for every palate, from light and fruity to dark and rich. Here are our top fourteen Texas rosés for the summer, including two canned options for portable poolside enjoyment.

12. William Chris Vineyards, Hye

PRODUCER

Wine: 2017 Grenache Rosé

Price: \$25

Grapes: Grenache

Tasting notes: There's so much going on with this dainty pink wine. Everything from dew-kissed summer strawberries and fresh parsley to hot limestone and warm daisy fields reaches out and pulls you into the glass. Its dry fruit finish begs for another sip.

13. William Chris Vineyards, Hye

PRODUCER

Wine: 2017 Rosé of Malbec

Price: \$28

Tasting notes: Offering lush aromas of pomegranate and fleshy ruby red grapefruit, this wine offers a rounded body and delicious high-toned citrus notes on the palate that make it a perfect pairing for a thick, juicy cheeseburger.

14. Yes We Can

PRODUCER

Wine: 2017 Sway Rosé

Price: \$16/4-pack

Tasting notes: The second release from this canned-wine project, its flirtatious pink hue hints at luscious aromas of ripe summer berries, ambrosia salad, and juicy melon. Notes of dried sage and lemon pith accent the fruity palate, leading to a dry, mineral finish.

The Top 30 Texas Wines for Spring

Go ahead and give these a swirl.
Our favorites for the season,
from crisp whites to juicy reds.

It's a great time for Texas wine. The state's vintners have never been so flush with acclaim from international competitions, national publications, and wine professionals. And this spring's selection exemplifies the improvements happening across Texas.

Our most consistent wines come from the Texas High Plains American Viticultural Area, which is located in the Llano Estacado region and accounts for nearly two thirds of the state's vineyard plantings. But advancements in the management of vineyards in the Texas Hill Country AVA have led to a higher caliber of wine from that region, making it one to watch.

A main reason for the state's increase in quality, at least among white wines, is the focus on Vermentino, Viognier, and Picpoul Blanc grapes, which are native to the warmer Mediterranean climates of Italy and Southern France and therefore well suited to the weather conditions in some parts of Texas. These grapes produce crisp, mineral-driven wines with high citrus tones and floral aromas.

In the red camp, Sangiovese, a widely planted Italian grape commonly associated with Chianti, and Mourvèdre, a Southern Rhône variety, are the stars right now. Others to watch for are Tempranillo, Aglianico, and outliers such as Petite Sirah and Norton (America's oldest native grape).

To pick the best of the season, *Texas Monthly* hosted a blind tasting that started off with 150 wines—a task not for the faint of palate! The bottles were wrapped to hide the labels, and volunteer sommeliers handled the pouring. We winnowed those down to thirty wines that stood out based on qualities such as aroma, structure, and finish.

Here we present our top whites and reds. All thirty wines are proof that, with each passing vintage, the state's wine industry has made nonsense of the question “Is there a good Texas wine to drink?” Now the question is simply “Which one?”

29. 2016 William Chris Vineyards Sangiovese (Narra Vineyards), \$36

A concentrated style of Sangiovese, this wine is savory and earthy, with aromas of tomato and sautéed mushroom. The fruit is tart on the palate and framed by a bold, complex structure.

30. 2015 William Chris Vineyards Skeleton Key, \$34

If a wine could exemplify the word “brooding,” this red blend would be the one. While Cabernet Sauvignon dominates, the best characteristics of Tempranillo, Malbec, Sangiovese, and Syrah culminate to offer rich, jammy notes of blackberry and currant with dusty earth and cocoa powder.

SURE, DRINK YOUR ROSÉ THIS SUMMER. BUT TRY THESE WHITES, TOO.

When it comes to summer sipping, what's better than crisp, dry white wine out by the pool (OK, other than maybe Provençal rosé)? We sipped through a range of wines from around the world, and while there are so many more to include, consider this your summer white wine cheat sheet.



12: 2015 WILLIAM CHRIS ENOCH'S STOMP VINEYARD BLANC DU BOIS (HARRISON COUNTY, TEXAS; \$26)

You may not associate Texas with crisp white wines—or wine at all, for that matter. But Texas Hill Country is one of America's emerging regions. We've enjoyed a few William Chris reds, and the same can be said for this native American grape. There's a lot happening here: fresh grass, lemon, lime, peas and asparagus on the nose with green apple, watermelon rind, grapefruit and vegetal notes in the mouth, plus a crisp acid to finish things off.

HOME • WINE • CHAMPAGNE + SPARKLING WINE

Sparkling Wines That Make Perfect Holiday Gifts

The holiday season is a time to indulge *and* give the gift of indulgence. That's why sparkling wines, whether Cava or Prosecco or Champagne, feel so perfect for the holidays, because they are meant to be shared and enjoyed in a festive atmosphere, ideally with some little, fried bites. Whether you're bringing a bottle to a party or leaving one under the tree, a bottle of bubbles is a gift that will please even the hardest-to-shop-for curmudgeon. Plus, the elegant, colorful and a touch metallic labeling of these bottles make them look like presents before you even wrap them. Here are some of the prettiest bottles of bubbly you can give—plus they taste lovely, to boot. —*Maria Yagoda*



3 of 12 Courtesy of Miguel Lecuona

William Chris Pétillant Naturel Rosé

This crisp (and satisfyingly pink) Pét-Nat is made with all Texas grapes, an effort from the family-run vineyard to help support Texas farmers, which directly benefits Texas' agriculture industry.

2016 William Chris Pétillant Naturel Rosé, \$25 at williamchriswines.com

October 29, 2016

THE LOCAL **PALATE**
FOOD CULTURE OF THE SOUTH



Texas. Terroir

A couple of Hill Country winemakers and their families
toast the harvest with dinner under the oaks

By **Paula Disbrowe** / Photography by **Jody Horton**



BY THE TIME THE SUN begins its slow descent behind the vineyard, dinner preparations are well underway. A mess of fresh produce—emerald leaves of young spinach, velvety pods of okra, and carrots—from nearby farms are carried down from the kitchen. Under a canopy of ancient oak trees, a long table is set with colorful wildflowers, candles, and a sea of wine glasses. The aromas of leg of lamb and beef tenderloin, sourced from neighboring farms, and sizzling over a wood fire, keep Sookie, the winemaker's Chesapeake Bay retriever, snoozing suspiciously close to the grill. The scene is not unfamiliar—the kind of al fresco affair you might happen upon in Sonoma or the Willamette Valley. But in this corner of Texas, it's still a bit of an anomaly.

An untimely sneeze might cause you to miss Hye, Texas, a tiny hamlet on Highway 290 between Johnson City and Stonewall. But

that would be a shame, particularly if you're a history buff (Lyndon Johnson, whose boyhood home is nearby, claimed to have mailed his first letter from the Hye post office at the age of 4), or a fan of adult beverages. That's because over the past decade, the little town has emerged an unlikely bastion of attention-getting wine and spirits.

Just a few miles off the highway, for instance, you can visit Garrison Brothers Distillery to smell the corn cooking, taste their sweet mash, and sample a nip or two of Dan Garrison's bourbon whiskey. Or, if you're looking to while away an afternoon with a cold bottle of dry, petal pink rosé and a cheese plate (and let's face it, who isn't?), you can hit the turn signal for William Chris Vineyards, a winery that offers visitors the chance to kick back, taste their wines, and experience the rustic charm of the region's history.

Housed in a historic farmhouse, the winery's tasting room looks like an iconic wine country postcard, but ten years ago, you'd be hard pressed to find a wedge of brick in these parts. Back then, "Hye was a junkyard with a rundown post office,"

Winemaker Chris Brundrett pours the winery's pet-nat rosé. **Opposite:** All dressed up and ready for snacks, the kids dig into a cheese plate. **Opening spread:** Winemakers Brundrett and Bill Blackmon among the vines.

admits Chris Brundrett, one of the founding winemakers at William Chris. "When we decided to open here, everyone said we were crazy, that we were too far from Fredericksburg."

True to Texas

Hye is the kind of town where you know your neighbors or hunt on their ranch, so a supportive community played a role in its growth. When laws prevented Garrison from selling his bourbon on premises, for instance, he convinced friends to open a liquor store on the side of the historic post office. Eventually, the shop was taken over by Jason Cook and evolved into the Hye Market Restaurant and Tasting Room, complete with live music, local craft beers, Texas wines, and locally sourced produce and meats. "Now Jason is part of the movement," Brundrett says. "His operation is exposing other winemakers from around

the state. We've gotten so far away from agrarian farming, now it's a novelty. For us, Hye was kind of a last-ditch effort, a cornerstone from which to say, 'hey we're out here growing something, growing a piece of our world.'"

The William Chris story begins with the meeting of two like-minded winemakers, Brundrett and Bill Blackmon. When they met in 2007, Blackmon was working as a vineyard manager of a respected winery and already an industry veteran with thirty years of Texas winegrowing experience. After graduating from Texas Tech in the late 1970s with degrees in agriculture and economics, he planted and managed several of the state's first vineyards in both the High Plains, where most Texas grapes are grown, and the Hill Country. Brundrett had recently graduated with a horticulture degree from Texas A&M, and assumed head winemaking responsibilities for several Texas wine labels. Managing properties in the Hill Country and the High Plains, he was establishing a career as one of the state's fastest rising young winegrowers. "We met and I immediately wanted to know as much about Texas viticulture as Bill did," Brundrett remembers.

Describing himself a wine "grower" is intentional—one of the most contentious issues in the Texas wine industry is whether Texas wine should be exclusively made with Texas-grown grapes. Because of the state's challenging climate, some winemakers rely on grapes grown elsewhere, such as California and Washington, for a portion of their production. As fierce and vocal advocates of truth in origin (clearly stating where your grapes are grown), Blackmon and Brundrett are committed to wine made with 100 percent Texas-grown grapes. Eventually this shared philosophy—that great wines are not made, but grown—led to their collaboration. They grow half of their production themselves; the remainder comes from fourteen other Texas families. In 2010, Brundrett and his father, Bruce, planted the Brundrett Family Estate vineyard in San Angelo, which will produce grapes exclusively for William Chris.

The partners bottled their first vintage under the William Chris label in 2008, relying on Old

Clockwise from top: The winemakers in their element; Bill Blackmon, dinner prep, the Brundretts with their dog Sookie; grilled okra is the jam. **Opposite:** Katharine Brundrett. **Next page spread from top left:** Blackmon, Vineyard Manager Evan McKibben, Ashley McKibben, Chris Brundrett, Wine Club Manager Rachael Theberge, Heather Christie, Production Winemaker Joshua Fritsche.



It's only fitting that each fall, the literal fruits of their labor are celebrated around a table of friends and family.

World techniques—an integrated approach to farming, tradition, and local culture—to create an expression of the Hill Country's distinctive terroir. Next came the search for the right location to build their winery. A pioneer settlement in the historic town of Hye seemed like the perfect platform for their approach, so they restored the property's 1905 farmhouse to serve as a tasting room. The winery and tasting facilities opened in 2010 and Hye Estate Vineyard was planted next to the winery in March 2012. With antique windows and a sweeping view of the Pedernales River Valley, the wine tasting bar provides a weathered, welcoming setting to taste their limited-vintage wines. Chances are you'll share the patio with a few of their wine club members (known as "Hye Society"), who also have access to special experiences, like dinners and parties that span the entire property.

Less is More

In the cellar, the winemakers feel that less intervention is more. That means they rely on the pre-industrial method of open-air fermentation and daily punch-downs by hand whenever possible. After each allotment of wine has been barreled, they practice minimal handling, allowing many varietals to take on increasing complexity and depth for years to come.

In the last few years, William Chris has earned acclaim for their Texas Mourvèdre, Lost Draw Malbec, and Hye Estate Malbec Rosé, among other varietals. "The Hill Country terroir is so incredible and diverse," Brundrett says. "We have decomposed granite and limestone, and these are incredibly significant to the flavor profile of our wines." In the next decade, he predicts there will be changes in Texas AVAs (American Viticulture Areas, or designated wine grape-growing regions), with more subregions emerging.

More and more, Texas is becoming known for compelling blends. "Our volatile climate provides vastly different vintages," Brundrett says. "Blending is a tool to make the best wine possible, and to show a true reflection of what High Plains and Hill Country varietals taste like." To





achieve that balance, they carefully blend with each varietal's strengths to create wines that are both balanced and emphasize the flavors that are unique to the vineyards in which they are grown.

An example is their annual "Artist's Blend," (with a label chosen from an open call to Texas artists, and selected by their wine club members) a mix of syrah, grenache, mourvèdre, and the untraditional addition of tannat to round out the Rhône-style blend.

"Several years ago, most people didn't drink Texas wine," Brundrett says. "Now they have a chance to understand how wine from different areas tastes, which leads to that 'a-ha' wine epiphany."

All in the Family

From the get-go, William Chris was a family affair. Blackmon's sister, Carol, works in guest relations, and Brundrett's wife, Katharine, manages the office. Bringing employees up through the ranks of their operation is testament to the winemakers' second shared conviction: that wine should be inspired by the pleasure that comes

from an extended community. So, it's only fitting that each fall, the literal fruits of their labor are celebrated around a table of friends and the family. "During harvest our wives and kids don't get to see us much," Brundrett says. "It's amazing to be able to have a dinner to say 'thank you' and let them know we understand the sacrifice."

The feast, like the business of winemaking, is a team effort. Wearing a straw hat and sunshades, Brundrett flips hefty burgers while production winemaker Joshua Fritsche chars carrots, okra, and scallions on the hot grates. Left to their own devices, young kids in their Sunday best make quick work of a board of local cheeses and charcuterie. At twilight, when vines become a dark silhouette against a streaky evening sky, Chris pops a bottle of a pét-nat rosé, a striking pink, naturally fermented sparkling wine brimming with the flavor of satsumas and fresh rose petals—and calls everyone to the table for a toast and prayer of gratitude. The meal is long and languid, complete with several shades of wine and the easy laughter that comes from shared struggles and the company of old friends.

ROUSSANNE-INFUSED PECAN PIE

Makes a 9-inch pie

The Rhône varietal roussanne has taken well to the Texas wine country. Katharine Brundrett developed this recipe to celebrate last year's vintage and this year's harvest. Here, pecans soak in William Chris' Roussanne for two days before they're baked into a saggy custard for a standout take on the classic. The infusing technique works well with Madeira too. The recipe makes more pecans than you'll need. Stored in an airtight container, they'll keep for up to four days in the refrigerator and are great for snacking or tossed in salads.

For the pecans:

$\frac{1}{3}$ bottle William Chris
Vineyards Roussanne
3 cups pecan halves
Cinnamon to taste

For the pie:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter, melted
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
1 tablespoon flour
3 eggs
1 cup light corn syrup
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup roussanne-infused pecans
1 (9-inch) pie crust

1. Make the pecans: In a gallon-size plastic zip-top bag, combine pecans and roussanne (or a fortified wine like Madeira). Make sure wine completely coats the nuts; add more if necessary. Add two dashes of cinnamon or more to taste. Infuse for 48 hours, turning the bag occasionally to coat the pecans.

2. Preheat oven to 250 degrees. Pour half of the roussanne mixture into a saucepan and bring to a simmer. Reduce to a thick simple syrup; add sugar if needed for thickness. Drain pecans, reserving wine mixture, and spread on a baking sheet. Roast until dry, stirring occasionally. Coat with the wine reduction and roast some more. After they dry out a second time, pull from oven and let cool. This process should be done slowly and gradually so you don't burn the pecans. The nuts should finish with a lovely candy coating.

3. Make the pie: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large bowl, mix together all ingredients except for pecans until well blended. Then, stir in pecans. Pour the mixture into pie crust. Bake on center rack of oven for 45 minutes. Cool for 2 hours before serving.

Why Texas Is America's Most Underrated Wine Destination

by ANDREW PARKS
October 27, 2016

II

A look at the leaders of the Lone Star State's new school of wine.

Jordan Mackay still remembers his first taste of Texas wine. God, it was awful—a grossly unsophisticated glass of double-oaked chardonnay that could have passed for butterscotch.

"This was before the ABC (Anything But Chardonnay) movement had really gotten in full swing, but my palate was already offended by oaky wines," says the San Francisco-based food and drink writer. "It wasn't just bad chardonnay; it was the hubris and self-satisfaction at what is now looked upon as a wine crime."

How things have changed, to the point where the **Austin** native penned a **lengthy Texas Monthly article** in defense of the state's new school last year. Among its many revelations: the rise of rosé—a fitting, effervescent foil to medium-rare burgers and rich slabs of barbecue—and Mediterranean grape varietals that are much better suited to a temperamental climate and nutrient-rich soil. Mackay was also bowled over by the boldness of young vineyards like **William Chris Wines**, **Lewis Wines**, and **McPherson Cellars**. None of them have been around for more than a decade, and they're a blip on the beverage industry's radar compared to California—the state produces 85 percent of the country's wine, and has more than 10 times as many registered wineries as Texas—but that's exactly what makes the market so compelling. It's able to take chances on cultish grapes bigger companies shy away from.

"As a wine writer in California, I certainly don't feel any need to pay attention to Texas," says Mackay. "But as someone who grew up in Texas, I'm fascinated by it. The fact that a wine culture can switch from inappropriate grapes to esoterica like Trebbiano and Montepulciano is really cool."

Texas wine has quickly become a point of local pride, too, drawing a growing number of curious travelers and dynamic beverage directors to hot beds of fermented activity like Fredericksburg. Easily accessible **via the 290 corridor** just an hour outside Austin, it features 15 wineries that are more than happy to host generous tastings for a nominal fee in the hopes of highlighting the area's inherent terroir.

To be fair, Texas had to fight an uphill battle even to earn its scrappy underdog status. Much of it was self-imposed in the 1970s, when Texas A&M and Texas Tech encouraged farmers to experiment with homegrown grapes and wine. The only problem? They were trying to please everyone with sweeter flavor profiles and easy sells like merlot, cabernet sauvignon, and chardonnay. Most of which suffered from challenges you'd *never* find in Napa Valley: hailstorms, late spring frosts, that sort of thing.

It wasn't all a wash, however. **Fall Creek Vineyards**, for one, figured out how to make the best of Hill Country's little quirks as early as the '80s. Having spent their first decade experimenting with French-American hybrids, co-owners Ed and Susan Auler shifted their main focus after meeting André Tchelistcheff ("the dean of American winemakers") in 1989.

"We took samples of cabernet sauvignon and merlot for André to taste and evaluate," says Susan. "André responded with, 'Plant more!' He then suggested planting all five traditional red Bordeaux varieties—which we did—and offered to become our consultant. We were overwhelmed and humbled to have this master of wine become our mentor, and we enjoyed his friendship and having him work with us the last five years or so years of his life. What a remarkable and wonderful man he was!"

If Fall Creek and its contemporaries—reputable folks like **Becker Vineyards** and **Llano Estacado**—are examples of Texas's award-winning old guard, William Chris is one of the reasons naysayers are being silenced by small-batch varietals you simply can't find elsewhere.

"Older wine regions are very well distributed," says William Chris co-founder Chris Brundrett, a risk taker who put the term "pét-nat"—a rare form of sparkling wine—on the tongues of many Texas drinkers this year. "You don't need to travel far to discover them. In Texas, most bottles are barely distributed in a few local spots, let alone outside of the state. Discovering real, 100 percent, Texas-grown wine is like finding a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow."

Or some really killer rosé, not to mention any of the Mediterranean and Rhone varietals that are hard to spell but easy to love. Or as Brundrett puts it, "Anyone can walk up to a wine bar and ask for cabernet sauvignon so they don't look dumb. Someone who's been somewhere asks for Mourvèdre, or Tannat."

One person who's followed the recent growth of the Lone Star State's wine scene closely is Jessica Dupuy, a certified sommelier who covers wine regularly for *Texas Monthly*. "In the past ten years, we've seen a significant boost in quality," she says. "New, savvy winemakers are setting the standard for wines that reflect a distinct flavor for the regions in which they're made. In the next decade, we'll be talking about wine tasting like Texas in the way that we talk about Oregon or Washington."

“
I think in the next decade, we'll be talking about wine tasting in Texas in the way that we talk about Oregon or Washington.



SHARE THIS QUOTE

Another major supporter of in-state wine has been Caroline Forbes, the general manager at **Dai Due Butcher Shop & Supper Club** in Austin. When she was developing the acclaimed restaurant's wine list with chef Jesse Griffiths two years ago, they did the unthinkable: decide to carry nothing *but* Texas wines made strictly with Texas fruit.

"I'll admit that I had some trepidation," she says. "At that time I hadn't been out to any of the small vineyards in the Hill Country and my only experiences with Texas wine hadn't been great.

"Two years later, we've been lucky enough to meet and work with some incredible producers who are passionate about elevating Texas wines, and the list is better than I ever thought it would be. ... We've seen Texas winemakers focus more on Mediterranean and Rhone varietals rather than planting pinot noir because it's recognizable to consumers. We're seeing Texas rosé really rise in popularity, which is great year-round but especially fantastic for a Texas summer. These days I notice a Texas wine or two on many lists at local restaurants that have never included them before. I think that speaks to how far the industry has come and how much respect the producers have earned."

"The coolest thing about owning a winery in Texas is that all of us are in it together," adds Andrew Sides, a managing partner at the rising Fredericksburg vineyard **Lost Draw Cellars**. "We help each other everyday with the hope that we can grow as an industry and individuals. ... We want Texans to experience real Texas wine, even if it's not our own."

What Is a Texas Wine, Exactly?

*The Lone Star state is "the size of France, so plenty of places make great wine," says James Tidwell, co-founder of **TEXSOM**. But can anyone agree on what kind of grape Texas is best known for, right now? Let the debate begin...*

"There is no true consensus on which grape is the grape of Texas. If you asked me, I would tell you it's Tempranillo, but if you asked others in the industry you might hear three or four different varieties listed. I think this provides the consumer with a unique experience in this region. You could visit three tasting rooms in a day and have three very different wine experiences at each." — *Ron Yates, owner of Spicewood Vineyards*

"Viognier is what put us on the map at an early stage; it has been, and will continue to be, our flagship wine. Recently we have upped our Viognier game though. We are always trying to be on the cutting edge here, whether it's through a single vineyard reserve or an orange-style, skin-fermented Viognier." — *Todd Webster, executive winemaker at Brennan Vineyards*

William + Chris

VINEYARDS

Helmed by two of the foremost winegrowers in Texas, William 'Bill' Blackmon and Chris Brundrett, William Chris Vineyards was founded in 2008 when the two experts who shared the same winemaking philosophy came together to make and bottle their first vintage.

Facebook + Instagram: @williamchrisvineyards

Twitter: @williamchrisvin

