

Wine & Spirits MAGAZINE

Drew Family Wines

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2016 Mendocino Ridge Syrah Valenti Ranch

When it was first poured, I liked this wine, clearly built for Rhône-heads with its cracked-green-peppercorn spice and porky intensity. But then I fell in love with it the next day. As it opens, it turns stemmy in the best way, and races, fragrant, rosy, with the scent of freshly turned earth and tart red fruit. I could drink this all night, starting with a thick-cut pork chop, then with aged Comté, then just on its own. Valenti Ranch, an east-facing ridge six miles from the Pacific, consistently grows some of California's best syrahs (I've scored Drew's 2008 and 2011 95 points or better; Luke Sykora scored the 2014 at the same level). Jason Drew makes this wine without added yeasts and with 50 percent whole clusters, cofermenting the fruit with a little viognier. Get some. **(95 points)**

2016 Mendocino Ridge Syrah Perli Vineyard

Perli is 12 miles from the coast, a high ridge rising to 2,200 feet, the vines facing northeast. The plant material is different here than at Valenti, where Drew also sources great syrah (recommended here, as well): half of Drew's Valenti is Chave selection, while half of his Perli is a selection from McDowell Valley Vineyard by Steve Alden. While Drew's Valenti seduces with its aroma, his Perli is all about texture, meaty, almost beefy in its richness. This packs savory black cherry and blackberry into its powerful flavors, lasting, graceful and clean. **(93 points)**

2016 Mendocino Ridge Mid-Elevation Pinot Noir

Jason Drew focuses this wine on fruit from elevations between 1,200 and 1,400 feet, including parcels at Valenti and Perli, with more than half the lot coming from his own vineyard three miles from the coast. This wine captures the salt air and conifer scents of the wind on the ridges

along the Mendocino coast, held tight for now in the iron grip of tannins. Built to cellar, this will mellow and grow more welcoming with bottle age. **(92 points)**

2016 Mendocino Ridge “The Ornbaun” Syrah

Jason Drew focuses this blend on syrah (84 percent), including small amounts of grenache, mourvedre and viognier; he ferments it with 50 percent whole clusters and ages it in neutral oak. The spiciness of the stems comes first, adding to the meatiness and black-olive flavors; then, as the wine opens, it yields juicy notes of dark fruit and refreshing, foresty scents of conifers and violets. It’s a dark and vibrant wine from California’s coastal hills. **(92 points)**

