

THE SOMM JOURNAL

X FACTOR

TRINCHERO FAMILY ESTATES'
HERITAGE COLLECTION PUTS
WINEMAKERS IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT



PHOTO: JENNIFER OLSON



THE SOMM Journey

In each issue, the editorial team at *The SOMM Journal* will deliberate on wine submissions before releasing final judgment on select wines that garnered scores of at least 90 points.



While the Edna Valley AVA is home to a range of soil types, limestone is the most prominent.

ON A MISSION

TASTING THROUGH THE 2018 VINTAGE OF TOLOSA'S SINGLE-VINEYARD SERIES

SITUATED NORTH OF the Santa Maria Valley and south of Paso Robles, Edna Valley is one of California's coolest AVAs. Vineyards run northwest to southeast along volcanic hills that are fewer than 10 miles away from the Pacific Ocean.

This area is the home of Tolosa, which crafts complex Pinot Noir and Chardonnay with fruit from its home estate, Edna Ranch, as well as from other sites. Founded by Robin Baggett—who originally considered establishing a cattle ranch there instead—the winery's name pays homage to the Franciscans of Mission San Luis Obispo de Tolosa, who were the first people to plant wine grapes in San Luis Obispo County.

Considering the mission itself is named for Saint Louis of Anjou, once the bishop of Toulouse, France, it was particularly serendipitous when a winemaker from Toulouse, Frederic Delivert, began working with Baggett and his consulting winemaker/partner, Jean Hoefliger, in 2009. During the 2017 harvest, Delivert was hired full-time as Tolosa's head winemaker.

Since then, he's delivered a fascinating array of single-vineyard wines, of which the SOMM Journey tasted various expressions from the 2018 vintage. These small-lot artisanal wines showcase many of California's top growing regions for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay while revealing the beauty of the estate's terroir in Edna Valley. —*Meridith May*



PHOTOS: DUANE HALL

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, El Coro Vineyard, Petaluma Gap, Sonoma Coast, Sonoma County (\$128)

Petaluma Gap is associated with the high winds that blow off of the Pacific. This site, located next to San Pablo Bay, is a 20-acre block of clay loam and gravelly volcanic subsoil; at an elevation of 500 feet, it's the highest point of Keller Estate. Scents of red tea, cinnamon, spiced cherries, and rose petals precede an exciting and elegant entry of mocha, cinnamon, plum, and cranberry on the palate. There's an underlying earthy tone, with leafy notes and saffras. **96**

Tolosa 2018 Chardonnay, Poletti-Edna Ranch, Edna Valley (\$93) Edna Valley relies on its traditionally long growing season, and 2018 was no exception. Aged nine months in 22% new French oak, this Chardonnay shows exceptional ripeness, with aromas of pineapple on a sea breeze that also carries scents of jasmine and tangerine blossom. Vibrant notes of banana cream pie, yellow apple, and almond cast a striking upstroke of lean acidity. **95**

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Hollister-Edna Ranch, Edna Valley (\$128) Located just 5 miles from the Pacific, the sloping Hollister section of Tolosa's estate vineyard requires three separate picks at harvest due to its varying microclimates. The lots are blended together, fermented in stainless steel, and aged nine months in new and neutral French oak. This wine is perfumed with ripe wild strawberry and possesses undercurrents of minerality and earthiness. **97**

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Drum Canyon Vineyard, Sta. Rita Hills, Santa Barbara County (\$128) Farmed by the Dierberg family, this Pacific-adjacent site on a steep, southwest-facing hillside experiences strong maritime winds and fog. This Pinot Noir is Tolosa's only single-vineyard wine made from Calera and Swan, both California Heritage clones. The nose leads with cedar and leather, followed by cherry, chocolate, and tilled soil. The palate is vivid and focused: Firm tannins, cinnamon, and roses meld with chocolate malt on a path of velvet before a juicy wash of boysenberry appears on the finish. **96**

Tolosa 2018 Chardonnay, Bien Nacido Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$93) According to Delivert, "Bien Nacido Chardonnay demands immense patience, as we allow the wine to take its course in the barrel." This world-class site, owned by the Miller family, is situated on the valley floor in a cool pocket 16 miles from the Pacific. The wine is elegant and creamy, with notes of candied pineapple, mango, red grapefruit, and buttered toffee that are preceded by aromas of dill and lime. **95**



Tolosa winemaker Frederic Delivert.

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Solomon Hills Vineyard, Santa Maria Valley (\$128) Another lauded site owned by the Millers, this vineyard is located at the westernmost end of Santa Maria Valley. With the Pacific just 11 miles away, high afternoon winds are an everyday occurrence, and the distinctively sandy soils make the property a pitch-perfect sanctuary for Pinot Noir. Aged nine months in new and neutral French oak, the wine exudes aromas of spiced oak, rhubarb, and tobacco. Stark acidity highlights tart cranberry on the palate alongside a juicy, elegant mouthfeel and a finish of cherry and vanilla. **96**

Tolosa 2018 Pinot Noir, Apex Vineyard, Santa Lucia Highlands, Monterey County (\$128) Because this site sits above the fog line, this was the first of the series' Pinot Noirs to be picked; with extra sun exposure, the fruit shows as luscious and ripe. Farmed by the Francioni family, who are well-known growers in the region, Apex is situated on soils that encourage low yields and concentrated berries. The hedonistic aromas range from sweet plum to dark cherry, with a hint of cedar and vanilla. White-peppered cherries appear on the juicy and focused palate, which features a fine balance of acidity and bright fruit with savory undertones. **97** *STJ*

See page 43 for another edition of the SOMM Journey.