

Antonio Galloni  
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## **Big Basin Vineyards**

by Antonio Galloni

Proprietor Bradley Brown and his team make a wide range of wines from a number of sites in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The 2014 Pinots show the most change over last year. Most likely, the wines needed quite a bit of time to assimilate their 100% whole clusters. In 2015 the stems are down because of the high levels of shatter. The Big Basin style centers around picking on the earlier side of things. The wines are fermented with a good dose of whole clusters and, with some exceptions, aged in 25-30% new oak. As is the case at most estates in California, yields were down markedly in 2015.

### **2014 Roussanne “Homestead Block”**

The 2014 Roussanne Homestead Block is an attractive, open-knit white to drink now and over the next year or two. Soft and tactile on the palate, the 2014 offers lovely depth and texture to match its understated personality. Hints of almond, dried peach and floral/honeyed notes add the closing shades of nuance. All things considered, this is a pretty laid back style of Roussanne. **(89 points)**

### **2014 Chardonnay “Coastview Vineyard”**

The 2014 Chardonnay Coastview Vineyard is very pretty. Nuanced and layered, the 2014 offers a striking combination of richness and oiliness with no excess weight. Pear, yellow orchard fruit, wild flowers and chamomile shape the textured finish. This 2014 is very nicely done. **(92 points)**

### **2014 Pinot Noir Monterey County**

The 2014 Pinot Noir (Monterey County) has come together nicely over the last year. Specifically, the wine has put on quite a bit more flesh, especially through the middle, while retaining its mid-weight personality. The style is intensely savory, with quite a bit of whole cluster influence, yet all the elements are nicely balanced throughout. This is very nicely done. Sadly, there will be no 2015 because of a combination of low

yields and high overall quality that resulted in no declassified lots. Fruit sources are Coastview and Olson. **(89 points)**

### **2015 Pinot Noir “Alfaro Family Vineyard”**

The 2015 Pinot Noir Alfaro Family Vineyard is shaping up to be a jewel of a wine. The 100% whole clusters come through, but the 2015 also possesses striking mid-palate density and flesh, all of which add up to a super-appealing Pinot with considerable potential. Sweet red cherry, pomegranate, wild flowers and savory herbs meld into the striking, expressive finish. **(90-93 points)**

### **2014 Pinot Noir “Alfaro Family Vineyard”**

Big Basin's 2014 Pinot Noir Alfaro Family Vineyard is striking in its precision and nuance. Brisk, saline and tense in style, the 2014 shows the more mid-weight style of the vintage. The 2014 was done with 100% whole clusters that are nicely integrated. Next to the 2015, the 2014 is less fleshy but more focused and tightly wound. Readers should plan on cellaring the 2014 for at least a year or two. **(92 points)**

### **2014 Pinot Noir “Coastview Vineyard”**

The 2014 Pinot Noir Coastview Vineyard is understated, classy and polished. Specifically, the 2014 is endowed with a superb length and overall persistence, with beams of underlying salinity that extend the finish. White pepper, chalk, cranberry and sweet floral notes are nicely delineated. The new oak and whole clusters are evident, but lie in the background, while the wine's intense salinity is very much front and center. This is a terrific showing from Big Basin. **(94 points)**

### **2014 Pinot Noir “Lester Family Vineyard”**

The 2014 Pinot Noir Lester Family Vineyard has come together nicely over the last year. Bright, sculpted and energetic, the 2014 offers lovely aromatics and fine balance. Readers should cellar the 2014 for at least a year, as it is tightly wound today. Bright red cherry, red plum, chalk and white pepper linger on the close. **(90+ points)**

### **2014 Syrah Santa Cruz Mountains**

One of the highlights in this range, the 2014 Syrah (Santa Cruz Mountains) is striking. Tightly wound yet wonderfully persistent on the palate, today, the fruit is a bit hidden between the acidity and tannin, but there is so much to look forward to. Blue and purplish-hued fruits, licorice, smoke and lavender are nicely delineated, but the 2014 is mostly about energy and texture. This is a terrific appellation-level Syrah from Big Basin. Relatively short aging in barrel (11 months) helps keep the flavors bright. **(91 points)**

### **2015 Syrah “Rattlesnake Rock”**

Tasted from barrel, the 2015 Syrah Rattlesnake Rock is deep, fleshy and seductive. Sweet red cherry, pomegranate, plum and sweet floral notes are fused together in a rich, open-knit Syrah loaded with personality. Creamy and inviting, the 2015 is shaping up to be a real beauty. **(91-94 points)**

### **2014 Syrah “Rattlesnake Rock”**

The 2014 Syrah Rattlesnake Rock is another wine that has turned out beautifully. A wine of precision and nuance, the 2014 offers up a compelling mélange of lavender, mint, sage and a kiss of new oak that wraps around the fruit. The whole clusters add aromatic presence throughout. This is one of the best wines in the range today. **(93 points)**

### **2014 Grenache-Syrah-Mourvèdre “Gabilan Mountains”**

The 2014 GSM Gabilan Mountain opens with striking aromatics. Freshly cut flowers, sweet red berries, mint and wild flowers all lift effortlessly from the glass. There is little question Grenache plays the starring role. Fine, silky tannins add to an impression of total finesse. The 88% whole clusters are barely noticeable. Overall, the 2014 is a wine built on precision. Today, it is super-impressive. The blend is 49% Grenache, 32% Mourvèdre and 19% Syrah. **(91-94 points)**

### **2013 Grenache-Syrah-Mourvèdre “Gabilan Mountains”**

The 2013 GSM Gabilan Mountain is just as impressive from bottle as it was from barrel, if not moreso. The higher percentage of Syrah in this vintage adds mid-palate richness and creaminess. This is a slightly riper style than is the norm at Big Basin these days, but all the elements are very nicely balanced throughout. **(93 points)**

### **2014 Rhône Blend “Homestead”**

The 2014 Homestead, Big Basin's Mourvèdre-based blend, is one of the more understated wines in the range. Bright red cherry and plum fruit, along with scents of white flowers and mint give the wine its delicate, mid-weight personality. This is an especially perfumed, bright red that brings together Mourvèdre along with dollops of Grenache, Carignane, Syrah and Cabernet that round out the blend. **(91 points)**



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