

March Madness, but It's Vineyards

(And it's also not really March Madness.) BY KRISTY ALPERT

What do basketball brackets and wine have in common? Absolutely nothing. Unless you consider pitting America's top vineyards against each other to find out who's the best... which we did. We sipped, swirled, and even spit (hi, we're not amateurs) the country's top wines in the most beauteous of places, and although we'll be tipsy for the next few months, we found the winners. Behold this delicious dream team.



OLD WESTMINSTER Madison County, Virginia WINERY

Piedmont Plateau, Maryland

Pop a Farm Fizz while touring this juniper farm turned winery, then crack open a can of Carbonic Cabernet Franc back in the lofted tasting room the second your wood-fired pizza arrives. While you're at it, order extra cans and a charcuterie board too.



Virginia may be the

birthplace of American

the state's future, grow-

manseng (white) and a

ing ridiculously good petit

petit verdot-merlot blend

that's perfect for sipping

on the stone tasting patio

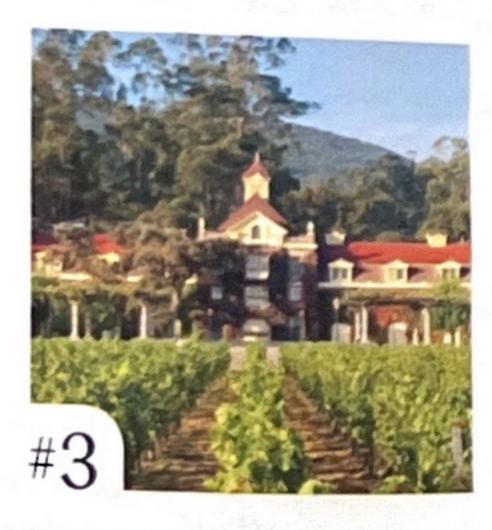
overlooking rolling hills

and rows of grapevines.

wine, but Early Mountain is

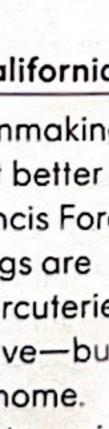
GRUET WINERY Middle Rio Grande Valley, New Mexico

Gruet can trace its roots to France's Champagne region, and its tasting rooms in Albuquerque and Santa Fe are full of the most "champagne-like" sparkling wines in America. Go for the blanc de blancs and stay for the wine-paired caviar flight.



INGLENOOK Napa Valley, California

Just like with filmmaking, few people do it better than owner Francis Ford Coppola. Tastings are cinematic—charcuterie in a candlelit cave—but so is sipping at home. Pair his cabernet sauvignon with The Outsiders and save the Rubicon for The Godfather.







Go Global With Your Wine Tour

Of course there's Tuscany and Champagne (duh), but wouldn't it be nice to brag that you've sipped the vino in these also-very-cool spots?

Pfalz, Germany

We're calling it: This spatburgunder (pinot noir) region. home to the world's largest wine festival, is the next Burgundy.

Hawke's Bay, New Zealand

Chardonnay and cabernet sauvignon just like in Napa Valley—except in freaking New Zealand.

Valle de Guadalupe, Mexico

The crisp sauvignon blancs and tempranillos from Baja California are proof that Mexico really does have it all.



LOOP DE LOOP VINTNER

Columbia Gorge, Washington

Winemaker Julia Bailey Gulstine lives next to her grapes in a vintage trailer so she can watch over her vineyard like a doting mom. Her Wallflower Project label basically says "screw you, 2020," proving her wines are bolder than the wildfires and pandemic that tried to ruin them.



WILLIAM CHRIS VINEYARDS

Hill Country, Texas

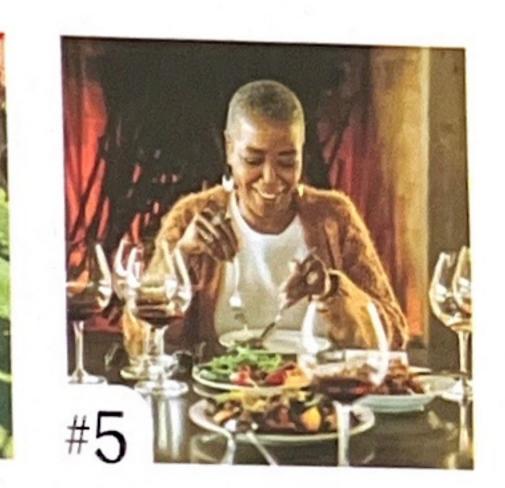
These 100 percent createdin-Texas wines are some of the best in the world—yes, world—with the awards to prove it. There's not much better than watching a fiery-red sunset on the covered patio.. except maybe doing exactly that while holding a glass of Hunter, which is also fiery red.



DR. KONSTANTIN FRANK WINERY

Finger Lakes, New York

The family-run vineyard makes the best Rieslings this side of the Atlantic. It's also among the few U.S. vintners that make rkatsiteli, a European-style dry white (the grapes grow on the peaceful slopes of Keuka Lake, right near the tasting room). Happy grapes, happy life! Isn't that the saying?



SOTER VINEYARDS Willamette Valley, Oregon

Biodynamic grapes 101: good for the planet and even better in a glass. At least, that's the case with Soter's fruit. This Oregon "farmyard" (farm + vineyard) includes a kitchen garden that grows all the ingredients for its fahncy and very worth it four-course winetasting lunches.



ROSEROCK DROUHIN

Eola-Amity Hills, Oregon

Véronique Boss-Drouhin grew up among the vines in Burgundy, where her family the Domaine Drouhins—has made wine since 1880. She now vinifies pinot noir and chardonnay in Oregon among ancient white oaks, enchanting meadows, and a creek-fed pond. So, yes, we also wish we were her.



RIDGE VINEYARDS

Sonoma County, California

This sustainable spot has been perfecting its cabernet sauvignon and zinfandel since 1962, and by "perfecting," we mean they're already pretty much perfect. Sipping your way through a roster of reds while soaking in views from the elevated patio, or grabbing some pals and booking a private tasting near century-old vines before zipping through the vineyard on an electric go-kart? Name a better way to weekend. (There isn't one.)



the MONEY issue

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Falling for

"Love is tight. When you find it, you fight for that sh*t."

