



The Wine Press

Medal Winning Wines from California's Best Family-Owned Wineries.

Vinum Cellars
California





Vinum 2014 'Red Dirt Red' Rhône Blend

Paso Robles, California

1,200 Cases Produced

The Vinum 2014 'Red Dirt Red' Rhône Blend is comprised of 55% Syrah, 24% Grenache, and 21% Mourvèdre from the Paso Robles appellation on California's Central Coast. Medium plum in color, the 2014 Red Dirt Red is complex and layered with spicy aromas and flavors. Upon entry, this wine has dark, dry cherry notes and is backed with toasted, charred oak nuances which transition seamlessly to a silky leather texture that is wrapped in black cherry flavors. The Red Dirt Red finishes with spice rack flavors of cinnamon, clove, and cardamom. Each varietal contributes its unique character to this Rhone-style blend; the Syrah is very juicy and supple with a silky texture; the Mourvèdre is responsible for the earthy notes; and the spicy pepper notes are thanks to the Grenache. Aged in French oak. Enjoy now until 2024.

Gold Medal Special Selection

Vinum 2014 'M-80' Chardonnay

Russian River Valley, Sonoma County, California

300 Cases Produced

The M-80 firework is extremely loud, explosive, and dangerous - and the same is true for Vinum's M-80 Chardonnay. Richard Bruno and Chris Condos selected choice Chardonnay grapes from the cool climate of Sonoma County for this bright, beautiful wine with its generous vanilla and buttery aromas and flavors that some may describe as extreme, explosive and dangerous. Pale straw yellow in color, the 2014 M-80 Chardonnay offers aromas of peach and apricot nectar with a touch of clove and cinnamon. On the palate, this wine is very juicy and concentrated with creamy, buttery flavors and notes of baked spiced apple, pineapple, guava, and passionfruit. The Chardonnay finishes with nice balance and lingering notes of ripe tropical fruit flavors. Aged 9 months in oak. 100% Chardonnay. Enjoy now until 2019.

Gold Medal Special Selection

Vinum 2016 'M-80' Chardonnay

Russian River Valley, Sonoma County, California

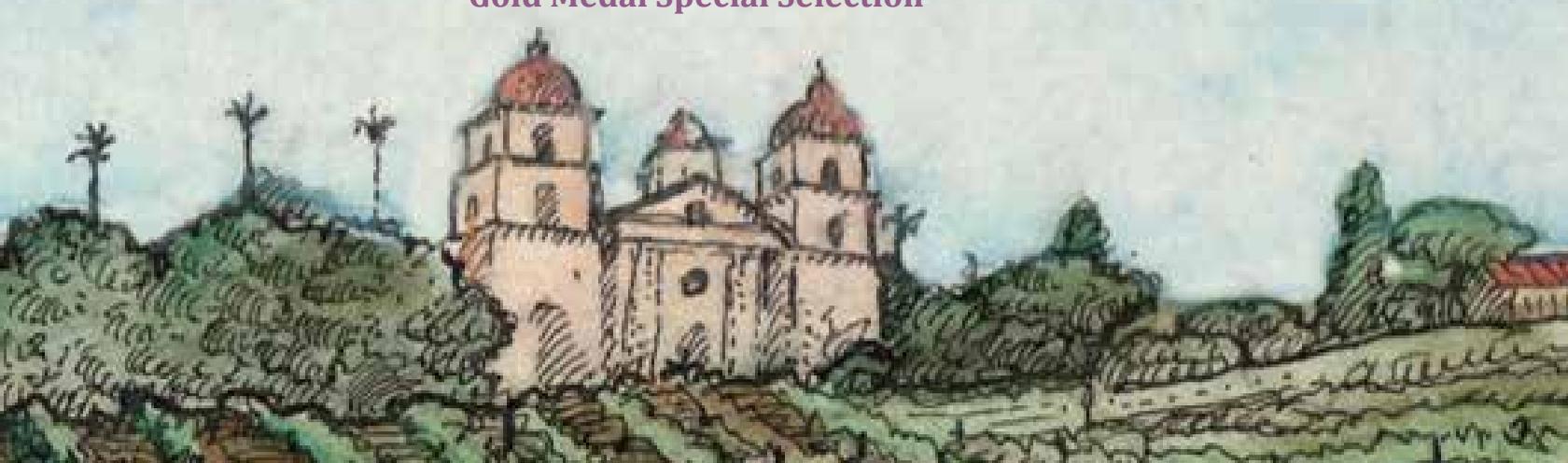
525 Cases Produced

The M-80 firework is extremely loud, explosive, and dangerous - and the same is true for Vinum's M-80 Chardonnay. Vinum's 2016 vintage of the M-80 Chardonnay comes from the Russian River Valley in the heart of Sonoma County. Here, in this world renowned cool-climate growing region, Chardonnay is incredibly sought-after as it produces wonderfully complex, layered, and brightly flavored wines. Rich golden in color, the 2016 M-80 Chardonnay offers supple and silky aromas with creamy custard and butter notes. Underneath these enticing cream notes exposes the ripe varietal Chardonnay qualities such as baked apple and cinnamon notes. On the palate, this wine is very juicy with a tropical core of pineapple, guava, and passionfruit flavors that linger on the finish. Aged in French oak. 100% Chardonnay. Enjoy now until 2021.

Gold Medal Special Selection

HOW WE CHOOSE OUR WINES:

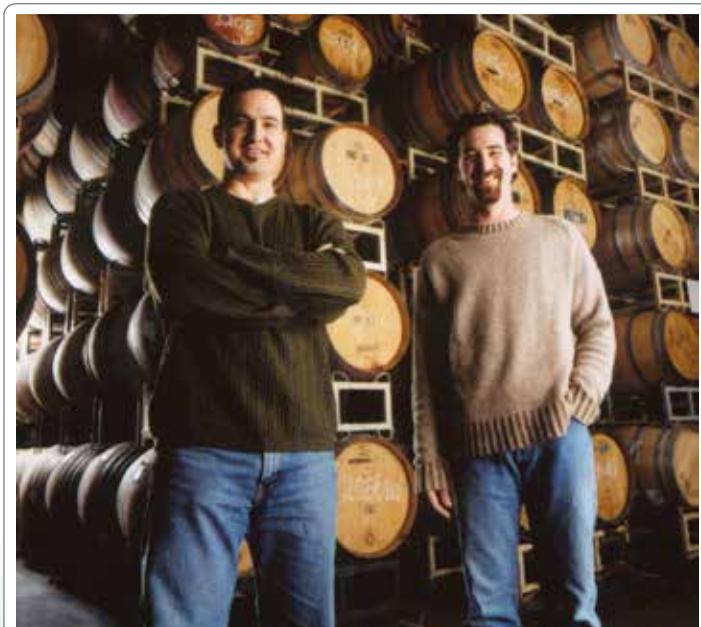
Gold Medal Wine Club showcases exceptional wines from only the best small wineries of California. Featured wines include those which have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by a respected national wine publication (see goldmedalwineclub.com/resources/wine-ratings). On occasion, we feature wines which are newly released by the winery and which medals and reviews are forthcoming. Each and every selection is a superb wine made in small quantities and with very limited distribution. There are over 4,000 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



Vinum Cellars



A unique collaboration between two winemakers, Vinum Cellars works with sustainable grape growers throughout California to produce a wide range of premium quality wines from key wine growing regions.



Vinum Cellars was founded in 1997 by first generation, California family winemakers Richard Bruno and Chris Condos. Together, they have built the winery into a well-established entity in Napa Valley, featuring grapes and winegrowing regions from throughout the state.

When Richard Bruno and Chris Condos first met at winemaker paradise, UC Davis, in the early 1990's, neither suspected their relationship would exist for the rest of their lives. The pair came from varying backgrounds and wound up in classes at the exceptional California College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. This path to explore viticulture and enology was followed after graduation with the formation of Vinum Cellars in 1997.

"We started quite small and only produced 966 cases of a white blend," informed Richard Bruno during a recent interview. "Chris and I shared some important feelings about the types of wines we wanted to produce that were outside the proverbial box, so to speak."

The duo searched for a name for their new enterprise and Bruno finally settled on a historical go-to, *Webster's New World College Dictionary*. After searching for catchy wine-oriented names, he settled on the Latin word for wine, and Vinum Cellars was born.

To accomplish the winery's funding, both partners maxed out their credit cards - not the easiest or safest method of funding a new business. "We both believed in what we were doing," recalled Bruno. "It didn't seem like a big deal at the time, and we were both quite young when we started."

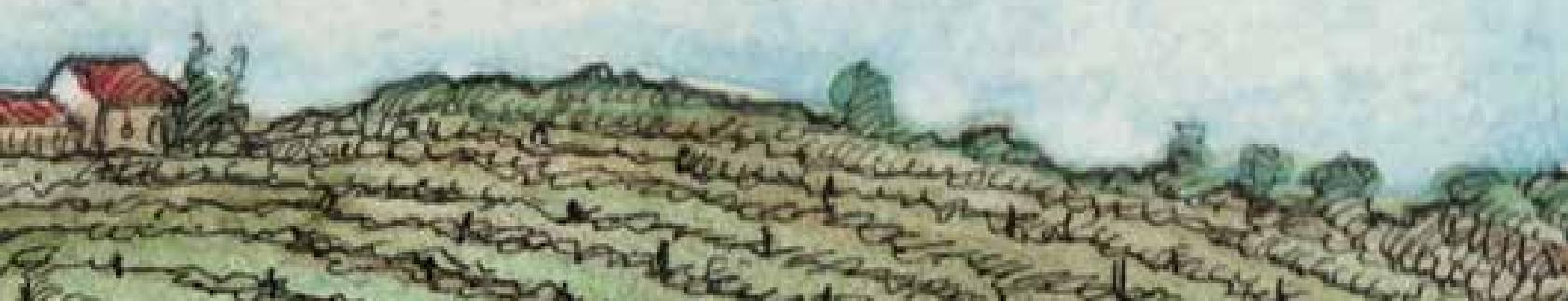
Time has been good to Vinum Cellars and its co-owners. Vinum Cellars will produce around 25,000 cases during the current year and is geared up for even larger numbers in the future.

"We have a three-tier business plan for our winery's future. Our portfolio will consist of value-driven wines that could easily reach fifty to sixty thousand cases. Our premium level can reach about twenty thousand cases and our super premium (this month's Gold Wine Club selections) will top off between five thousand and seven thousand cases. This won't happen overnight; the competition is simply too intense. If everything goes well, we could grow to these numbers in the next three to five years," stated Bruno.



Vinum Cellars is unique in that it makes wines from single vineyards and appellations from throughout California. From Coastal Chardonnay and Pinot Noir to Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, and Rhone-blends from the Central Coast, Vinum Cellars truly produces a little bit of everything. The focus is to pair the best microclimates and vineyards with the varietals the owners wish to produce.

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Richard Bruno and Chris Condos, Winemakers

It is something of a rarity in wineries for both co-owners of a winery to also be winemakers. Since both owners of Vinum Cellars are UC Davis graduates, this aspect seemed to be a forlorn conclusion when the company was first formed.

“Besides being good friends, we both brought something different to the table,” offered Richard Bruno. “Our careers in the wine business were different and we had worked in completely different settings. What we did have in common was the desire to make wines that we’re so mainstream, like Cabernet Sauvignon. Our outlook was more European in nature and our wines tended to be somewhat esoteric. We both agreed there was a need for the type of wines we enjoyed drinking and our efforts in establishing our portfolio at Vinum Cellars always kept that concept in mind.”

Bruno stated that both he and Chris Condos have developed a sixth sense for each other. If someone posed a particular question, each one would give the exact same answer.

“People think we are connected at the seam,” added Bruno, “and that’s okay with us. All blending decisions are a mutual effort and that’s the reason our wines are so consistent. We both hope that result continues for a long, long time.”

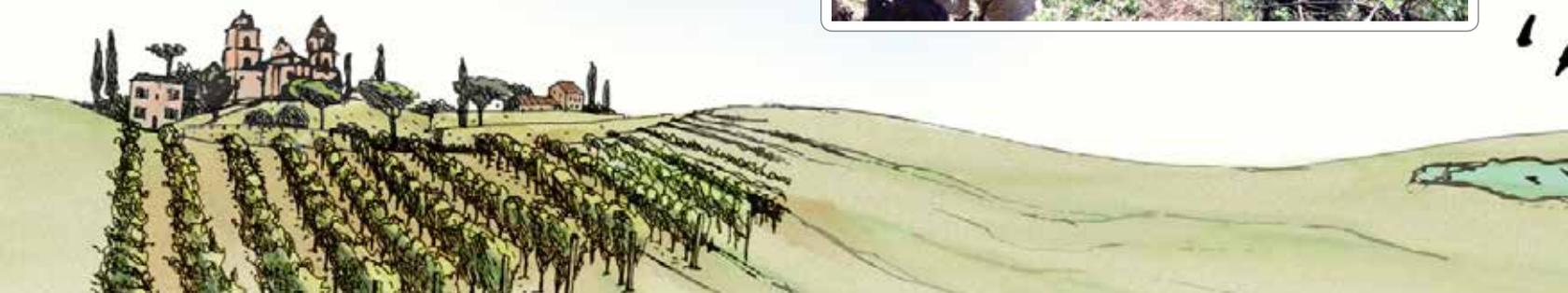
Vinum Cellars

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Richard Bruno had some inside help in developing the Vinum Cellars label. His wife Anya possesses two college majors, including one for graphic design. Her distinctive design graces each bottle Vinum Cellars produces and is a stand out whenever appearing on off-premise shelves around the country.

Speaking of on/off premise, the current Vinum Cellars ratio is about 60-40 in favor of restaurants and the like. “We have been able to develop an excellent distribution network,” Richard Bruno added. “Our wines can be found in 42 states and that’s a plus for a winery of our size. But it has taken us years to develop the relationships that make it work.”

Vinum Cellars is a collaboration between two friends that makes perfect sense. It is our pleasure to introduce our Gold Wine Club members to this fascinating winery. Enjoy!





Food pairings from Vinum Cellars



Oven Braised Beef Short Ribs

Pair with the Vinum 2014 'Red Dirt Red' Rhône Blend

- 8 beef short ribs, depending on size and desired volume (but intended to serve 2 per serving)
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 4 Tbs extra virgin olive oil
- 1 whole red onion, chopped/diced (white or yellow onion are fine also)
- 4 cloves of garlic, mashed
- 1 1/2 cups of beef broth
- 2 Tbs Worcestershire sauce
- Fresh rosemary, chopped

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Season all sides of each short rib with salt and pepper and chopped rosemary. Using the extra virgin olive oil in a heavy cast iron pan, sear the short ribs on stovetop over high heat; 1 minute per side (all four sides). Remove the short ribs and put into a holding bowl. To the now empty pan (with the meat juices only), add the onion and saute for 3-5 minutes. Add the garlic and reduce to a simmer before adding the beef broth and Worcestershire sauce. Once this both has been brought to a simmer, add the beef short ribs and cover the pan with a lid. Place the pan directly into the preheated oven for 2 1/2 hours, until the beef is very tender and easily falls off the bone. Garnish the short ribs with a rosemary sprig and serve with garlicky mashed potatoes. *Recipe provided by Vinum Cellars. Serves 4.*



Grilled Salmon with Béarnaise Sauce

Pair with the Vinum 2014/2016 'M-80' Chardonnay

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|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 whole salmon filet | 1 Tbs Italian Parsley, finely chopped |
| Salt and pepper | 1 Tbs Chervil, finely chopped |
| | 1 Tbs shallots, finely chopped |
| Béarnaise Sauce: | 1/8 tsp white pepper, ground |
| 1/4 cup Vinum Cellars M-80 Chardonnay | 1/2 tsp sea salt |
| 2 Tbs Tarragon vinegar | 3/4 cup butter (salted or sweet) |
| 2 Tbs fresh Tarragon leaves | 3 egg yolks |

For the salmon: Take the salmon filet and de-bone, leaving the skin on. Rinse with cold water and pat dry with a towel. Season with salt and pepper and place skin-side down on the grill on high heat. The fish will cook slow because the skin and oils trapped between the skin and the fish will create a slight barrier. Once the fish shows evidence of searing on the edges, it's time to flip the fish onto the seasoned side. Reduce heat to medium and cook face down for 5 minutes. Remove from grill and place face down again at a 90 degree angle (from original orientation, to create proper grill marks for presentation). Using fork and tongs, remove the skin from the back of the fish. Salt and pepper the skin side after it is removed and flip the fish again for 2-4 minutes. Place on a large serving platter and pour just enough Béarnaise Sauce to partially coat the fish, reserving some for guests to add desired amount to their selected portion. **For the Béarnaise Sauce:** Combine wine, vinegar, and herbs in the top of a double boiler and cook until reduced by half. Mixture will be very concentrated and cool. Add this mixture to your blender and add 3 egg yolks and salt. Blend for 5 seconds. Melt butter in a saucepan until bubbling, but do not burn! Remove center stopper from blender cap, turn the blender on high, and pour the hot butter through the opening in a steady stream while motor is running for 30 seconds. The sauce should be finished and the consistency of aioli. Serve immediately. *Recipe provided by Vinum Cellars. Serves 6.*





Richard Bruno and Chris Condos, In The Spotlight

It is a rarity when our *In the Spotlight* section features two individuals, but in the case of Vinum Cellars, it is necessary. Vinum Cellars is an operation that thrives when both co-owners and co-winemakers think alike on most matters.

Richard Bruno

For Richard Bruno, 49, his path toward ‘winedom’ began in high school when he was a bus-boy, and then a waiter in restaurants around the San Francisco area. He was attracted to wine and soon realized that the better the restaurant, the better the wine list, and hence the larger tips that followed. By the time he reached college, Bruno knew that wine was definitely in his future.

He enrolled in UC Davis’ agricultural school and wound up with a degree in fermentation science. At Davis, Bruno met another student, Chris Condos, and struck up a lasting friendship that eventually evolved into the establishment of Vinum Cellars.

Between graduation from UC Davis and Vinum Cellars’ founding in 1997, Richard Bruno had several important roles in the wine industry. His first job was with Randall Graham at iconic Bonny Doon Vineyards, where Graham became his friend and mentor. “Randall taught me a lot of what to do and not to do,” recalled Bruno. “We have remained great friends and talk to each other on a consistent basis.”

After Bonny Doon Vineyards, Bruno worked at Alexander Valley Vineyards and Napa Valley’s Foix a Deux Winery. He also joined the staff at Don Sebastiani and Sons where he was Director of Winemaking for eight years.

But his real love during that time was Vinum Cellars and its mission of producing wines that he felt were esoteric and sometimes overlooked. “When we started Vinum, hardly anyone in California was making Chenin Blanc. I love the grape and what you can do with it,” confessed Bruno. “We have made it a priority for our winery, and a number of other wineries have jumped on the bandwagon.

It is gratifying to see the varietal succeed and having a part in its achievement.”

Chris Condos

Chris Condos’ involvement with Vinum Cellars was decided before he was born. As a third-generation product of a large Greek family, Condos, 48 was destined to follow his grandfather and father into the wine business. He met Richard Bruno at UC Davis and found they shared similar outlooks and approaches to varietals, particularly those infrequently used or grown in California.

Condos agreed to team up with Bruno when Vinum Cellars was developed. His own career had flourished after graduation with stints at Napa Valley’s Pine Ridge Winery and Santa Cruz’s popular Kathryn Kennedy Winery. These jobs helped pay the bills at Vinum Cellars during its early development period.

Chris Condos remains a winemaking consultant and has been a driving force in the organic and biodynamic farming process that has swept throughout California, and much of the wine-growing world. His time at Pine Ridge Winery allowed him to see the benefits of organic farming and has carried through to his most recent project, *Horse & Plow*. Along with his wife Suzanne, Horse & Plow produces an excellent cider and a number of certified organic wines. “These (organic) farming practices allow us to craft wines with greater complexity and sense of place, while caring for worker health and the environment,” Condos remarked. “Our organic practices don’t stop when the grapes get to the winery - our wines are made naturally with no synthetic nutrients or additives, no GMO’s, are vegan, and contain low, sometimes no, sulfites. I’m all about natural wine, natural farming, always.”

It is easy to see why both of the above individuals occupy this *In The Spotlight* section. Both are independent, forward-thinking individuals that aren’t afraid to tackle new vistas or established mores.





Wine Region: California

When you have the entirety of California's numerous grape growing regions to choose from, it is easy to understand why Vinum Cellars' owners have chosen to utilize a great many of the existing areas.

"We firmly believe that certain varietals thrive in certain microclimates," Co-owner Chris Condos advised. "We do our best to match the varietal we intend to use with the best possible soils and climate to accentuate the vine's development. I guess you can say that we source by microclimate, but it all seems to work for us."

Grapes from growing areas such as the Central Coast's Paso Robles AVA, Sonoma Valley AVA, Sierra Foothills AVA, Napa Valley AVA, and the huge Sacramento Delta growing area are all included in Vinum Cellars' long-term plans.

"It is vital to our development to have agreements with first-class growers that can provide us with the specific fruit we need for our portfolio," added Chris Condos. "We



watch each grower closely for the first few years to insure they meet our standards. When we feel their fruit is uniform, then we sign long-term contracts. It's a win-win for both sides and it works for us."

Few California wineries source their fruit from such varied locales. The success of Vinum Cellars might easily provide the impetus for more wineries to consider this form of sourcing for their products.

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Join Today! **\$18-\$22/Delivery**

This month's *Gold Club* featured *Plus!* wine:
Tercero 2014 Verbiage Blanc White Rhône Blend
Santa Barbara County

93 Points - Robert Parker's *The Wine Advocate*

350 Cases Produced

Retail Price at the Winery: \$30.00



Wine Winyard: Test Your Wine IQ!



What is whole cluster fermentation and how does it affect the wine?

Whole cluster fermentation is just what it sounds like: The whole grape cluster is harvested off the vine and then crushed and fermented as a whole intact piece, stems and all. With the rise of mechanical destemming over the course of the 20th century, the great majority of wines are made from fruit *without* stems. Traditionally though, this wasn't the case, and a number of producers - for a variety of reasons - still find advantages to fermentation with whole clusters of grapes on their stems. One such advantage (for certain varietals) is that stems impart their own unique flavors and complexities, while also contributing more tannins and structure, to the finished wine. Some winemakers find that the stems give more expression of site specificity with their unique flavor contributions as well. On the other side, though, if the stems are unripe they can give the wine unwanted 'green' aromas and flavors of methoxypyrazines. Stem inclusion tends to correspond with less intense color in the finished wine as well, but the color *stability* is increased - which is one reason why Pinot Noir is a popular grape for whole cluster fermentation (it's thin skin contains less pigment than most red varieties, so fixing the color can improve the wine's appearance as it ages). Whole cluster fermentation isn't an 'all or nothing' proposition either, so a winemaker may choose to throw in a few whole clusters with the rest of the destemmed grapes, or go all in with 100% whole clusters. Deciding to do a whole cluster fermentation depends on the grape varietal and desired outcome of the wine and it is just one of the wide spectrum of possibilities winemakers are faced with.

The Gold Medal Wine Store



Instant! Membership Rewards saves you 10% to 31% off Vinum Cellars wines!

VINUM CELLARS	Retail Price at Winery		Gold Medal Membership Rewards Pricing*		
			2+ btls.	6+ btls.	12+ btls.
2014 'Red Dirt Red' Rhône Blend Paso Robles, California	\$20.00/btl.	2-Bottle Members:	\$18.00	\$16.33	\$15.50
		4-Bottle Members:	\$18.00	\$15.50	\$14.25
2014 'M-80' Chardonnay RRV, Sonoma County, California	\$25.00/btl.	2-Bottle Members:	\$21.00	\$19.33	\$18.50
		4-Bottle Members:	\$21.00	\$18.50	\$17.25
2016 'M-80' Chardonnay RRV, Sonoma County, California	\$25.00/btl.	2-Bottle Members:	\$21.00	\$19.33	\$18.50
		4-Bottle Members:	\$21.00	\$18.50	\$17.25

*Effective per bottle prices after Membership Rewards discount is applied at checkout.

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2 bottle min, per wine, per order. Shipping and tax (if applicable) not included in above prices.
Membership Rewards does not apply to Sale or Special Offer Wines.

