

## **Cattleya: California Wines with a French and Colombian Accent**

I first met Bibiana González Ravez several years ago at the World of Pinot Noir when we were interviewing young winemakers for a feature on Grape Radio: "A Day in the Sun at the 2011 World of Pinot Noir," [www.graperadio.com/archives/2012/02/09/a-day-in-the-sun-at-the-2011-world-of-pinot-noir/](http://www.graperadio.com/archives/2012/02/09/a-day-in-the-sun-at-the-2011-world-of-pinot-noir/). Her interview was the only one of several that I still remember, since her story was unlikely and intriguing. She dreamed of making wine since the age of 14, growing up in Medellín, Colombia, yet that country had no wine culture at all. Bibiana would study chemical engineering in Colombia, but go on to work in the vineyards and cellars of Burgundy, the Rhone Valley, Bordeaux, Alsace and Cognac, and earned a Technician of Viticulture and Oenology diploma in Angoulême, followed by a Diploma of Oenology with honors from the University of Bordeaux.

After an extraordinary experience working at Château Haut-Brion, she moved to Sonoma County in 2004 and gained winemaking expertise working 14 harvests in California at wineries that included La Crema, Peay Vineyards, Au Bon Climat and Qupé, before becoming the director of winegrowing and winemaking at Lynmar Estate in 2009. Bibiana would leave Lynmar Estate in 2011 and become the winemaker for Pahlmeyer's Sonoma Coast project, Wayfarer, in 2012. At Wayfarer she has crafted exceptional Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays that have made my annual All-Americans list. Bibiana was named "2015 Winemaker of the Year" by The San Francisco Chronicle, and her wines have received considerable praise from the wine press.

Most recently, she launched her own brand, Cattleya ("Cat-LAY-a"), the culmination of a dream that started more than 20 years ago, offering vineyard-designated Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Syrah. Cattleya is an orchid, the national flower of Colombia, and is one of the most beautiful and delicate orchids in the world. The wines are sold through an allocated mailing list at [www.cattleyawines.com](http://www.cattleyawines.com). They are not inexpensive, but they reflect passionate and experienced winemaking of the highest standards and are connoisseur's wines by a Colombian-born, French-trained, California-based winemaker.



Bibiana has partnered with her spouse, winemaker Jeff Pisoni, to make Shared Notes, a high-end Sauvignon Blanc producer. She also launched Alma de Cattleya, a value-priced brand of California wines to be distributed in Columbia.

If you have had the good fortune to sample Wayfarer wines, you know that they are rather bold expressions of Pinot Noir, almost an antithesis of the trend in Sonoma Coast to pick early and offer more delicate wines with lower alcohol and higher acidity. The Cattleya wines are similar to Wayfarer in character, in that they offer rich, ripe flavors, yet in a balanced and charismatic style. Three wines were offered from the 2013 vintage, two of which are reviewed here, and the third is a Syrah from Soberanes Vineyard in the Santa Lucia Highlands.

### **2013 Cattleya Wines Pratt Vineyard Sonoma Coast Chardonnay**

14.5% alc., pH 3.38, TA 0.69, 101 cases, \$70. Pratt Vineyard is one of Sonoma County's premier Chardonnay vineyards, owned and farmed by Jim Pratt. The vineyard was planted in 2000, and this wine is sourced from 4 rows of clone 15 (Old Wente selection). Carefully hand sorted, gently pressed, native yeast fermented for 2 months, followed by 100% malolactic fermentation. Aged 15 months in 50% new French oak barrels. · Moderately light golden yellow color and clear in the glass. Welcoming aromas of lemon pudding, pineapple and vanilla creme. Creamy and delicious on the palate, with flavors of pear, kiwi and grilled pineapple augmented by hints of butterscotch and nutty oak, offering impressive fruit expression, and sliding off the palate with aplomb at the finish. So beautifully composed, one is tempted to drink it all night. **Score: 96**

### **2013 Cattleya Wines Donum Vineyard Sonoma Carneros Pinot Noir**

14.2% alc., pH 3.58, TA 0.65, 88 cases, \$70. Roederer clone. 25% whole clusters. 5-day cold soak, fermented on the skins for 18 days, aged 11 months in French oak barrels, 50% new. Bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. · Moderately dark reddish purple hue in the glass. Nicely perfumed, with aromas of black cherry, blackberry, pomegranate and a deft touch of oak. Structured and somewhat bold, with earth-kissed flavors of black cherry and blackberry. The firm but polished tannins are nicely balanced by a laser beam of acidity propelling the finish. A classy wine that is built to age, and a proper salute to Carneros terroir. **Score: 93**

### **2014 Cattleya Wines Cuvée Number One Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**

14.2% alc., very limited, unreleased. Sourced from Lakeview Vineyard in the Green Valley of Russian River Valley. Pommard and Dijon 115. Named after the successful first of many blending trials between both clones. · Dark reddish purple color in the glass. Intoxicating aromas of black cherry, cassis and bark. Exceptionally refined in the mouth with a velvety texture, featuring mid weight flavors of black raspberry, blackberry and plum. Impeccable balance with involved but not intrusive fine-grain tannins. and an intensely endowed finish. A gregarious and toothsome wine that is meant to please. **Score: 94**