

## Cattleya Wines: Some 2024s

Wines of remarkable focus, purity and intensity

by Fredric Koeppel/ [www.biggerthanyourhead.com](http://www.biggerthanyourhead.com) / posted on July 18, 2026

**B**ibiana González Rave, working mainly in Sonoma County, is owner and winemaker for her labels Cattleya and Alma de Cattleya, named for an orchid that grows in her native Colombia. Her focus at Cattleya Wines is chardonnay and pinot noir from named appellations in Sonoma County; also on the roster is a syrah from the Soberanes Vineyard in Monterey County's Santa Lucia Highlands. Alma de Cattleya is a second and less expensive label for *chardonnay* and *pinot noir* plus *sauvignon blanc*, all carrying a general Sonoma County designation.

I tasted the red wines from 2024 reviewed here during a Zoom event over which González Rave presided with grace and good humor. The Chardonnay 2024 was part of a separate package.

These are very impressive wines, elemental, almost feral, in their precise focus, purity and intensity. The names of



the wines derive from Joseph Campbell's seminal book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and trace what González Rave referred to as her personal journey of discovery and psychological equilibrium. There is, indeed, a touch of the visionary about these wines.

**Cattleya Wines Chardonnay 2024**, Sonoma Coast. 14% alc. 18 months, 70% new French oak barrels. Vegan-friendly. Production was 200 cases. Very light straw-gold color; in the nose, this chardonnay offers ripe pear and mango, with hints of quince and ginger, smoke and toasted cumin, and a touch of candied orange rind; the exquisite balance on the palate is between a full, luscious body, with a subtle note of creaminess, and a sleek, lithe texture, all animated by vivid acidity; more of a lemon-saline character emerges, along with an element of nectarine, the whole package distinguished by its presence, poise and tone. Now through 2032 to '34. Excellent. About \$65.



**Cattleya "Belly of the Whale" Pinot Noir 2024**, Sonoma Coast. 14.2% alc. 18 months in French oak, 75% new barrels. Production was 100 cases. Vegan-friendly. Wow, this is a big, dark, deep, brooding pinot noir (to get all alliterative about it), that displays extraordinary depth and dimension, gliding, after some contemplation, toward the spicy-floral-fruit-driven constellation; yet all in all, it comes across as clean, fresh and elegant, though you have to possess a bit of patience and coax out these elements; ripe and macerated black cherries and blueberries, whiffs of woody, earthy vetiver and sweet rose petals, oolong tea and pine oil; the structure feels built upon a foundation of dusty tannins, bright acidity and lightly sanded oak, finishing with a touch of damp flint. An archetypal, chthonic pinot noir. Try from 2028 through 2034 to '36. Excellent. About \$85.





BIGGER THAN YOUR HEAD

**Cattleya Wines “The Goddess” Pinot Noir 2024**, West Sonoma Coast. 14.2% alc. 18 months in French oak, 80% new barrels. Production was 125 cases. Vegan-friendly. Dark ruby-magenta hue, with an ethereal rim; the bouquet evolves rapidly with a few minutes in the glass, shifting through ripe and dusty currants, plums and blueberries to sandalwood and saffra to iodine, mint and graphite to a coniferous edge; on the palate, this pinot noir is taut, tense, vibrant and resonant; the cedary aspect grows to encompass a whole range of briers, brambles and underbrush that undergird succulent cherry and plum flavors; from mid-palate back through the finish, this picks up traces of loam, granitic minerality and soft, velvety tannins. A remarkable achievement. Drink now through 2032 to ‘35. Exceptional. About \$125.



**Cattleya “Belly of the Whale” 2017**, Sonoma Coast. 14.2% alc. 16 months in French oak, 50% new barrels. Production was 150 cases. Vegan-friendly. At almost eight years old, this mature version of “Belly of the Whale” offers a medium, transparent ruby-garnet color and heaps of earthy, loamy, mushroomy qualities that gradually unfurl spiced and macerated black and red cherries and blue plums, then becoming seriously laden with notes of dried rose petals and violets, crushed cumin, sour cherry and melon, the skin from a slightly bruised apple (do you get it? bitter and sweet with just a bit of over-ripeness and too much), yet the whole shebang feels beautifully balanced, sweetly autumnal, engagingly coniferous. I can’t think (at the moment) of a better wine to drink with seared magret of duck with a balsamic reduction. Through 2028 or ‘29. Pretty darned wonderful. Excellent. About \$125.

**Cattleya “The Initiation” Syrah 2024**, Santa Lucia Highlands. 14.5% alc. From the Soberanes Vineyard. 18 months in 100% new French oak barrels. Production was 50 cases. Vegan-friendly. Let’s look at that fact again: 18 months in 100% new French oak barrels. And yet there’s not a speck of overbearing oakiness or toastiness or any of the oaky qualities that can distract from or mar a wine’s character; no, the wood influence on this pinot noir is elemental, nuanced, subliminal. Instead, what stands out are the classic iodine-iron-graphite spectrum, the wet dog-bacon fat-ripe dark berries elements, the whole range of the spice box and the baskets of potpourri, the vivid core of lilac-lavender-espresso bean-macerated blackberry and blueberry fruit; everything robed in an opaque black-purple color with a magenta rim. Quite a performance, for consuming through 2032 to ‘34. Excellent. About \$70.

