

SELECTED REVIEWS 1999 VINTAGE

HARTFORD FAMILY WINES

From Don Hartford's first vintage, in 1994, his self-proclaimed goal has been to showcase "high-personality" vineyards, whether Chardonnay, Pinot Noir or Zinfandel. Now, five vintages later, his 1999s, says Hartford, "give us a chance to illustrate what we've been striving for." ...The various Pinot Noirs are treated similarly in the winery: 75-80% whole berries, a 7- to 12-day cold soak and hand-punched in small, open-top bins, with a large proportion allowed to ferment on its indigenous yeasts. The single-vineyard Zinfandels – all from along Wood Road in the Russian River Valley – are handled the same way, producing wines, says Hartford, "that reflect where they come from."

*Pinot Noir*

- 94 HARTFORD COURT 1999 DUTTON-SANCHIETTI VINEYARD PINOT NOIR (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY) \$50.  
Pure, seductive Pinot aromas combine floral, rose-petal aromas with dark fruit and brown sugar. Rich flavors of blackberries and boysenberries cascade across the palate in a fall of velvet. Moderate acidity makes it approachable now, but there's enough tannin to preserve it for a few years. A wine that can stand up to steak but still retains a sense of Pinot elegance. Editors' choice.
- 92 HARTFORD COURT 1999 ARRENDELL VINEYARD PINOT NOIR (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY); \$65.  
Aromas of dark fruit, anise, smoke and dried herbs morph into flavors of stone fruits (plums, cherries) in the mouth, with a strong undercurrent of pomegranate. This thick, almost syrupy wine is almost steroidally concentrated, but stays focused thanks to lemony acids that might be too much for some tasters.
- 92 HARTFORD COURT 1999 PINOT NOIR (MARIN COUNTY); \$50.  
The most Burgundian of the '99s from Hartford, this cool-climate single-vineyard wine smells of leather, clove, even slightly of barnyard. Some green herbaceousness on the palate balances bright cherry fruit – the interplay of elements gives this wine a multifaceted character that changes from sip to sip. Give it 2-3 years for the tannins to smooth out. Cellar Selection.
- 91 HARTFORD COURT 1999 SEVENS BENCH VINEYARD PINOT NOIR (CARNEROS); \$50.  
Toastier and smokier than the other bottlings, with clove and coffee accents dressing up sturdy plum and earth flavors. Finishes long, with hints of tart plum skin and dusty tannins. Seems as if rare duck breast would be a perfect match.
- 90 HARTFORD COURT 1999 VELVET SISTERS PINOT NOIR (ANDERSON VALLEY); \$50.  
An apt name for this richly fruited and supple wine, which features high-toned green grass, stem and herb aromas over earthy, black-cherry flavors. The finish is long, spicy and briary. If you enjoy the herbal aspect of Pinot Noir, you may rate it even higher.

*Zinfandel*

- 93 HARTFORD 1999 HARTFORD VINEYARD ZINFANDEL (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY); \$34.  
From the old vineyard in back of Don Hartford's house, this 15.7% alcohol Zin is big – but it's no brute. It's full of dark, rich blackberries, layered with chocolate and black pepper. The velvety texture carries through the long finish, picking up hints of black licorice. Editors' Choice.
- 93 HARTFORD 1999 HIGHWIRE VINEYARD ZINFANDEL (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY); \$34.  
Spicier than the other Hartford Zins, with the accent on black pepper and clove. Brambly blackberry and chocolate provide a solid foundation for spice complexities. Hints of crushed nettles provide yet another layer of flavor, and the wine finishes with zippy acids and peppery spice.
- 91 HARTFORD 1999 ZINFANDEL (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY); \$29.  
Hartford's blended Zin is filled with exuberant aromas of jammy "Zinberry" fruit, baking spices like cinnamon and clove, bittersweet chocolate and black pepper. The vibrant mixed-berry flavors are rich and satisfying, finishing with a touch of warmth and softness.

*Chardonnay*

- 90 HARTFORD 2000 CHARDONNAY (SONOMA COAST); \$22.  
A blend of lots that didn't make it into the single-vineyard Chardonnays, the Sonoma Coast bottling offers a representative introduction to the Hartford Chardonnay style. Oily-textured melons and peaches are framed by toasty, nutty, buttery accents.