

Wine Spectator

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EXPLORING SONOMA

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE

- BEST RESTAURANTS AND HOTELS
- 6 DAY TRIPS FOR FUN AND LEARNING
- WINERIES TO VISIT

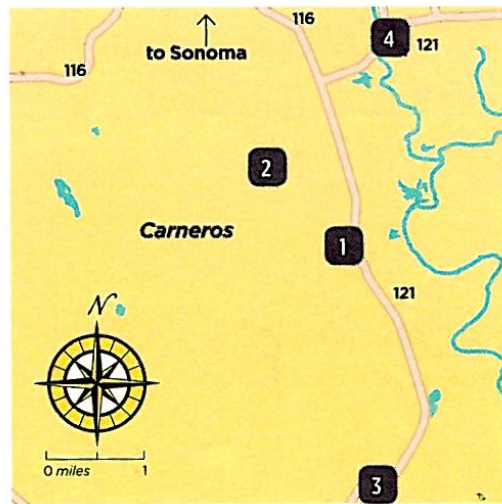
NEW ZEALAND
PINOT NOIR
COMES OF AGE

LOIRE VALLEY
VALUES:
REFRESHING
WHITES



CARNEROS

Gateway to wine country



3 RAM'S GATE WINERY

28700 Arnold Drive, Sonoma **Telephone** (707)

721-8700 **Website** www.ramsgatewinery.com

Open Thursday to Monday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Cost Tastings \$6-\$20

This impressive new addition to Carneros is the first winery visitors come across on Highway 121, and it should be a first stop. It's a beautiful modern space designed by wine country's most famous architect, Howard Backen. Although walk-ins are welcome, calling ahead to reserve a table will ensure you a comfy spot. The Carneros- and Sonoma-grown Chardonnays, Pinot Noirs, Syrahs and Cabernets are delicious on their own, or they can be paired with sophisticated and delicious bites. These are some serious pairings, such as the crisply fried forest mushroom arancini that complements a glass of Chardonnay, or Carneros lamb albóndigas matched with Syrah.

90 Ram's Gate Chardonnay Carneros Lee's Secret Vineyard 2010 \$64 Offers creamy fig, honeysuckle and baked apple flavors that gain depth, ending with a long, persistent finish. A richer, fuller style from this producer. Drink now through 2018. 148 cases made.—J.L.

90 Ram's Gate Chardonnay Sonoma Coast Durrell Vineyards 2010 \$74 Rich and yeasty, with full-bodied pear, spice, bread crust and hazelnut notes. Yet for all its size, this has a measure of finesse and detail, gaining on the finish. Drink now through 2019. 209 cases made.—J.L.



JEFF GAFFNER
Winemaker

93 Ram's Gate Syrah Sonoma Coast Parmelee-Hill Vineyards 2009 \$52 Rich and smooth, showing flavors of blackberry, blueberry, beef carpaccio and fresh espresso, with a nice tannic grip. Gains depth and richness on the finish. Offers more polish and finesse than the sterner, more tannic 2008. Drink now through 2022. 123 cases made.—J.L.