

Rams at the Gate

IN 2011, JEFF O'NEILL, ONE OF CALIFORNIA'S MOST successful producers of bulk wines and custom bottlings, teamed up with celebrated winemaker Jeff Gaffner, owner of Saxon Brown and consultant to numerous premium wineries, and bought an estate in the southern Sonoma part of Carneros, the Spanish word for "rams." Their goal was to make superior vineyard-designated Chardonnays and Pinot Noirs. They named their estate Ram's Gate and built a stunning winery, designed by Howard Backen, which seamlessly blends rustic and modern elements.

Using their estate grapes as well as fruit from such superstar vineyards as Sangiacomo, Hyde, Hudson, Gap's Crown, Ulises Valdez and Durell, they have achieved their goal in very short order. Their latest round of releases clearly demonstrates that they have catapulted their winery into the rarefied upper echelon of producers of these two noble varieties.

90 **Ram's Gate 2014 Chardonnay, Carneros** (\$36) Silky and bright with juicy, racy Chard fruit; juicy, sleek and balanced



95 **Ram's Gate 2014 Chardonnay, Green Acres Hill Vineyard, Carneros** (\$62) Subtle vanilla oak woven through racy acidity; elegant, complex and beautifully balanced; long and exceptional.

94 **Ram's Gate 2014 Chardonnay, Hudson Vineyard, Carneros** (\$64) Lifted in style with great finesse and purity; a great wine from one of

California great vineyards.

92 **Ram's Gate 2014 Chardonnay, Durell Vineyard, Sonoma Coast** (\$74) Smooth and lush but also graceful and elegant; creamy and ripe; long and luxurious.

93 **Ram's Gate 2014 Estate Chardonnay, Carneros** (\$76) Bright and tangy with deep flavors of fruit, toasty oak and lively acidity; complex and classic.

90 **Ram's Gate 2014 Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast** (\$40) Smooth, dusty and showing cherry and savory notes; earthy, balanced and fresh.

93 **Ram's Gate 2014 Pinot Noir, Roberts Road Vineyard, Sonoma Coast** (\$70) Juicy cherry and earth notes mounted on a core of firm acidity; fresh, balanced and elegant.

94 **Ram's Gate 2014 Pinot Noir, Gap's Crown Vineyard, Sonoma Coast** (\$70) Bright-toned Bing cherry fruit on a silky texture; tangy and crisp; balanced, layered and long; stylish and lovely.

95 **Ram's Gate 2014 Pinot Noir, Bush Crispo Vineyard, Russian River Valley** (\$74) Deep color; rich, complex and elegant with depth, intensity and great balance; long and complete.



96 **Ram's Gate 2014 Pinot Noir, Ulises Valdez Silver Eagle Vineyard, Russian River Valley** (\$74) Deep, rich and juicy with tangy red cherry and pure acidity; very elegant yet with lively style and a long, crisp finish.

95 **Ram's Gate 2014 Estate Pinot Noir, Carneros** (\$76) Velvety textured with lavish cherry fruit; smooth, juicy and complex with great poise and depth; toasty vanilla oak on the long, lush finish.