

## Arnot-Roberts

By [Josh Reynolds](#)

According to Duncan Meyers and Nathan Roberts, another young team making a name for themselves by exploiting cool, high-altitude sites in the North Coast and the Santa Cruz Mountains, 2011 was a rough year for yields because of the cold spells during flowering and subsequent shot berries, but it could be a fine year, quality-wise, for early-ripening varieties. "If you had your fruit in before the rain, which pretty much means that you're not a ripeness junkie anyway, you could make really pretty, fresh wines" Duncan said. In the case of varieties that ripen later, like cabernet, it was important to wait for the rainwater to be absorbed, which wasn't a major issue in dry-farmed vineyards that were starved for moisture after the dry summer and harvested well into October, as late as the 22nd for their Chalk Hill cabernet.

### **2011 Arnot-Roberts Chardonnay Watson Ranch Vineyard Napa Valley**

(\$30) (raised in neutral French oak): Light gold. Mineral-accented aromas and flavors of orange, mint, anise and ginger. Dry, silky and penetrating, displaying very good lift and focus. Finishes spicy and taut, with impressive clarity and length. This vineyard sits just above San Pablo Bay and the ocean influence shows. **91**

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### **2011 Arnot-Roberts Chardonnay Santa Cruz Mountains**

(\$30) (picked at 21 Brix; 12.7% alcohol and aged in neutral oak): Pale yellow, with a hint of green. Lively, pure aromas and flavors of fresh citrus fruits, jasmine and iodine. Sappy and incisive, with intense lime and bitter pear skin flavors lifted by chalky minerality. Finishes dry, with excellent clarity, cut and stony persistence. **91**

### **2011 Arnot-Roberts Ribolla Gialla Vare Vineyard Napa Valley**

(\$40) (12.5% alcohol): Light yellow-gold. Assertive aromas of lemon zest and pear, with a smoky mineral undertone and sexy floral qualities. Clean and brisk but concentrated, with palate-staining citrus fruit flavors giving way with aeration to deeper quince, pear and nectarine. The persistent, incisive finish leaves notes of bitter citrus zest and quinine behind. Powerful yet lithe white wine, with limitless food-matching possibilities. **92**

### **2011 Arnot-Roberts Old Vine White Compagni-Portis Vineyard Sonoma Valley**

(\$30) (made from a field blend of sylvaner, riesling and "a bunch of crazy stuff" that was planted 58 years ago; 12.5% alcohol): Pale green-gold color. Intense, mineral-accented pit fruit and floral aromas are complicated by notes of honey, ginger and white pepper. Lively acidity gives lift to fresh nectarine, melon and pear flavors, with a fennel note coming up with air. Finishes spicy and long, with lingering florality and very good focus. **91**

### **2011 Arnot-Roberts Trousseau Luchsinger Vineyard Clear Lake**

(\$30) (made with all whole clusters; raised in neutral puncheons for 10 months; 12.5% alcohol): Light red. Spicy redcurrant, strawberry and Asian spices on the nose. Firm and tangy on entry but fleshes out in the mid-palate, offering sappy red berry and bitter cherry flavors and sneaky sweetness. Tangy mineral and cherry skin notes dominate the long, spice-accented finish, which shows excellent clarity and lift. **91**

**2011 Arnot-Roberts Pinot Noir Peter Martin Ray Vineyard Santa Cruz Mountains**

(\$55) (made with 100% whole clusters and aged in neutral oak; 12.7% alcohol): Bright red. Fresh red berries and Asian spices on the high-pitched, floral-accented nose. Racy and taut, offering zesty raspberry and bitter cherry flavors that are given bite by a note of white pepper. Gains sweetness and depth with air and finishes on a candied rose note, with striking clarity and length. **93**

**2010 Arnot-Roberts Cabernet Sauvignon Clajeux Vineyard Chalk Hill**

(\$85) (30% whole clusters, 30% new French oak and 13.1% alcohol): Dark purple. Textbook cabernet aromas of cassis, cherry, pipe tobacco and pungent herbs, with a suave vanilla overtone. Plush and palate-coating, offering gently sweet dark fruit and floral pastille flavors and a touch of licorice. Becomes spicier with air and finishes with superb persistence, clarity and subtle, harmonious tannins. **93**

**2010 Arnot-Roberts Cabernet Sauvignon Bugay Vineyard Sonoma County**

(\$85) (made with 20% whole clusters and raised in 45% new French oak for 22 months; 12.8% alcohol): Glass-staining ruby. Highly energetic aromas of cassis, black raspberry, smoky minerals and sexy oak spices. Silky and sweet on entry, then vibrant and taut in the mid-palate, showing impressive density and energy to its dark berry, bitter cherry and mineral flavors. Finishes impressively long, with mounting tannins and a whiplash of sappy dark berry fruit. Very promising but definitely in need of more bottle age. **93(+?)**

**2010 Arnot-Roberts Cabernet Sauvignon Fellom Ranch Santa Cruz Mountains**

(\$85) (made from fruit picked on October 22nd; 30% whole clusters and aged for 22 months in French oak, 40% of it new): Opaque ruby. Expansive, heady aromas of candied red and dark berries, pipe tobacco, potpourri and licorice, with a spicy nuance that gains strength with air. Stains the palate with sweet cherry-cola, cassis and floral pastille flavors supported by juicy acidity. The spicy quality comes back strong on a finish that features velvety tannins and a refreshingly bitter cherry pit quality. **94**

**2011 Arnot-Roberts Syrah North Coast**

(\$35) (made with 100% whole clusters and 12.9% alcohol; all neutral oak): Bright purple. High-pitched aromas of dark berries, cherry skin and violet, with a peppery nuance. Very syrah. Sappy and precise, offering taut black raspberry and bitter cherry flavors and a jolt of cracked pepper. Silky tannins give shape to the finish, which leaves spice and floral notes behind. **91**

**2011 Arnot-Roberts Syrah Clary Ranch Sonoma Coast**

(\$45) (all whole clusters and 12.2% alcohol; all neutral oak): Vivid purple. Black raspberry, fruity black pepper, star anise and candied flowers on the intensely perfumed nose and on the palate. Peppery, focused and pure, with superb clarity and lift. Offers a striking array of dark fruit and floral character on the lively and incisive finish, which shows only a trace of tannins. This fruit was harvested on November 8th at a very low 20 Brix. **93**

**2011 Arnot-Roberts Syrah Griffin's Lair Vineyard Sonoma Coast**

(\$55) (100% whole clusters, all neutral oak and 13.2% alcohol): Dark purple. Intense spice- and floral-accented aromas of black and blue fruit preserves and Asian spices, with a bright mineral nuance gaining power with air. Fresh and incisive, offering vibrant black raspberry and boysenberry flavors and a subtle touch of candied violet. Fine-grained tannins build on a long, juicy, penetrating finish that ends on a floral note. **93**