Four to Watch

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KALE: SWINGING FOR THE FENCES

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Kale Anderson is just 34, but he has already been making wine for a decade. The Sonoma native attended UC Davis, with the intention of following his father into medicine, but an introductory course in viticulture and enology changed that. "I quickly found that one of the coolest intersections of nature and culture was in the vineyard," says Anderson.

After school, Anderson interned at Colgin Cellars, followed by stints at Terra Valentine and Cliff Lede before joining Pahlmeyer in 2012. Along the way, Anderson worked at the side of Mark Aubert, Philippe Melka and David Abreu, who each helped shape his meticulous approach in the vineyard and cellar. "They taught me more about what not to do than what to do," jokes Anderson. "But the one takeaway was to spare no expense in the vineyard." In 2008, Anderson started his own label, Kale, focusing on Rhône wines.

Another source of inspiration came from Dick Keenan, whose Kick Ranch Vineyard, in Sonoma's Rincon Valley, is planted on a former horse ranch next door to the field where Anderson played Little League as a child. The winemaker recalls retrieving home-run balls from the Clydesdales' pasture. Anderson met Keenan around the time Kale was established, and subsequently decided to call his first wine Home Run Cuvée.

Anderson tailors each wine to the vintage and the vineyard. "It all comes down to the raw materials," he says. The Syrah-based Home Run Cuvée is rich and bold, but Anderson also makes Syrah from the cooler Alder Springs Vineyard in Mendocino, with floral and spice scents. Starting in 2013, Kale will continue to expand, adding Syrah from Napa Valley's Stagecoach Vineyard, as well as Grenache and Mourvèdre from a newly planted vineyard in Rutherford.

92 KALE Home Run Cuvée Kick Ranch Vineyard Sonoma County 2010 $45 81 cases
87 KALE Syrah Mendocino County Alder Springs Vineyard-Spirit Rock 2010 $45 111 cases