

# The Billionaire Boys' Club

CLOS DE LA TECH AND ALEJANDRO BULGHERONI ESTATE  
ARE WORTH THE SPLURGE by Anthony Dias Blue

**The typical California** winery story goes something like this: A retired, semi-successful dentist buys a small plot of land and moves there with his wife with the aim of becoming a “gentleman farmer.” By contrast,

the not-so-typical California winery story: A billionaire buys a prime plot of land, constructs a state-of-the-art winery, and begins producing expensive, world-class wine (sometimes without actually moving there).

Two elite members of the latter group are T.J. Rodgers and Alejandro Bulgheroni. Rodgers—the founder and, until recently, owner of Cypress Semiconductor as well as the principal of several other Silicon Valley operations—began growing Pinot Noir in the 1-acre vineyard surrounding his home in the Santa Cruz area in 1996. The

resulting wine, called Clos de la Tech, was so remarkable that he bought more vineyard land. Each bottle sports a working computer chip on its neck.

Bulgheroni, meanwhile, owns the second-largest oil and gas company in Argentina as well as 13 winery properties in Argentina, Australia, Italy, Uruguay, and California. The biggest is Bodega Garzón, a 10,000-acre Uruguayan paradise I visited several years ago that not only produces wine but raises cattle. Winemaking for his California operation is overseen by Philippe Melka and Michel Rolland.

We start with a surprising vertical of Rodgers’ best wine, followed by a selection of bottlings from Alejandro Bulgheroni Estate in Napa Valley:

**Clos de la Tech 2003 Pinot Noir, Domaine du Docteur Rodgers, San Francisco Bay (\$250)** Amazing, deep, and velvety; intense, seamless, and layered. Generous, elegant, and youthful, it’s remarkable for a 17-year-old wine. **97**

**Clos de la Tech 2006 Pinot Noir, Domaine du Docteur Rodgers, San Francisco Bay (\$225)** Aromas of mint and herbs. Smooth, lush, and juicy; rich with good length. **95**

**Clos de la Tech 2008 Pinot Noir, Domaine du Docteur Rodgers, San Francisco Bay (\$225)** Luscious, refined, and ripe, with notes of mint, spice, and dried cherries; elegant and long. **96**

**Clos de la Tech 2010 Pinot Noir, Domaine du Docteur Rodgers, San Francisco Bay (\$225)** Rich and smooth, with bright raspberry and spice, warm notes of red fruits, and tangy acidity culminating in a long finish. **95**

**Clos de la Tech 2012 Pinot Noir, Domaine du Docteur Rodgers, San Francisco Bay (\$120)** Luscious notes of bright cherry, blackberry, spice, mint, and clove; seamless and lovely. **96**

**Clos de la Tech 2015 Pinot Noir, Domaine du Docteur Rodgers, San Francisco Bay (\$150)** Floral nose with scents of berry. Smooth, juicy, and tangy, with a hint of clove and rich cherry as well as a tangy acid structure; long and delicious. **96**

**Alejandro Bulgheroni 2017 Lithology Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$166)** Vanilla-inflected nose, silky texture, and lush notes of plum, blackberry, earth, and spice; complex and layered with bright hints of vanilla and new oak. Not bad for an “entry-level” wine. **96**

**Alejandro Bulgheroni 2017 Lithology Beckstoffer Cabernet Sauvignon, Dr. Crane Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$295)**

Originally planted in 1858 and replanted by Andy Beckstoffer in 1998, this vineyard has yielded a glowing garnet wine with a plum nose and crisp acidity; ripe blackberry, cherry, and plum; and nuances of vanilla, spice, and licorice. It’s long and generous. **98**

**Alejandro Bulgheroni 2017 Lithology Beckstoffer Cabernet Sauvignon, Las Piedras Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$295)** Lovely plum and blueberry nose; smooth, luscious, and complex, with hints of mocha, black olive, and chocolate. Graceful, soft, and beautiful, it reveals itself slowly but dramatically. **98**



**Alejandro Bulgheroni 2017 Lithology Beckstoffer Cabernet Sauvignon, To Kalon Vineyard, Napa Valley (\$295)** Scents of vanilla and herbs, velvety texture, and deep and rich notes of graphite, vanilla, tangy plum, and berries as well as soft herbs and spices. All components are in their rightful place in this remarkably balanced wine from a historic vineyard. **98**

**Alejandro Bulgheroni 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (\$395)** Deep and dark, this miraculous wine stays with you—the finish seems to last for hours. Before that comes ripe plum, blueberry, and cassis followed by fresh herbs, smooth vanilla, new oak, and spices; creamy, juicy, and balanced. **99** *LT*