

WINE News

Our Domestic Wine team toured Napa Valley during the harvest of 2014 and brought home a bumper crop of beautiful wines.



OCTOBER 6, 2014 FEATURES

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Napa Valley Cabernet — On Top Again!

By Trey Beffa

Having just spent a few days in the Napa Valley with a group of K&L staff, I'm reflecting on several of our discoveries. First, not all 2011 Cabernets deserve negative press. There are, in fact, some delicious 2011s that will provide enjoyment early on. These wines are a nice change of pace from the typical California vintage; they are much lighter in the mouth, with complexity and freshness. Second, hype for the 2012 and 2013 vintages is justified. We tasted many wines from 2012 that impressed us greatly. They are, for the most part, big, ripe, dense and driven by a solid core of ripe fruit and fleshy, sweet tannins. History has shown that consumers love this style. These wines will surely be in high demand upon release. Although we only tasted a few 2013s out of barrel, we were hugely impressed. Many winemakers believe the 2013s to be even better than the 2012s. Lastly, Napa Valley winemakers are producing a range of wine styles that will please almost every palate. We tasted wines from many

different terroirs and winemakers—from the elegant wines of Frog's Leap, to the sturdy, structured Howell Mountain wines of Ladera, to the full-throttle wines of Lewis Cellars. There are wines being made in Napa for all types of wine consumers—as long as you look in the right places!

The middle of September was a great time to be in the Napa Valley. Harvest was fully underway and wineries that are usually quiet and serene were as busy as they will ever be. Each night as we were going to bed, workers were heading out to the vineyards to pick. By the time we arrived at our first appointment around 9:00 a.m., the grapes were there and already being processed. Optical sorters were rolling and tanks were being filled as quickly as possible. Early reports are that 2014 will be a third consecutive successful vintage in Napa. Let's just hope they don't raise their prices!

Dominus Tames the 2011 Vintage

2011 Dominus Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$139.99) Attention to detail at Dominus in 2011 resulted in very successful vintage for this Napa Valley icon. The cool growing season set many California wineries into panic attacks as October rains began to threaten, but the Bordelais' winemaking experience at Dominus paid off, and they didn't break a sweat. Such harvests aren't uncommon at Dominus' sister winery Château Pétrus in

Pomerol. Aided by the fact that the grapes at Dominus ripen a bit earlier than other Napa Valley vineyards because of the estate's dry-farming techniques, a selective harvest of ripe and healthy grapes was made and the proof is in the bottle. 94 points AG: "Savory herbs, menthol, smoke and licorice are some of the aromas that open up in the glass in the 2011 Dominus. This is a relatively immediate, expressive Dominus with plenty of near-term

appeal. The style is open and succulent for the year, with lovely balance and poise. Crushed rose petals and dried herbs linger in the close. With time in the glass, the 2011 fleshes out nicely." 94 points W&S, 93 points ST.





Left to right: John Williams with K&L's Krista Johnson, Clyde Beffa Jr., Jeff Garneau, Trey Beffa, Lisa Crean of Frog's Leap, and K&L's Mike Jordan and Mellyn Craig.

FROG'S LEAP *Bounding off to a Fresh Start in Rutherford*

The first winery visit of our Napa trip was at Frog's Leap, and what a start it was! We were warmly greeted by the staff, the owner and winemaker John Williams, and their adorable dog Abby. Then we took a walk through their beautiful gardens and into the vineyard. John talked passionately about their vineyards, which are almost all estate-grown now. They have been dry-farming and growing certified organic grapes for more than 20 years, because they feel that these practices produce high-quality grapes. Frog's Leap grows 50 other crops on their property, and the winery is 100% solar powered.

The Frog's Leap name was created while the founders were drinking their first batch of wine—which was still fermenting. The grapes were from Stag's Leap and the wine was being made on a property that had once been a commercial frog farm. When they decided to make wines professionally, the whimsical name stuck.

If you are looking for wines that show balance, restraint and respect for terroir, look no further than Frog's Leap. Each wine we tasted here demonstrated those principles, and it was a refreshing change of pace! Frog's Leap wines also tend to have a lower alcohol content (ABV), which I've listed with these selections:

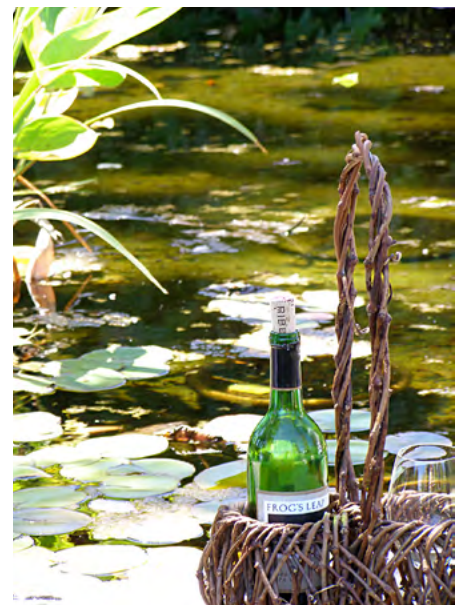
2013 Frog's Leap Rutherford Sauvignon Blanc (\$19.99) The Frog's Leap Sauvignon Blanc is always nicely done, but the 2013 has more weight, which took this wine to another level. Bright aromas of lemongrass, stone fruits and white flowers are followed by citrus pith and white peach. It has nice, chalky minerality and crisp acidity on the palate. 12.4% ABV. 90 points and "Best Buy" *W&S*.

2012 Frog's Leap Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$21.99) Barrel-fermented in 100% French oak, and then aged in concrete vats on the lees. Loaded with spice, minerality and acid! Lovely, high-toned citrus and apricot fruits freshen up the toasty brioche characteristics. Since this Chardonnay has such big minerality and acid, I would pair this with oysters, or grilled white fish such as tilapia or halibut. 13.2% ABV.

2012 Frog's Leap Napa Valley Zinfandel (\$27.99) This is a classic style of Zinfandel, and it is delicious! A field blend, it includes some Petite Sirah and Carignan. Its blueberry and raspberry bouquet wafts out of the glass. Purple and red fruits and spices envelop the palate in a subtle, elegant style. The mouthfeel is fresh, juicy and balanced, with integrated, dusty tannins. 13.7% ABV. 91 points and "Best Buy" *W&S*.

2012 Frog's Leap Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.99) This is the first vintage where their Rutherford Cabernet is 100% estate-grown. Dark currant, rose petal, black olive, anise, cedar and dusty, earthy flavors are already showing on this young Cabernet. This wine is structured for the long haul, but is so clean and balanced, you will love drinking it at any age! 13.5% ABV.

—Mellyn Craig



Frog's Leap wine is great al fresco.

HEITZ CELLAR *New Wine from Old Friends*

One of the legendary Napa Valley wineries, Heitz Wine Cellars was founded in 1961 by Joe and Alice Heitz. This family-owned and operated winery is now in the hands of the second generation, siblings Kathleen Heitz Meyers (President and COO) and David Heitz (winemaker).

On our recent visit to Napa we were met by Kathleen, who graciously gave us a tour of the 19th-century stone cellar that forms the historic and sentimental heart of the 160-acre St. Helena property that was originally purchased by her father in 1964. The building sustained some slight damage (already repaired) during the recent Napa earthquake, but remains part of the working winery, housing the large wooden tanks used to age Heitz's signature wines.



2013 Heitz Cellar Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$21.99) Heitz Cellar's Chardonnay is a welcome alternative to the standard Napa "oaky-buttery" style. The wine is lively and refreshing, crisp and bright, with ripe, fleshy white peach and nectarine notes. There is some use of oak but it is deftly done, adding texture and a hint of spice without upstaging the fruit. This is an excellent value and a wine that can be enjoyed year-round without tiring the palate.

A note about Heitz Cabernets: They take their Cabernet very seriously at Heitz and adopt the rather "old school" approach of releasing the wines two to three years later than is typical for Napa. They spend three years in wood (one year in large American oak tanks and two years in standard French Limousin oak barrels) and two years in bottle prior to release.

2009 Heitz Cellar Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$42.99) At the risk of being accused of hyperbole, this 2009 is without question the best Heitz Napa Valley bottling I have ever tasted. In assessing a wine we are taught to break it down and examine it critically—its structure, its texture, its flavors and aromas. With this wine, though, that seems a kind of sacrilege, an act of vinous vandalism that does no justice to its perfect balance, its seamlessness. This is a wine that is truly greater than the sum of its parts, and can only be appreciated comprehensively. For what it's worth, however, I did admire its bright acidity and fine tannins, its rich texture and its generous fruit. But ignore all that. Just take a sip, close your eyes and enjoy.

2009 Heitz Cellar "Trailside Vineyard" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$69.99) I have long been a fan of the Trailside Vineyard wines from Heitz, although they always seem to me to live somewhat in the shadow of the Bella Oaks or Martha's Vineyard bottlings. The 2009, however, refuses to be ignored. It has all of the strengths of the regular Napa bottling, but with more size and weight—bigger, richer and rounder. The Heitz family has been making wine from

grapes grown on this prime section of Rutherford vineyard land for more than 30 years, and their experience shows.

2005 Heitz Cellar "Martha's Vineyard" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$129.99) What can you say about the Martha's Vineyard Cabernet? This is Heitz Cellar's flagship wine, produced under exclusive contract since 1966, and a member of the pantheon of elite Napa Valley Cabernets. The 2005 is a classic Martha's Vineyard in every sense of the word. Telltale notes of mint and eucalyptus on the nose. A structured yet elegant wine with lively acidity and fine tannins. Terrific weight in the mouth with remarkable persistence and length. At nearly 10 years of age, this is a perfect cellar candidate, one that will continue to improve effortlessly for another decade or more. 93 points WS.



—Jeff Garneau



Oak upright tanks on the second floor of historic Heitz Wine Cellars.



SHAFER *A Stag's Leap Original*

Shafer Vineyards occupies an absolutely stunning site in the Stags Leap District of Napa Valley. Perched about halfway up a large, steep hill, it is surrounded by gnarled, old trees and acres of vines, all teeming with life. The beauty and vitality of the acreage are reflected in the quality of the wines.

On our recent visit we were greeted by Andrew Wesson, Director of Sales. Our arrival coincided with harvest time, so we got to see all the intense effort that goes into making these great wines. It takes a lot of hard-working people and a lot of love to get the wines we all adore so much from the vine and into the glass. Andrew offered us fresh Chardonnay and Cabernet grapes harvested just that morning to sample for ourselves as he guided us through the inner workings of the winery. The fresh grapes tasted spectacular.

Along with employing many extra hands during harvest time, Shafer also has extra help year-round in the form of owls, hawks, bats and songbirds. The owls and bats work at night to keep the rodents, gophers and insects away, and the hawks and songbirds take on the day shift doing the same, so that the winery has no need to spray pesticides. Shafer is a truly sustainably-farmed (and 100% solar-driven) winery. Clean air, pure water, healthy soil, thoughtful tenders...it all comes together to create incredible wines. Let's delve into three of them:

2012 Shafer Napa Valley Merlot (\$50.99) Oh, Merlot. Merlot is an incredible varietal, and Shafer knows how to bring out the best in this fickle grape. This beauty is rich and sumptuous, yet with a lifted finish that keeps it from being too heavy. Ripe raspberry, mocha dust, violet and soft earth make this Merlot a polished keeper. 92 points WS.



2011 Shafer "Relentless" Napa Valley Syrah (\$84.99) Just the nose on this one made my toes curl! Explosive blueberry, leather, cigar box and bourbon-soaked cherry all fly out of the glass. The texture is satiny (almost oily!) and so wonderfully rich. Concentrated blueberry, rainbow peppercorn spice and suede-like tannins all meld perfectly together. Intensely satisfying. 94-96 points RP, 94 points WS.

2012 Shafer "Red Shoulder Ranch" Carneros Chardonnay (\$54.99)

The Red Shoulder Ranch Chardonnay is named after the red-shouldered hawks that help protect the vineyards from varmints. What I love about this Chardonnay is the expressiveness of the fruit. With just a wee bit of oak involved, the vibrant citrus really shows itself off. Tangy, minerally and chalky dry, this refreshing white really quenches. It's Burgundian in style with California flair. 91 points RP.

—Krista Johnson

JOSEPH PHELPS *Still on the Mark*

We have seen many changes at Joseph Phelps in the last few years.

The biggest change has been to not produce as many wines as in years past, instead refocusing on Cabernet. Part of this Cabernet-focused goal was to make the Napa Cabernet 100% estate grown. Marking the 40th release of Cabernet from Joseph Phelps Vineyards, the **2012 Joseph Phelps Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.99)** is aged in 40% new oak barrels and 60% two-year-old barrels, with American and French oak each representing 50% of the total cooperage. Fans of California Cabernet will love this wine. It is rich, concentrated in the mouth with blackberry fruit, graphite and spicy oak, which lingers in the back. What I love about this wine is that the fruit feels rich, but not sweet. There is structure and tannin, but it is balanced, seamless and silky on the finish. 91-93 points AG.

Believe it or not, one of my favorite wines from the trip was the **2011 Joseph Phelps "Insignia" Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$179.99)**. In warm vintages such as 2007, the Insignia is too much for me. The cooler 2011 vintage really allows this wine to still have that typical Phelps fruit, but with much more restraint and a bit more elegance and finesse. This is a solid effort for the vintage. 93-95 points AG, 92 points JS.



—Trey Beffa

TURNBULL *On a Roll*

Turnbull is certainly on a roll with the press these days. Winemaker Peter Heitz is racking up some of the highest scores in the valley for his Cabernets. The just-released **2012 Turnbull Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$39.99)** is a wine that will surely be lauded when reviewed. The fruit for this wine explodes from the glass, while the texture is rich, decadent and lush in the mouth. There is lots of structure and tannin here, but the tannins are juicy and ripe. Still a baby, this is a big wine that is surprisingly drinkable at this stage but that will keep improving in the bottle over the next 5-10 years. Turnbull's single vineyard wines are sure to get more big scores, so keep an eye out for those, as well. Also, Turnbull makes one of the best Sauvignon Blancs in the valley. The **2013 Turnbull Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$16.99)** shows lots of citrus flavors with a mid-core of creamy fruit. The finish comes back with some zing and is bright and fresh. Love this wine at 12.7% ABV.

—Trey Beffa



NEAL FAMILY *Growers First*

The Neal Family has been in the Napa Valley for over 40 years. Jack Neal began growing grapes in Rutherford in the early 1960s. In 1968, he founded Jack Neal Vineyard Management, which later became Jack Neal & Sons (JNS). In 1984, JNS began implementing organic farming practices. Today, 85% of the vineyards managed by the company are farmed organically.

After the passing of Jack Neal, Mark Neal took over as president of JNS and sought to establish the family winery. Based on Howell Mountain, the winery, completed in 2001, is a modern, state-of-the-art building with a 12-acre estate vineyard surrounding it. All the grapes used in Neal Family wines are either owned by or farmed by the Neal Family. The eight vineyards are located all over the Napa Valley, and many of them have been under JNS management since 1968.

Winemakers Gove Celio and Kelly Wheat crush the grapes and age and bottle the wines all at the Howell Mountain facility. All Cabernet Sauvignon-labeled wines are 100% Cabernet Sauvignon.

2006 Neal Family “Fifteen Forty” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$74.99) Grown at the Fifteen Forty Vineyard on the backside of Howell Mountain, this wine has bright blue fruit with subtle hints of cherry, blackberry, chocolate, baking spice and cedar. Kelly poured this on our recent visit to the winery. The wine is beautifully aged and ready to drink. Only five cases were made available to us, so get it fast.

2008 Neal Family Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$47.99) This is a riper vintage, but most of this fruit comes from the mountains around Napa. The wine is dark and brooding, with tobacco, spice, olives, chocolate and sage, with very soft tannins. A customer favorite.

2010 Neal Family Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$47.99) The 2010 is one of my favorites. Much more structured, with a little sharper tannin. Dark fruit with hints of dark cherry, sage, tobacco and cedar. The wine will need a few years of aging or five to six hours of decanting. Only five cases available.

2011 Neal Family “Rutherford Dust Vineyards” Napa Valley Zinfandel (\$24.99) Probably the best Zinfandel you have never heard of. Bright, fresh and forward fruit with lovely spice note. The 2011 is just about out of stock. The 2012 will be in stock in November.

2012 Neal Family Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$17.99) Bright and fresh, with lovely acidity. Hints of tropical fruit, citrus and stone fruit. *Sur lie* aging adds great depth in the mid-palate. A beautifully balanced Sauvignon Blanc. The 2013 arrives in November.

—Mike Jordan

PINE RIDGE *Napa Classic*

Pine Ridge was established in 1978 and now has 200 acres under vine throughout five sub-appellations in Napa Valley. We had the pleasure of getting a tour with general manager and winemaker, Michael Beaulac. He strives to make wines that express their terroir while remaining balanced and elegant.

During the tour, we tasted several barrel samples of their various 2013 Cabernets, which are already showing amazing potential. We also tasted several of their 2012 estate Cabernets, which are not released yet, but are so delicious in their youth. Last but not least, we tasted the wines we currently have for sale during a delectable lunch prepared by the winery’s chef, Susan Lassalette.

2013 Pine Ridge Chenin Blanc-Viognier (\$11.99) Crisp and juicy tropical fruits, lime blossom, honeydew melon, white flowers and a touch of minerality. This wine is refreshing, clean and lively, and very easy to drink!

2012 Pine Ridge “Dijon Clones” Carneros Chardonnay (\$24.99) This wine manages to be rich and fresh at the same time. The flavors are bursting with pineapple, melon, mango, crème brûlée and a touch toast, with medium-plus acidity. 92 points *WE*: “This is the winery’s best Dijon Clones Chardonnay ever. It shows the balanced, long hang time fruit of the vintage, bursting with ripe flavors of pineapples, oranges, honeydew melons and pears, along with toasty new French oak and vibrant acidity. What a yummy wine to drink with scallops or crab.”

2012 Pine Ridge Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$44.99) Bright red fruits, such as cherry and plum, with dried flowers are followed by baking spice, anise and chocolate. This wine has a nice balance of silky tannins and a strong acidic structure, which allows it to taste great young while still being built for cellar aging. 90-92 points RP.

—Mellyn Craig



Hard work at Pine Ridge: taking tasting notes.

NAPA RELEASES *At Ke&L*

Amici

2010 Amici Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$43.99) Super classic in style, with an ultra-rich color of black and purple fruit and plush weight on the palate, making it feel luxurious but not too over-the-top. Superbly elegant and finessed, with integrated tannins and a polished finish. 91 points *WE*, 90 points *RP*.

Beringer

2012 Beringer Knights Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$22.99)

Beringer, which is located in Napa Valley, has been producing this wine from Sonoma County's Knights Valley appellation for some time now, and it has been a consistent value in California Cabernet. The vineyard lies at a higher elevation than Alexander Valley in Sonoma County, and manages to combine the suppleness of that AVA with the fine tannin structure of Knights Valley. The bouquet offers black cherry, dark plum, cassis, earth and a hint of bittersweet chocolate. On the palate, there are supple tannins blended with a fine dusting of cocoa powder, bringing the finer-grained, firmer tannin structure. It's all framed by lightly toasted oak that is well-integrated, with good length.



Caymus

2012 Caymus "40th Anniversary" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$54.99) With a special bottle and label marking their 40th anniversary, Caymus is ready to celebrate with this epic 2012 vintage. Charlie and Lorna Wagner, with their son Chuck, launched this Napa Valley icon in 1972.



2009 Caymus "Special Selection" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

(\$159.99) A small release from Chuck's cellar! Direct from the winery. 97 points *WE*, 93 points *WS*.

Honig

2012 Honig Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$35.99) Plush, yet structured; integrated oak and tannins; a great bottle to pop and serve this year, or cellar for up to 12 years. Incredible balance and class. This is classic Napa Cab at an even more classic price!



2013 Honig Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$14.99)

Wine Enthusiast: "Flowery and electric in high-toned grapefruit and peach, this is a crisp, clean white from a consistent producer. Medium-bodied, it holds small percentages of Sémillon and Muscat. The finely hewed texture benefits from 10% of the wine having been aged in neutral oak."

Lewis Cellars

2012 Lewis Cellars "Mason's" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$54.99) This 100% Cabernet screams from the glass with rich, mocha-laced red fruits, hints of vanilla bean and black cherries. In the mouth the wine is lush and mouthcoating with a long spicy finish. 91 points *WS*.

2012 Lewis Cellars Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$79.99) The 2012 Napa Cabernet is out of this world. Rich and lush; exotic fruits fill the glass and dance across the palate. This is a big, structured wine with lots of backbone, but the wine is so polished and seamless, you are not even aware of its size. I expect this to sell out quickly; long before its "sure to get" high *Spectator* score!

Opus One

2011 Opus One Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$229.00)

While the blockbuster 2010 was intense, rich and lush, cool weather in 2011 made that style of wine impossible. Winemakers who fought the vintage had trouble making a balanced wine without any green characteristics. Winemakers who worked with what the cards dealt, and embraced the style of the vintage, created wines that



will be a pleasure to drink. This blend of 71% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Merlot, 9% Petit Verdot, 8% Cabernet Franc and 1% Malbec contains the lowest percentage of Cabernet ever in an Opus One bottling. True to its roots, this wine smells and feels like a classic Bordeaux wine. A great short to mid-term cellaring candidate, the 2011 is even showing well right now. 92 points *AG* and *JS*.

NV Opus One "Overture" Napa Valley

Bordeaux Blend (\$109.00) First-ever retail release! Since 1993, Overture, the second wine of Opus, has been only available at the winery and a few select restaurants. This release is a blend of the 2007, 2010 and 2011 vintages. Made exactly like Opus One and sourced from the same estate vineyards, Overture is also a classic Bordeaux blend with Cabernet Sauvignon making up around 70%. Overture is made to be enjoyed upon release. We tasted this the other day, and it was delicious. It smells and tastes like Opus, but with a bit less depth and power than the first wine, making it more enjoyable now. The tannins are soft, round and supple. Excellent food wine!

Ramey

2012 Ramey Napa Valley

Cabernet Sauvignon (\$53.99) 91-93 points *ST*: "Bright purple. Intense, smoke-accented aromas of cherry and blackcurrant, with Indian spice and floral notes adding complexity. Juicy and precise on the palate, offering energetic dark fruit flavors and a hint of chewing tobacco. Closes tangy and long, with slow-building tannins and very good focus."



2012 Ramey Napa Valley Claret (\$36.99)

Ramey delivers excellent value across their entire portfolio, but this is an excellent example of an overachieving entry-level wine. It is also a good introduction to the highly anticipated 2012 Napa Valley vintage and a hint of things to come. 90-92 points *RP*: "The 2012 Claret appears to be another outstanding example of value-priced Cabernet Sauvignon...consumers will love this beauty because of its forward, classic Cabernet style."

Robert Craig**2012 Robert Craig “Affinity” Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend**

(\$49.99) The 2012 Robert Craig Affinity is a dense and powerful Bordeaux blend that is sure to be a huge hit with the press. It was a tad closed when we tasted it last month, but I would bet this wine is already starting to blossom in the bottle. This wine has all the elements of classic mountain Cabernet from a great vintage.

**2011 Robert Craig Howell Mountain**

Cabernet Sauvignon (\$69.99) The 2011 Howell Mountain is crafted from the winery’s 9.5-acre estate vineyard at nearly 2,300 feet. It is a big wine, but in 2011 it shows the softer side of Howell Mountain. It is surprisingly aromatic and forward. Of course it shows more size on the finish, but it is all in balance. Bright, blue fruit combines with notes of chocolate, menthol, pepper and cedar. The wine is deep and powerful, with incredible length. With the Mount Veeder, it’s one of the best 2011s we’ve tasted, and a cellar candidate for sure. 94 points AG, 91 points RP.

2011 Robert Craig Mount

Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon (\$69.99) The difficult 2011 vintage affected fruit from the valley floor much more than the mountains. (Mountain grapes get more sunshine and are less susceptible to rain issues.) The Mount Veeder mostly comes from the 20-acre Pym Rae vineyard, which sits between 1,600 and 2,000 feet in elevation at the north end of the appellation. Showing blueberry and plum fruits, this is loaded with hints of chocolate, mocha and coffee notes, with crunchy tannins that lead to a lingering finish. It is a big wine with lots of structure and power. While this wine is already tasting so elegant now, the structure practically demands cellaring. 92 points AG and *W&S*; 91 points RP.

Spottswode**2013 Spottswode Napa/Sonoma Counties Sauvignon Blanc (\$35.99)**

A fan favorite Sauvignon Blanc from Napa, the 2013 shows excellent zip and acidity even though it is barrel-fermented. The barrel only comes through in the texture of this wine, which is rich and creamy in the mouth.

2011 Spottswode “St. Helena Family Estate” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

(\$139.99) As you would expect, Spottswode made a solid wine despite the vintage. In a blind tasting you would guess this was a Bordeaux. It is pure, balanced and shows tremendous finesse and minerality. 95 points JS, 94 points AG.

Von Strasser**2010 Von Strasser Diamond Mountain District Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.99)**

A blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, with Malbec and Merlot, from vineyards that Rudy Von Strasser controls. The Diamond Mountain is a gem. Dark black and blue fruit, with touches of cedar and spice, soft tannin and a lovely mineral backbone. Decant for an hour or hold for three to five years. 92 points *WE*.

**2012 Von Strasser “Rudy” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**

(\$19.99) How does a winery make a wine of such beauty and balance for only \$19.99? Rudy Von Strasser can. A nice balance of Diamond Mountain structure and acidity with valley floor ripeness just kissed with a touch of wood. One of my favorite wines on our California shelf.



— *Trey Beffa, Christie Cartwright, Jim Chanteloup, Mellyn Craig, and Mike Jordan*

LADERA *Beauty on Howell Mountain*

Ladera is located in the beautiful Howell Mountain appellation of Napa Valley. Twenty acres were originally planted on this property in 1877. In 1886, a three-story stone building was erected. That building is used today as the Ladera winery.

Ladera was founded by the Stotesbery family in 2000. Long-time ranchers in Montana, the family decided to move west and continue the passion they had for wine by producing it. The Ladera property is 200 acres, 100 planted to grapes. Of those 100 acres, 95% is Cabernet Sauvignon. The wines have been made by Napa Valley legend Karen Culler from the beginning, but she has recently transitioned to a consultant role. New Zealand native Jade Barrett is now the full-time winemaker. The wines show the magnificence of Howell Mountain and are sure to please.

All three Cabernet Sauvignons below are 100% from the estate vineyard on Howell Mountain. A barrel selection process differentiates the wines.

2010 Ladera “Reserve” Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$69.99) The king of the Ladera wines. This is a vibrant, black-

fruited beast with amazing backbone. Hints of cedar, vanilla, mint and chocolate. The tannins are lush and the wine is accessible immediately. However, I think this is the wine you might put in your cellar for three to five years.

2010 Ladera “Stile Blocks” Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$47.99) A new offering from the winery, this is blended from barrels that didn’t make it into the Howell Mountain Reserve, but is a couple steps up from the basic Napa Valley. A little softer than the reserve, with more touches of red fruit, tobacco and cinnamon, and a little less vanilla and mint.

2011 Ladera Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$29.99) One of the best deals in Napa Valley Cabernet. This is 100% Howell Mountain fruit for \$29.99! Very approachable; a must-try wine.

2013 Ladera Howell Mountain Sauvignon Blanc (\$24.99) Crisp and clean with great mid-palate texture. Tropical fruits and citrus with lovely acidity throughout.

—*Mike Jordan*

THE DIFFERENT SHADES

of Napa Cabernet

With the cool fall weather and holidays quickly approaching, I want to shed some light on a gift everyone loves to give, receive and enjoy: the gift of Napa Cabernet. I'll focus on a few producers whose styles are all drastically different from each other, giving you options for both your Bordeaux aficionado and your classic California Cab-obsessed wine lover.

First off, a producer that, since 1982, has made its reputation making the most crowd-pleasing, juicy, rich, round and supple style of Cabernet year in and year out. With or without a juicy piece of meat, the **2012 Rombauer Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$41.99)** hits all the right notes!

Modern in style, it won't give your palate the harshness of a Cab that is too young and tannic. It is sourced from some of the most prestigious AVAs of the Napa Valley, including Stags Leap District, Atlas Peak, Mount Veeder, St. Helena, Calistoga, Rutherford and Howell Mountain. This succulent wine is comprised of 83% Cabernet Sauvignon with 11% Cabernet Franc and 6% Petit Verdot.



Next up is a winery and label that never disappoints and always over-delivers for the price. Comprised of fruit from some of the best mountain sites for the past 50 years, the **2012 Chappellet "Mountain Cuvée" Napa Valley Red Blend (\$29.99)** delivers all the goods. I love this because the style of this wine is Old World meets New World in terms of structure and drinkability. Always loads of black and purple fruit, with finely integrated tannins and a juicy and supple mid-palate. This is great for when you're in the mood to pull corks and get immediate gratification,



because you don't have to wait years to cellar it! Perfectly blended with 39% Cabernet Sauvignon, 35% Merlot, 12% Malbec, 8% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 3% Syrah.

The final wine I want to mention is from one of the most old-school producers, doing age-worthy, classic Bordeaux-style blends all sourced from his 25-acre estate high above the valley floor on Spring Mountain. Philip Togni began his career in Bordeaux, where he is from originally, and focuses on Margaux-type blends of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot. All of his wines are well worth the wait in the cellar. But while you wait for his big boys to age, enjoy the **2011 Philip Togni "Tanbark Hill" Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.99)** from the younger vines on his estate. The 2011 is a gorgeous cooler vintage compared to the 2012 fruit bombs that you will be seeing from Napa. It's full of minerality, structure, depth of fruit and savory undertones, cigar, cedar, tobacco and currants, with juicy acidity and a finish that won't leave you hanging! Fewer than 400 cases produced.

—Christie Cartwright

NAPA Values

Buehler

2012 Buehler Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$21.99) From a very special estate up in the hills north of Pritchard Hill, founded in the 1970s by the current owners. This blend is comprised of 30% estate-grown grapes from Buehler's Cabernet vines, which are more than 30 years old, with the balance in high-quality fruit sourced from around the Napa Valley.

Carpe Diem

2011 Carpe Diem Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99) Fruit-forward with soft tannins and restrained oak, this Cabernet Sauvignon is made by Christian Moueix's wine-making team (also responsible for Dominus) in a vibrant and substantial style that is very drinkable in its youth. This excellent value evokes tones of red fruit, cassis and eucalyptus.

Round Pond

2012 Round Pond "Kith & Kin" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$26.99) This bottling is inspired by the first wine the MacDonnell family made for their friends and family back in 1992. Based on Rutherford Cab, it incorporates fruit from all over the Napa Valley, making for a more affordable, approachable offering to share on a Tuesday night.

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K&L EVENTS & TASTINGS

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