

# WINE News

California Cabernet Sauvignon.



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## Cabernet Continues to Roll!

By Trey Beffa

**Will this string of excellent vintages in Napa ever end?** We hope not. Our shelves are filled with 2012 and 2013 Cabernets that continue to impress us. The word on the street is the 2014s will be similar to the 2013s in quality. Now, hopefully El Niño brings us some good rain!

The real beauty of an excellent vintage is that we find the lower-priced wines are “punching above their weight class.” Just check out the **2012 Ancient Peaks Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon (\$13.99)**. This wine shows excellent upfront fruit, with a silky, easygoing finish. Perfect party wine! Look for several other values mentioned later on in this newsletter. Obviously, a great vintage produces some big scores, as well.

We currently have a very healthy selection of top California Cabernets for you to choose from. One of my top picks would be the **2013 Pine Ridge Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.99)**. This wine shows a ton crushed fruits and minerals, with a round, fleshy mid-palate and ripe but firm tannins. This wine is pure Napa Valley Cabernet! A wine in a bit of a different style, the **2012 Dominus “Napanook” Napa Bordeaux Blend (\$59.99)** brings a taste of Bordeaux to Napa, with a bit more restraint and earthiness. And for those who only will be happy with the best, the **2012 Opus One Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$249.99)** is the wine for them. Enjoy!

**2012 Inglenook “Cask” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.99)** Now firmly in the hands of Francis Ford Coppola, the Inglenook wines are starting to show some of their former glory in the bottle. The 2012 “Cask” shows a ton of blackberry and red currant fruit that jumps from the glass with hints of cedar, mint and spice that linger in the back. Robert Parker says, “This is the best, young Inglenook Cabernet Sauvignon I have tasted during my professional career of 35 years.”



**2013 Lewis Cellars Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$79.99)** Lewis sources their fruit from a variety of vineyards throughout the Napa Valley. This allows them to capture different elements of the valley and combine them into a single expression of Napa Valley Cabernet. This new release is brimming with blackberry and blueberry fruit, with hints of cedar, coffee and vanilla bean flavors. The tannins are firm but integrated. The 2013 is still quite young and will be a good candidate to put away in the cellar for 5 to 10 years.



**2012 Beaulieu Vineyard “Georges de Latour Private Reserve” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99)** The Georges de Latour’s fruit comes from fruit originally planted by Georges de Latour in the early 1900s. The 2012’s dark, chewy fruit is broad and rich in the mouth. Hints of cocoa powder, mocha and Asian spice are followed by firm but ripe tannins that grab you. This is a very solid wine and should age quite well for the next 10 to 15 years.



## Pied á Terre Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon

By Jim Boyce

Back in April of this year, we were cruising through one of our large domestic staff wine tastings, when one wine really made me take a step back and call time out. Since we taste an average of 60-plus wines during one of these sessions, the odds are pretty good that we'll come out of it with a few new favorites that will inevitably be replaced at the next month's (or even next week's) tasting. The 2012 Pied á Terre Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon defied the odds and continues to be a favorite of the entire staff, six months later!

The Pied á Terre label came about when Richard Luftig, a longtime wine buyer in NYC, decided to solve the dilemma of finding "high-quality, soulful, and truly balanced wines" without the \$100 price tag by starting his own wine label. Pied á Terre means "foot to earth," and the label follows through on that idea by sourcing fruit from some of the best vineyards in Sonoma: Mauritson, Chamizal, Rockpile, and others. The winemaker in charge is Clay Mauritson (of Mauritson Wines—another K&L favorite), who grew up in

the Dry Creek Valley area and knows the ins-and-outs of Sonoma County. The first vintage from Pied á Terre came in 2010 and consisted of just a Cabernet Sauvignon. Richard stuck to his guns and passed on making any wine in 2011, due to his high standards. He jumped back on the horse in 2012 and made two wines: a Sauvignon Blanc and this stunning Cabernet Sauvignon.

**2012 Pied á Terre Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon (\$25.99)** True to his word, the impeccable fruit is sourced from seven top Sonoma County vineyards, and then aged in 10 to 15 percent new French oak, the rest neutral. The wine is full of incredibly pure cherry and red currant fruit, showing off the top-quality sources. Medium-bodied with fine tannins, this Cabernet is all about balance, and truly reminded us of old school Sonoma County Cabernet from the '70s and '80s that is still drinking beautifully right now. Drink now with an hour decanting, or lay down for 5 to 10 or more years. It will truly reward patience.



## Napa Cabernet: Top-Notch in 2012

By Christie Brunick

Goodness gracious, the 2012 vintage is full of wines that are absolutely over-delivering for the price with all their upfront fruit, drinkability, and cellar-worthiness. Tasting through the gamut of our staff tasting "hell week" really showed that you don't have to spend a ton to get your money's worth, this vintage. I'm excited to share a few of my favorite Cabernets from this spectacular vintage that will get your palate screaming with excitement and your wallet left fuller than otherwise expected!

One of my go-to sub-\$30 uber-values is a small producer making a big Cab! The **2012 Obsidian Ridge "Obsidian Ridge Vineyard" Red Hills Lake County Cabernet Sauvignon (\$24.99)** is a hidden gem, which comes from vineyards north of the Napa Valley in the Mayacamas Range. Altitudes of up to 2,640 feet, and the region's famed volcanic soils, help to create a wine with distinctive terroir traits. Another unique quality about this winery that I love is that they have their own cooperage for making Kadar Hungarian oak barrels, in which they age the Cabernet for 18 months. This Cab is deep and dark purple in the glass, with aromas of cassis, tobacco, kirsch, cocoa nibs, and dried berries. The palate is weighty and expansive, with its silky and velvety textured mouthfeel that is all pulled together with balanced, sweet oak tannins and just the right amount of acid. This is a great find for your holiday dinner parties!

During the holidays I like to give gifts that keep on giving. The **2012 Ehlers Estate St. Helena Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.99)** is my favorite Napa Cab to gift because it makes me feel good, as well as those who receive it! Ehlers Estate is a "not-for-profit" winery and is held in trust



for the Leducq Foundation. Jean and Sylviane Leducq established the trust in 1996 to fund the Foundation, which supports international cardiovascular research. So every time you drink this wine, it's good for your heart in more ways than one! I've been fortunate enough to have visited the Ehlers estate. All 39 acres are 100% organically and Biodynamically farmed. This is always a well-received wine because of how approachable and balanced it is. Gorgeous color in the glass, with pretty fruit aromas of crushed flowers with sweet Bing cherries and dried berry patch fruit. Silky and supple on the palate, with savory baking spice and smooth tannins, this wine makes everyone happy.

My biggest surprise in this year's 2012 Cabernet lineup was the **2012 Frog's Leap "Estate" Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon (\$49.99)**. If you tasted it blind, you would swear you were smelling and tasting Bordeaux! I'm so happy they released this wine for the first time this year, because it is the best Cab I've ever tried from Frog's Leap, hands down! And it comes from 100% Rutherford AVA fruit that is dry farmed, as well. This explodes out of the glass with crazy aromatics that remind me of Pauillac, with its crushed savory herbs, flowers, and purity of fruit. The palate is rich, refined, and elegant. Completely complex in all the right ways, with structure that will age, this wine will cellar beautifully or can be enjoyed right now!



# The Blended and the Bold: Chappellet and Phelps

By Gary Norton

Nearly 40 years ago, Donn and Molly Chappellet were the first to plant vineyards exclusively on high-elevation slopes. Today, this gorgeous hilltop estate is cultivated as 34 individual vineyard blocks, each with varying soil types, exposures and drainage systems.

The **2013 Chappellet “Mountain Cuvée” Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$24.99)** is a blend of the traditional Bordeaux varietals: 43% Merlot, 34% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Petit Verdot, 7% Malbec and 5% Cab Franc. The aromas are bright and ripe upon opening and show vanilla, cedar, baking spice, cracked black pepper, cassis, French oak and red fruit. On the palate, the wine coats the mouth with notes of ripe red plums, dark cherry, black and red currant and baking spice. The wine is certainly big and rich, but wears its 14.5% ABV very well. The finish is complex and elegant, with a long, granular tannin structure. It is the perfect example of a wine you could drink now, or cellar for a few years.

In the late 1960s, Joseph Phelps was running one of the largest privately-owned general contracting and construction management companies in the United States. However, a fascination with wine and a winning bid to build Souverain Winery (now Rutherford Hill) was enough for Phelps to become entrenched in the industry. By 1975 he had purchased and converted a 600-acre cattle farm in St. Helena into a fully operational winery. In 1977, Phelps released the first vintage (1974) of the coveted Insignia line that would be heralded as one of

the most profound wines in California wine history. Robert Parker said, after tasting it again nearly 40 years after first reviewing it, that it “makes a mockery of one of the biggest sham arguments in the wine world put forth by critics who say California wines don’t age.” The Insignia bottling has been a staple in Phelps’ portfolio and scored 95 points or higher a staggering 18 times since its initial release. This offering is no different, boasting 96-100 points Parker, 97 points James Suckling, and 94-96 points Antonio Galloni.

**2012 Joseph Phelps “Insignia” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$199.99)** is inky, rich and incredibly age-worthy. Showing beautiful notes of pencil shavings, black currant, cola, dark fruit and dark berries, this wine has a rigid acid and tannin structure that will keep it drinking wonderfully over the next 20-30 years.

Another perennial favorite is the **2012 Joseph Phelps Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.99)**, which has been lauded as the second wine to Insignia (and costs a fraction of the price). Swanky and opulent, it shows dark fruit, Bing cherry, tobacco, cedar, black currant and vanilla, with a tinge of green bell pepper. The finish is long and robust, and firm tannins linger on the palate. This wine needs some time in the cellar, but will be singing after 2017.



# All the Sweet Spots: Sequoia Grove and Von Strasser

By Andrew Stevens

I came to K&L, and to wine for that matter, through the bar. Having spent the past 10 years behind the bar in numerous cities, I know that when it comes to red wine, California Cabernet reigns supreme. While I certainly worked at restaurants that had extensive wine lists by the bottle, as a bar manager I always looked out for Cabs that I could serve by the glass, and didn’t need an hour to decant. I always tried to find what we would call a good “rip and sip” Cabernet.

The **2012 Sequoia Grove Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$31.99)** hits all of the sweet spots. The wine opens with dark berry on the nose, with hints of cedar and a whiff of coffee, baking spice and a little vanilla. Despite the ripe vintage in Napa, the wine shows some restraint on the palate. Fresh fruit, cherry and a touch of sage all come in to play, supported by soft, fine tannins. While instantly accessible, the wine stays softer than some other Napa Cabs, but is brightened by enough acidity to give the lift. At the finish, the wine displays a hint of smoke and wood with an almost feathery tannic structure that helps to keep it from falling flat. The versatility of this wine makes it a delightful dinner companion.



Sometimes you need a big, serious wine to take to a special dinner or to gift someone special, and sometimes you just want a good bottle that can be opened and enjoyed immediately. The Von Strasser “Rudy” Cabernet, a perennial favorite at K&L, certainly delivers on the latter aspect. The **2013 Von Strasser “Rudy” Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99)** showcases how you do not need to throw out quality to make a crowd-pleasing \$20 bottle of Cab. As soon as you open this wine, dark berry notes come into play on the nose, hinting at the richness within. The wine is big, round, and plush, full of rich, ripe fruit, succulent blackberries and plums. Although the 2012 is full to bursting with fruit and a hint of spice, “Rudy” remains beautifully balanced with just the right amount of wood. On the finish, the wine shows a little smoke and notes of mocha and coffee. Although the wine works wonderfully well as a “cocktail wine” that will keep anyone from looking for another glass, the structure allows it also to be a fine food companion. Proving that a big juicy wine need not have an accompanying big price tag, “Rudy” can be a wonderful companion to a fun-filled evening.



## Brick's Picks: A Trio of Napa Cabs

By Bryan Brick

For this edition of our annual Cabernet Sauvignon newsletter, I've picked a trio of Napa Valley Cabs that are sure to impress. Two of these wines are tried and true classics, and the other is a new superstar with a long history in the business.

**2012 J. Davies Diamond Mountain District Cabernet Sauvignon (\$84.99)** Most people probably have never heard of J. Davies and their outstanding wines from their estate on Diamond Mountain, but that is not for lack of history or pedigree. The estate was founded in 1862 by Jacob Schram and planted shortly thereafter. Out of this vineyard sprung Schramsberg, the famous and quite prolific still wine house of the 19th century. Obviously, many years have passed—153, to be exact—and while Schramsberg is still wildly famous and is now producing some of the best sparkling wine in the United States, if not the world, they wanted to get back to their roots of making great still wines. So, in 1994 they replanted the estate to Cabernet Sauvignon and other Bordeaux varietals. In 2004, the first vintage of J. Davies Cabernet Sauvignon was released (2001). Since then, they have produced a string of wildly delicious, balanced, structural efforts that have, for some reason or another, remained distinctly under people's radar. Hopefully, that all changes with the 2012 vintage. This is a stunning wine, full of the complexity, depth and concentration that is rarely seen but often spoken about in Napa wines. Chock-full of unsweetened chocolate, cassis liqueur and spiced plum on the nose, this has tons of sweet-tinged aromatics. But, underneath, a savory sous bois and new leather quality add complexity and considerable depth. Brightly blue fruited on entry, with a texture that is slick, round and approachable, this Cabernet comes off as ripe but never jammy or sweet. As the wine floats along the palate it adds flavors of fleshy black fruits, asphalt, red currant, sage and black tea. The tannins melt away slowly in the finish and frame the wine in a harmonious manner.



**2011 Heitz Cellar Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$44.99)** Always one of the standard-bearers for "classic" Napa Valley Cabernet, Heitz made the best out of a tough vintage in 2011. For this vintage they declassified all of the famed Martha's Vineyard and the shamefully overlooked Trailside Vineyard designate bottlings, and added all that juice to this wine. The result is outstanding and has elevated this wine to a whole other level of quality. Bright and more "claret-like," this has snappy red fruits and fennel on the nose, with traditional notes of redwood and warm gravel. High-toned and full of raspberry, crushed cherry, sandalwood, sweet pipe tobacco and the unmistakable eucalyptus notes of Martha's Vineyard, this is a steal of a wine. Don't miss out on this because of any preconceptions of the vintage.



**2012 Dunn Vineyards Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99)** Another wine that has stayed true to its roots is the Dunn Cabernet. While the ripeness of the 2012 vintage certainly shows up here in the enjoyable baby fat and rare upfront openness, this is still quintessential Dunn. One will realize quickly that the savory, mountain-like flavors are all still present and accounted for. Stratified flavors of porcini mushrooms, spearmint, fried sage, blackberry, hot asphalt and spice cake are at once intriguing and comfortably familiar to longtime Dunn fans. Backed by the trademark tannins of the winery, this is a wine perfectly suited for the cellar as per usual, but more open while young than I can ever recall.



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