

{ what's new } with Kim Beto

In 1968, Silverado's Stags Leap Vineyard became the third planted to Cabernet Sauvignon in the Stags Leap District. Now in its 11th vintage, SOLO, the winery's single-vineyard, single-varietal wine has a sibling aptly named GEO. Comprised of 98% Cabernet Sauvignon and 2% Cab Franc, GEO is introduced in its inaugural 2012 vintage, claiming the burgeoning Coombsville appellation as its home, grown on Silverado's own Mt. George Vineyard.



# SILVERADO VINEYARDS: PRACTITIONERS OF BORDEAUX VARIETALS



When I arrived at the winery, I realized how long it had been since I had visited Silverado Vineyards, beautifully situated along the Silverado Trail, perched on a hilltop with awe-inspiring views of Napa Valley. Fred Dame, MS, and I—along with our SOMM Journal group of a dozen sommeliers and wine buyers—taste the Silverado Miller Ranch Sauvignon Blanc on the terrace; it's a very refreshing, crisp and beautiful single-vineyard white.

Silverado Vineyards has been family-owned since 1981, and things are very different now compared to back then. Single-vineyard focus, estate fruit and sustainability are foremost—and the word *quality* is something you hear a lot.

The Miller family purchased their original Stags Leap District property in 1976 and founded Silverado Vineyards there in 1981. Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc were released a few years later and the first of their Cabernet Sauvignons were released in 1984.

In 1987, all four of Silverado's entries take Gold at the prestigious London Wine Fair. Founding Winemaker Jack Stuart is celebrated for making great wines and garnering some serious press. Jon Emmerich, the current and long-time winemaker, came on board in 1990 and soon after, in 1993, the Silverado Vineyards 1990 Cabernet Sauvignon Limited Reserve was named the number three wine on *Wine Spectator's* top 100.

## A HISTORIC MEETING OF LIKE MINDS: DEBUTING THE 2012 VINTAGE

Today we are meeting some of the top sommeliers in the Bay Area to taste the new 2012 vintages over lunch. On one end of table we have Silverado's President, Russ Weis, telling great stories about the history of Silverado, and on the other end, Winemaker Jon Emmerich is carefully explaining how he makes these beautiful wines. Clint Wilsey, who is an old friend, is the passionate Vice President of Sales and has arranged an incredible lunch from Meadowood to accompany the wines.

The **Silverado Vineyards 2012 Mt. George Merlot** is the first wine presented, and immediately the conversation turns to the popularity of Merlot in the market. Michelle Fano from Bottega says it pairs well with an array of dishes and Morimoto's Eduardo Dingler has a Merlot by the glass for "closet Merlot drinkers." Richard Matuszczak of Grand Award winner La Toque in Napa Valley has a Merlot as a pairing wine, and Vincent Morrow from Gary Danko calls the Merlot a "distinctly elegant wine with a sense of character."

Silverado's Vineyards newest creation, the **2012 GEO Cabernet Sauvignon**, the winery's on-premise exclusive offering from the Coombsville appellation, was the focal point of the get-together. The fruit comes from two blocks on Mt. George and the flavor profile is about great style and structure. Notes of iron-spun soil, grilled meat, graphite and plum-cherrywood make up just some of the flavor components. Its dusty, chocolate finish speaks to the volcanic soil.



*Cabernet Sauvignon grapes off the Stags Leap Vineyard on Silverado Vineyards' estate. The 2012 Estate Cab finds fruit off of their estate vineyards in Oakville and Coombsville as well. Dark chocolate and sweet mint are the backdrop for this angular, edgy red (81% Cabernet Sauvignon, 15% Merlot and 4% Petit Verdot) with tobacco undertones and blackberry charm. "This is a wine that shows discipline," says Richard Matuszczak, Wine Director for La Toque in Napa. "This is the style of wine that I personally like to drink."*



*Winemaker Jon Emmerich with The SOMM Journal's Meredith May and Silverado Vineyards' VP/Sales, Clint Wilsey.*



*Michele Fano and Laura Koffer of Bottega Napa Valley, Eduardo Dingler of Morimoto in Napa and Silverado Vineyards Winemaker Jon Emmerich.*

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*Fred Dame, MS, MS, VP/Prestige Accounts for American Wine & Spirits. "Everybody's talking about the Coombsville AVA right now," says Dame. "And you talk about GEO, a wine with this type of quality out of the chute—well, you've got something special."*

"The Mt. George Vineyard's undulating topography produces unique characteristics of hillside fruit," notes winemaker Emmerich. "It's gorgeous now but it's still youthful. Put it down for a while and it will reward you."

Jordan Nova from 1313 in Napa underscored the AVAs growing popularity commenting that his customers know this appellation. "Coombsville is on the map and my customers ask for this wine by name."

Laura Koffer and Michele Fano from Michael Chiarello's Bottega comment positively on the nature of wines from Coombsville. "It's a cooler appellation with longer hang time, and the area produces higher-acid wines. (5.8 pH according to Emmerich). Marie Mertz, owner of Todo un Poco Bistro in Sacramento, is charmed by its character and balance. We are all in agreement that this is a great, well-made, world-class wine with elegance.

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*Richard Matuszczak of La Toque Napa Valley with author Kim Beto.*

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The older sibling, **Silverado Vineyards 2012 SOLO**, a 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from Stags Leap that was first released in 2002, is a much darker and intense Cabernet and, just like brothers, can be quite different. This flagship Cabernet sports tobacco, firm tannins and rich structure and again tons of natural acidity. If you want a bigger Cab, this is it. Clint Wilsey proclaims "SOLO is everything Silverado stands for, as striking, unique and powerful as a bolt of lightning." Brandied plum, orange zest, big raspberry, rhubarb and an exotic touch of sandalwood rounds it out.

Most of the sommeliers had not been to Silverado Vineyards before and were delighted by the great people, breathtaking property and the equally beautiful wines.

I can't wait to go back and taste the next vintage of GEO! ❖

*Kim Beto is Vice President of Key Accounts for Southern Wine & Spirits of Northern California.*



*Tasting at Silverado Vineyards.*



*Vincent Morrow of Restaurant Gary Danko, San Francisco.*



*Jordan Nova of 1313 Main in Napa.*