

THE ART OF FINE WINE LIVING

LE·PAN

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2015

CULT WATCHES
& DELICIOUS GEMS

PINOT TO RIVAL
BURGUNDY

SCREAMING
EAGLE EXCLUSIVE

THE ART OF FINE WINE LIVING

NAPA SPECIAL | SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2015



NAPA SPECIAL

Harlan: The Next Generation

LE
GUIDE
296 FINE WINES TASTED
AND RATED BY OUR
EXPERTS

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DISPLAY UNTIL 10/25/15

CURRENT RELEASE NAPA 2012

Blessed with a near-perfect growing season, the vintage is shaping up to be just about as good as it gets.

Just after the 2012 harvest in Napa Valley, Bart Araujo, former owner of Araujo Estate and now of Accendo Cellars, told me the vintage might be the best for 20 years. “The weather was perfect and the fruit was excellent,” he said. Araujo was not getting carried away – his sentiments were echoed across the valley.

Aron Weinkauff, winemaker of Spottswode, views 2012 is an “idyllic” vintage. “The growing season was easy – there were no huge heat spells, no challenging rain.” The only downside was that it was arguably too easy. “The wines are beautiful but perhaps not exciting,” he says. Most winemakers disagree. Cathy Corison, of Corison Wines, was grateful for the large crop and calls the 2012 “perfect”. Ann Colgin of Colgin Cellars is equally enthusiastic. “The 2012 vintage was a classic – it was generous and the fruit was beautiful.”

A vintage will always be compared with what preceded it, of course, and 2012 came after the most challenging of vintages in Napa, the 2011, with its cool temperatures, incessant disease pressure and small volumes. 2012 had

ideal bud break and good flowering followed by a long stretch of warm days and cool nights with little rain. What more can a winemaker ask for?

Not only was 2012 a perfect growing season, but it also yielded an abundant crop. Philippe Bascaules, who has overseen a change in style at Inglenook with grapes picked earlier and fresher, was delighted. “Big crops in California are good because they dilute the concentration and produce better balanced wines,” he explains. “We want to be the reference for finesse and elegance in Napa.” Not all the changes he has implemented are viticultural though – Inglenook now pays pickers by the hour rather than by the ton, as Bascaules believes workers will be less inclined to rush and over-load bins, crushing grapes.

Another French winemaker, H el ene Mingot of Araujo Estate, reduced the output of the Eisele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon from 2,000 cases to 1,700 in the abundant 2012 vintage, part of a long-term strategy for stricter selection and greater quality. The evidence is in the bottle – 2012 combines both elegance and intensity. Others employed vineyard

techniques to keep quantity down. “The 2012 was a big crop,” says Tom Futo of Futo Wines. “We worked hard in the vineyard – taking off the shoulders, the large wings, and going through cluster by cluster.” The hard work paid off; Futo’s 2012 reds are fabulous.

The 2012 arrives at a time when many Napa winemakers are looking for freshness and balance. Michael Silacci, winemaker at Opus One, says that since the 2009 vintage there has been a distinct shift. Whereas in the past, 60-80 percent of the grapes harvested were defined as having “ripe fruit”, with flavors leaning toward dark, black fruits, now only 40 to 60 percent ripe fruit is desired, with the rest made up of “fresh fruit”.

Because of the generous volumes, there should be plenty of great wines at every price point. Overall, this is classic Napa at its very best. In the right hands, the wines strike that perfect balance of generosity and intensity of flavor; a firm backbone wrapped in plush, velvety tannins; and wonderful freshness and length.

– Jeannie Cho Lee

«Recommended 2012 Napa Valley Reds»

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|----|---|----|---|
| 99 | Dana Estates Lotus Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon | 96 | Colgin Cellars Tychson Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon |
| 99 | Larkmead Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon | 96 | Dana Estates Helms Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon |
| 98 | Colgin Cellars IX Estate Red | 96 | Opus One |
| 98 | Screaming Eagle | 96 | Silverado Vineyards Solo Cabernet Sauvignon |
| 97 | Bond Estates St Eden | 95 | Araujo Estate Eisele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon |
| 97 | Colgin Cellars Cariad Red | 95 | Bond Estates Melbury |
| 97 | Dalla Valle Vineyards Maya | 95 | The Futo Oakville Estate Red |
| 97 | Dana Estates Hershey Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon | 95 | Au Sommet Atlas Peak Cabernet Sauvignon |
| 97 | Harlan Estate | 95 | Lail Vineyards J. Daniel Cuv e Cabernet Sauvignon |
| 97 | Blankiet Estate Proprietary Red Paradise Hills Vineyard | | |
| 96 | Bond Estate Pluribus | | |



As vine age increases, so does the quality of Napa's wines

LE GUIDE

296 WINES REVIEWED

NAPA VALLEY | CENTRAL OTAGO | GREECE



LE·PAN

NO. 2 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2015



Screaming Eagle 2012 95
 Subtle and restrained on the nose with a palate that is equally shy. Has the structure and depth for long-term ageing but as yet there are few flavors to detect and little expression. However, the texture is beautiful with velvety tannins and good concentration and a very long finish. Needs at least 5 to 6 years before it is ready to be enjoyed. ■

Screaming Eagle Second Flight 2012 95
 A dry spring and warm growing season yielded elegant, beautifully detailed Merlot. Riper-than-usual for the site, with great depth and freshness, and notes of red plum, cherry and red currant. Velvety tannins, persistent length. 🍷

Seavey Vineyard Caravina Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 90
 Nice density and good depth for Seavey's second wine, a Cabernet that is intended to be consumed young. Dark, earthy fruit with cocoa, licorice, blackberry and velvety tannins. A balanced, seamless, well-made wine. 🍷

Shafer Vineyards Merlot 2012 90
 Plump, juicy and very ripe. Nice concentration of flavors with hints of cocoa and mocha on the finish. Well made, with the potential to evolve for 5 to 7 years. ■

Shafer Vineyards One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 89
 First produced in 2004 after the Shafer family purchased a new vineyard, this site enjoyed a fine 2012 vintage with excellent ripening conditions. Generous, opulent Cabernet with ripe plum and cassis flavors on a fairly long finish. ■

Silverado Vineyards Solo Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 96
 Beautiful flavors of both red and black berries with notes of violets and sweet spices. This Cabernet from Stags Leap District is incredibly elegant, complex and balanced, and this vintage is one to lay down for a few decades. ■

Smith-Madrone Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 89
 Dark fruit characteristic of Spring Mountain: savory blackberry and dark plum, supported by firm, chewy tannins. Still neither open nor offering very much but should benefit from a few more years of cellaring. ■

Smith-Madrone Cook's Flat Reserve 2012 91
 Only 160 cases of this are made, and only in the best years. Recently bottled, and somewhat closed right now. Velvety, ripe and firm, with the potential to evolve nicely. A well-made wine that should open up over the next few years. ■

Spottswoode Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 94
 Beautiful, balanced flavors of blackberry and cassis on an impressively long finish. The tannins are silky and the integration of flavors is fantastic. A lovely wine with great potential to age and deliver lots of drinking pleasure. ■

Spottswoode Lydenhurst Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 91
 Just 2,000 cases of this are made per year. Subtle and elegant with a mint, plum, herbs and dark-olive notes. A beautiful texture with velvety tannins and wonderful balance. Aged for 20 months in French barrels, 60% of which are new. Young, but accessible and easy to drink now. 🍷

Stony Hill Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 91
 Stony Hill is better known for its Chardonnay but the reds from here are made with the same gentle touch. This is fresh and lifted, with firm acidity; quite lively on the palate with a lean profile. Has more depth than other vintages from the estate; enjoy from 2018. ■

Tor Kenward Family Wines Tierra Roja Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 94
 A barrel sample of this wine was terrific and gives a hint of what lies ahead via concentrated, just-ripe fruit with velvety tannins and a long finish. A wine to follow. ■

Trefethen Family Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 90
 Juicy fruits and savory herbs combine in this elegant Cabernet that can be approached young. Firm tannins, well balanced by freshness and vibrant red berry fruits. Modest finish. 🍷

Viader 2012 92
 Violets and leather with blackberry and cherry notes. Hints of mocha and cocoa, with freshness and firm, elevated tannins. A sumptuous wine with the potential to age. Includes 34% Cabernet Franc in the blend. ■



Wines are listed in alphabetical order