

NAPA VALLEY GRILLE

The Cellar

We draw this distinction between "storing" and "cellaring" wine: Storing is about waiting until you are ready to drink a particular wine; cellaring is about waiting until the wine is ready to be consumed.

The overwhelming majority of wines don't need to be cellared. They are made to be drunk young, taste fine upon release and, in fact, will probably lose their appeal if not consumed within a few years. Red wines, especially those that are substantial and well-balanced, with plenty of ripe tannins are more likely to need aging. In cellaring, components soften and evolve and give the wine depth and complexity that a young wine will rarely exhibit.

Take a step back in time and explore the remarkable Cabernet Sauvignon, Meritage and Red Table Wines from the past two decades.

The 1993 Vintage

Okay, the truth comes out...the '93 is lighter and less concentrated and not of the same caliber as earlier. That doesn't mean 1993 was a total bust; it means we shopped carefully and focused on the best wines.

Far Niente, <i>Napa Valley</i>	235.00
Beringer, " <i>Private Reserve</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	185.00

The 1995 Vintage

The good news is that the 1995 vintage for California Cabernet Sauvignon was another tremendous year, one that collectors gave serious consideration. Rich and elegant wines from a first-rate vintage.

Girard, " <i>Reserve</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	157.00
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The 1996 Vintage

The 1990's decade was certainly phenomenally successful when you consider that 1990 through 1992 were exceptionally good vintages for Cabernet Sauvignon wines in California. The 1996 vintage rivals the best wines made that decade, although overall, the quality is not as consistent as that of its two predecessors, 1994 and 1995. The vintage produced small crops due to the warm to hot growing season but most winemakers were able to monitor ripeness and pick at optimum levels.

Beringer, " <i>Private Reserve</i> ", Napa Valley	215.00
Château Montelena, " <i>Calistoga Cuvée</i> ", Napa Valley	187.00
Flora Springs, " <i>Rutherford Hillside Reserve</i> ", Napa Valley	150.00
Quintessa, Napa Valley	295.00
Corison, " <i>Kronos Vineyard</i> ", Napa Valley	198.00
Diamond Creek, " <i>Gravelly Meadows</i> ", Napa Valley	264.00
Dominus, " <i>Napanook Vineyard</i> ", Napa Valley	189.00
Robert Mondavi, " <i>Reserve</i> ", Napa Valley	205.00
Diamond Creek, " <i>Red Rock Terrace</i> ", Napa Valley	264.00
Diamond Creek, " <i>Volcanic Hill</i> ", Napa Valley	264.00

The 1997 Vintage

In a decade flush with magnificent wines from superlative vintages, along comes 1997 to cap things off with a giant exclamation point. 1997 is the vintage of the century for California Cabernet Sauvignon. It was a monumental year that wine lovers will be buzzing about for a long time to come. The profound depths, complexity, finesse and flavor in these wines was simply astounding. While these wines are gushing with ripe, opulent, juicy currant, black cherry, wild berry and spicy nuances, most are also well-framed by seductive oaky flavors of mocha, cedar and toasty vanilla. When you encounter a vintage of this magnitude, it is because something magical happened in the vineyard, providing winemakers with the ingredients to make these special wines.

Pine Ridge Winery " <i>Andrus</i> ", Napa Valley	247.00
Beringer, " <i>Private Reserve</i> ", Napa Valley	275.00

The 1998 Vintage

Because so many vineyards struggled to ripen in 1998, the resulting wines generally lack the rich core of plush fruit flavors usually evident in California Cabernets. This vintage is the black sheep in this spectacular decade of Cabernet vintages. With time, the 1998 wines are proving to be late bloomers and live up to some winemakers' claims that this vintage is a worthy successor to 1997.

Miura, " <i>Cuvée Kemiji & Portay</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	170.00
Dominus, <i>Napa Valley</i>	191.00
Miura, <i>Napa Valley</i>	145.00
Quintessa, <i>Napa Valley</i>	245.00
Silver Oak, <i>Napa Valley</i>	265.00
Merryvale, " <i>Profile</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	195.00

The 1999 Vintage

Fasten your seatbelts...1999 with near-perfect growing conditions gave us another great vintage of stellar quality wines from Napa Valley, Cabernet's magical kingdom. These are generally long-lived wines coming from a very fine vintage.

Silver Oak, <i>Napa Valley</i>	271.00
Kenwood, " <i>Artist Series</i> ", <i>Sonoma County</i>	137.00
Far Niente, <i>Napa Valley</i>	328.00
Laurel Glen, <i>Sonoma Mountain, Napa Valley</i>	165.00
Nickel & Nickel, " <i>Tench</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	192.00
Merryvale, " <i>Profile</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	190.00

The 2000 Vintage

Wedged between the acclaimed 1999 and 2001 vintages, the first vintage of the new century was somewhat overlooked at first. It appeared to be a text-book vintage until some ill-timed harvest rains created localized crop damage - some growers severely affected and others not at all. It cast a pall on the vintage, but now that the wines have some bottle age a few Napa stars are quite delightful and at perfect drinking maturity now.

Quintessa, <i>Napa Valley</i>	240.00
Mount Veeder Winery, " <i>Reserve</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	162.00
Niebaum-Coppola, " <i>Rubicon</i> ", <i>Napa Valley</i>	197.00
Silver Oak, <i>Napa Valley</i>	272.00

The 2001 Vintage

A cold, early spring followed by record heat in May and near record temperatures in June got us off to a wild start and pushed the vines nearly three weeks ahead of schedule. But, it became an easy ride by mid-summer through harvest. Near perfect temperatures with cool nights, and warm but not hot days, allowed for the all-important hang time producing an early, but remarkably good vintage with rich and concentrated juice, and many long-lasting wines.

Freemark Abbey, "Sycamore", <i>Napa Valley</i>	134.00
Stag's Leap Wine Cellars " <i>Cask 23</i> ," <i>Napa Valley</i>	230.00
Dominus, <i>Napa Valley</i>	292.00
Far Niente, Oakville	298.00
Grgich Hills " <i>Yountville Selection</i> " <i>Napa Valley</i>	267.00
Viader, <i>Napa Valley</i>	160.00

The 2002 Vintage

The 2002 vintage give us the quality we seek. We were snapped to attention by heat in September that brought in a lot of fruit in a short time. At the time of harvest, the 2002 crop was somewhat overlooked, probably due to the excitement about the 2001 vintage. Now that the wines have been in the bottle for awhile, we find that in many cases the 2002s surpass the 2001s in quality and character. We give you the following attractive wines from best Napa names

Dominus, <i>Napa Valley</i>	292.00
Chateau St. Jean, " <i>Cinq Cepage</i> ", <i>Sonoma County</i>	159.00
Chimney Rock Winery, "Reserve", Stags Leap District	178.00
Merryvalle, "Profile", <i>Napa Valley</i>	205.00
Viader, <i>Napa Valley</i>	185.00
Freemark Abbey "Bosché", <i>Napa Valley</i>	141.00
Pine Ridge, <i>Napa-Stags Leap District</i>	177.00
Rubicon Estate " <i>Rubicon</i> ", <i>Rutherford-Napa Valley</i>	232.00

The 2003 Vintage

We'll remember 2003 for a warm "July in March" followed by drenching rain in April, but ultimately this was quite a good harvest.

Pine Ridge, <i>Oakville-Napa</i>	177.00
Bell, "Sonnette", <i>Napa Valley</i>	142.00
Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, "FAY", <i>Napa Valley</i>	164.00
Silver Oak, <i>Napa Valley</i>	213.00
Cain Five, <i>Napa Valley</i>	167.00
Rubicon Estate "Rubicon", <i>Rutherford - Napa Valley</i>	232.00
Opus One, <i>Napa Valley</i>	285.00

The 2004 Vintage

The growing season got off to an unusually early, jack-rabbit start with very warm conditions spurring rapid vine development. The sugars gave growers the signal to harvest early, but those who held on were rewarded with a good acid balance and flavor maturity. Fine harvest weather led from good to very fine grape quality and a crop that was smaller than average.

Nickel & Nickel, "Dragonfly Vineyard" <i>Napa Valley - St. Helena</i>	202.00
Showket, <i>Oakville</i>	179.00
Buoncristiani, <i>Napa Valley</i>	189.00
Bell, "Talianna", <i>Napa Valley</i>	152.00
Roy Estate, <i>Napa Valley</i>	245.00
"Fortis" by Pine Ridge, <i>Napa Valley</i>	252.00
Château Montelena, "Estate", <i>Napa Valley</i>	207.00
Opus One, <i>Napa Valley</i>	289.00
Mount Veeder Winery, "Reserve", <i>Napa Valley</i>	162.00

The 2005 Vintage

Unseasonably late spring rains delayed flowering and caused concern about crop loss and mold problems. Fortunately, our fears were unfounded. The summer months were mild and pleasant followed by continued

warm, nearly perfect ripening conditions in the early fall. Without the typical heat spikes the harvest was late for most growers, with grapes on the vine well into November in some cases. Ordinarily this might be a cause for concern, but continued warm, dry weather allowed for extended hang time and great flavor concentration. Virtually the whole valley brought in an exceptionally fine vintage. The 2005 vintage will be long remembered for bringing us not only remarkable quality but bountiful quantity too!

Darioush, <i>“Signature”</i> , Napa Valley	157.00
Metisse, Napa Valley	235.00
Quintessa, Napa Valley	268.00

