

WINE News

Joyride to the Napa Valley with us: Inside, our domestic wine buying team drops in on some old friends and brings back some exciting new releases.



OCTOBER 7, 2013 FEATURES

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The News from Napa: A Fresh Look at Old Favorites

By Trey Beffa

We don't often make it to the Napa Valley during the late summer or fall, so heading up for a quick trip right before harvest this year was a nice change of pace. The valley is such a beautiful place regardless of the time of year, but when the vines are lush and green and loaded with grapes, it just adds to the experience. Our trip was well timed, as a bunch of new Napa Valley wines will hit our shelves over the next few months. While barrel tasting can be very educational, it's always nice to taste the finished product from the bottle. On this trip, we focused mainly on the wineries' current releases that are ready to go on the market. We hit some of our old favorites on the main roads, including Caymus, Lewis Cellars,

Groth, Dominus, Chateau Montelena, Opus One and Joseph Phelps. We also visited some properties that took a bit more work to get to, mountain vineyards such as Dunn, Mayacamas, Philip Togni and O'Shaughnessy. It was a very busy trip and I think we have come up with an informative newsletter to help guide you through some of the biggest releases of the year from the Napa Valley. Many of the new Cabernet Sauvignons date from 2010 and 2011, which have been called the coolest growing seasons that Napa has seen in 50 years, while much of the Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay hails from the picture-perfect 2012 vintage. These diverse vintages have made for some exciting new wines. Cheers!

Napa Valley Value Picks

2011 Kalinda Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$17.99) Finally, a California Cab for less than \$20 that isn't bogged down by oak and high alcohol. If your palate is anything like mine, then you will love it! It's juicy but not heavy, with nice, bright acidity and absolutely no harsh tannins. This is a great Cab for all red wine drinkers because it's super-approachable and food friendly. I think I could even have it with cedar plank salmon as well as grilled meats. Delicious! (Christie Cartwright, K&L)

Cain "NV9" Napa Valley Cuvée (\$29.99)

Cain's Cuvée project began more than 20 years ago as a multi-vintage, multi-varietal blend. The

grapes are sourced from Rutherford, Oakville, Yountville, Spring Mountain and Atlas Peak. Each vintage is a new, carefully made blend and many of the same rows of the same vineyards are included in each cuvée. Winemaker Christopher Howell explains: "The facts will explain nothing. The NV9 is 53% Merlot (the balance being Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Petit Verdot), and it's a blend of two vintages: 2009 (57%) and 2008 (43%). What sets the wine apart is how it tastes...this has everything I want in a red wine: smooth entry, mouthfilling, sits gently and lightly on the palate, just enough mouthwatering tannins to cleanse the palate. Aromas of black cherries, red cherries, cigar box. Core of red fruit carries

through from beginning to end. Nicely refined. Nothing sticks out."

2010 Avalon Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$12.99) Napa Valley Cab at a very nice price. *Wine Advocate*: "It offers notes of black currants, licorice, cedar wood and spice. Drink it over the next several years."

2011 B Side Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$18.99) 90 points *WE*, Editors' Choice: "This offers everything you want in a Napa Cabernet, and at a decent price. It's dry, balanced in acidity and tannins, and elegantly constructed, with classic blackberry and cassis liqueur flavors touched by oak. Not an ager, and doesn't pretend to be; just a nice wine to drink now."

New Cab, Library Cab—Great Cab at Groth

By Trey Beffa

During our recent trip to the Napa Valley, we had the opportunity to spend some time at Groth Vineyards and Winery. It is always a pleasure to talk with people who took a gamble on the Napa Valley back in the day. The Groth's gamble began in 1981, when they purchased a 121-acre property in the heart of the Oakville appellation. Today, the winery is truly a family-run operation. Dennis and Judy Groth are still very much involved, along with their children Suzanne and Andrew. Head winemaker Michael Weis has been on board since 1994. During our visit we had a chance to taste some older vintages, which we currently have available directly from the property. This is a great opportunity to purchase some older wines that you can be sure were stored properly, and that are drinking great right now.

2002 Groth Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$79.99) The 2002 is a blend of 76% Cabernet Sauvignon and 24% Merlot. The wine was aged in French oak barrels, 50% of which were new, for 23 months. This wine still shows fresh and ripe fruit, nice balance and elegance, combined with classic Napa Cabernet flavors. This wine is delicious right now and is an absolute pleasure to drink. 91 points *WE*.

2004 Groth Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$69.99) Ripe, juicy, fleshy fruit followed by a silky mouthfeel and ripe, integrated tannins. The 2004 shows lots of finesse and sexiness. It is drinking great now and should age well for another five to seven years. Delicious!

2006 Groth Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.99) The 2006 is a blend of 79% Cabernet Sauvignon and 21% Merlot. It's a big, structured, tightly-knit wine, even still. With some air, the fruit comes out and shows red currants, a spicy texture, lots of mineral and earthy edges that linger on the finish. This is a classic Cab from Napa that tastes more like mountain fruit than valley floor.

Decant and enjoy! 90 points *WE*, 93 points *W&S*: "Packed with red and black currant flavors,

this wine has the cool, refreshing feel of the forest. Tannins frame the berry fruit, providing contrast in umami flavors of wood-ear mushrooms, both tannins and fruit lasting in a finely structured, luxurious finish. Balanced for ten years of age."

2010 Groth Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$44.99) The current release Cabernet is a winner all around. It is loaded with fruit and shows hints of toasty vanilla oak, sweet herbs, and the finish is long and lingering. Give this wine some time in a decanter to allow the flavors and aromas to come together.

2005 Groth "Reserve" Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$129.00) Excellent wine. Velvety, juicy, fleshy mid-palate fruit, sweet and fresh. Still lots of power in the glass. Really classic Cabernet flavors. First wine made after vineyard replanting. 94 points *WS*: "This has wonderful richness, density and focus, with tiers of smoky plum, currant, blackberry, loamy earth, sage and underbrush notes. Though firmly tannic, there's a measure of finesse and polish. Ends with a long, rich, persistent finish. The best Groth Reserve in years."

2009 Groth "Reserve" Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99) Still young and juicy, with quite a bit of tannin showing, this is a wine for the long haul. A spicy core of black cherry fruit, cola, red currants and smoke are tightly wound and focused. 91 points *ST*, 93 points *WE*: "...incredibly lush and delicious. It dazzles with rich blackberry, cherry pie, currant and cassis liqueur flavors, perfectly accented by sweet, smoky oak. It's soft in tannins, yet ageworthy."

2010 Groth "Reserve" Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$89.99) Very young, intense and concentrated, with a rich core of blackberry fruit and sweet mocha flavors. The 2010 shows great texture and mouthfeel for having so much power. Due in late October.



Left to right: Christie Cartwright, Suzanne Groth, Ken Uhl (Groth), Clyde Beffa Jr., Judy Groth, Dennis Groth, Michael Weis, Trey Beffa, Bryan Brick

A New Beginning at Mayacamas Vineyard

By Michael Jordan

It was a real treat to be invited up to Mayacamas Vineyard this fall, just as picking was getting under way. I have been a huge fan of their wines for years, but this was my first visit to the property.

Established in 1889, Mayacamas is one of the Napa Valley's oldest wineries. A long road winds up Mount Veeder to bring you to the historic stone winery and its estate vineyards, located at elevations between 1,800 and 2,400 feet above sea level. A wonderful highlight of our visit was when we sat on a bench at the very top of the property, admiring the view of the Napa Valley below, with San Francisco off on the distant horizon, while enjoying a library bottle of 1977 Cabernet from the estate. It was a wine of great beauty and character that was, even now, just finding its perfection—a brilliant balance of blue and black fruit, tannin and length.

Owned by the Travers family since 1968, the winery has been known for making lean, balanced, long-aging wines for more than 40 years. Many vintages need a decade or more of cellaring to really find their greatness. These wines bring one back to the old days of California wine, when wines were allowed to age gracefully and develop in the bottle.

Mayacamas has been in the news lately because it recently sold to a group headed by former Screaming Eagle owner Charles Banks. The deal was six years in the making. Mr. Banks and new winemaker Andy Erickson spent many hours with Mr. Travers trying to figure out a way to make it work. In May of 2013, the sale finally closed and the new owners have been hard at work ever since. Andy Erickson, whose wines include Favia, Leviathan, Screaming Eagle and Dalla Valle, has been put in charge of updating the winery, while replanting of the entire vineyard is entrusted to Andy's wife Annie Favia, who was a longtime viticulturist with David Abreu Vineyard Management.

Many Mayacamas fans are a bit worried that the new ownership will change the winemaking style. Will the wine be made in the newer Napa style: ultra-ripe, heavily-oaked? I have to admit, I had those thoughts,

too. I have had a long, great love affair with Mayacamas wines, and I want to see it continued. After spending time with Andy, I learned that he has that same love affair with the wines and with the vineyards. But as they are now, the Mayacamas vineyards are very old and infected with virus, with some areas yielding as little as one-quarter ton per acre. The plan is for all the vineyards to be replanted in the near future. There will be new rootstock, new clones and new exposures. The winery will be cleaned and reorganized.

Will the wine change? Yes. However, I believe that the love for this winery's style and history felt by everyone involved with the project will ultimately help to bring about a revival of the property and guarantee its long-term survival. The beauty of the place is second to none, and you can see the passion in Andy's face as he speaks about the winery and its future. This is a long-term commitment, and it seems



The view from Mayacamas.

to be headed in the right direction. I wish the new owners luck and look forward to sipping their wines a few years down the line.

2011 Mayacamas Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$27.99) It's nice to take a break from high-acid, mineral-driven, herbaceous Sauvignon Blanc every now and again, in favor of a nutty, rounder style with saline notes, almond skin and a bit of barrel-fermented richness. This is an elegant, well-made wine. (David Driscoll, K&L)

2010 Mayacamas Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$27.99) From the winery's dry-farmed, estate vineyards on Mt. Veeder. *Wine Enthusiast*: "Lean, dry and minerally, with tart flavors of grapefruit, lemon peel and Asian pear. The acidity is refreshingly crisp. This is a bottling that rarely does well in blind tastings because it's so austere. But it is elegant."

2007 Mayacamas Mount Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon (\$59.99) In 2007, the juice from the Cab, plus small proportions of Merlot and Cab Franc (9% combined), was aged for a year and a half in large oak casks, followed by another year in small 60-gallon barrels. Despite the long time the wine spent in barrel, the oak flavors that were imparted are subtle and deftly woven into the texture of the wine. Bright violet, cherry and raspberry dominate the initial aromas, which turn plummy, with notes of Earl Grey tea, mint and a touch of cigar box on the palate. This is balanced, mid-weight Cab that's incredibly food friendly, with plenty of character, without being over the top. K&L's David Driscoll calls it, "Ridiculously good Cabernet Sauvignon from one of the last bastions of old school wine production in Napa. The fruit is supple, but balanced by fine tannins and hint of bell pepper and tobacco. Lovely stuff. Textbook Cab."

We often buy older vintages of Mayacamas from private cellars. Check KLWines.com to see the current list of older wines available.





New Releases from the Napa Valley at K&L

Caymus

2011 Caymus Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$64.99) Always an upfront, ripe style, the 2011 continues the Caymus tradition in typical fashion. Aromas of vanilla, crème de cassis and blackberries jump from the glass. The 2011 shows a bit more structure and balance than past releases, partly due to the cooler vintage. Drinking well already!

2011 Caymus "Special Select" Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$124.99) Caymus could be the most consistent winery in Napa right now. The newly released 2011 Special Select doesn't veer off track, even with the difficult 2011 growing season. It is a bit tight right now, but will open up with some decanting. Lots of depth and pure, concentrated Cabernet fruit. This wine shows hints of cocoa powder, black and red currants, a spicy, lush texture and ripe, fleshy tannins. Michael Jordan and Bryan Brick from our stores in the north loved this wine!

Lewis Cellars

2012 Randy Lewis "Race Car White" Sonoma County Chardonnay (\$29.99) Made by the Lewis Cellars wine team, this Chardonnay shows fresh, lively upfront fruit, with hints of toasty oak and spice that lingers on the finish.

2012 Lewis Cellars Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$44.99) This is made in the classic Napa style. It shows a rich, juicy, round and creamy mouthfeel with hints of cream and butter. The texture is almost chewy and the finish is long and full. Fans of big, rich California Chardonnay will love this one!

2012 Lewis Cellars Russian River Valley Chardonnay (\$44.99) What doesn't make it into Lewis' Barcaglia Lane Chardonnay gets declassified into this wine. The 2012 shows excellent acidity on the finish (typical of the Russian River Valley) and also shows excellent richness on the mid-palate. Hints of cinnamon and nutmeg linger on the finish.

2011 Lewis Cellars Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$79.99) We were very pleased with the 2011 Lewis Cabernet. A difficult and cool year, 2011 actually made some really balanced wines. Still in typical Lewis fashion, this wine shows tons of vanilla oak on nose, toasty, rich, chewy fruit, and a lush mid-palate that is followed by lots of integrated fruit tannins. This wine shows surprisingly well even at this early stage.

2011 Lewis Cellars "Alec's Blend" Napa Valley Red Blend (\$54.99) A blend of Syrah, Merlot and Cab, this wine is loaded with spice, mocha and cola-like flavors. The color of the wine is dark and inky with aromas of grilled meats and black cherries. Pair this wine with bigger, grilled meat dishes, for sure. One of our favorite Lewis wines!



2011 Lewis Cellars “Mason’s” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$54.99) Has a very intriguing, spicy nose, with black and red currants. Shows some restraint in the mouth. Tight, deep and concentrated mid-palate. A big, juicy wine.

Opus One

2010 Opus One Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (PA \$209.00)

This may be the best young Opus One we’ve tasted to date. The 2010 shows gorgeous balance and amazing finesse. The fruit is bright, yet understated, with hints of red cherry, lavender and sweet herbs. Tannins are fine, integrated and fresh. A favorite from our trip! 92 points *WS*, 95 points *ST*, 97 points Antonio Galloni: “The 2010 stands out for its exceptional minerality, tension and pure power.”



Spottswoode

2012 Spottswoode Napa-Sonoma Sauvignon Blanc (\$34.99) The 2012 Spottswoode is a blend of 66% Sauvignon Blanc and 34% Sauvignon Musqué. Also a blend of 54% Napa Valley fruit and 36% Sonoma Mountain fruit, this wine shows the richer side of Sauvignon Blanc. This vintage shows some oak with a round, creamy texture, hints of fig, guava and coconut.

2010 Spottswoode “Family Estate” St. Helena Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$139.99)

The 2010 Spottswoode Cabernet is packed with concentrated fruit with hints of mint, sage and tobacco leaf. There is an elegance and purity to this wine. The finish lingers with bright red currant and spice. Tannins are ripe and integrated. This wine should age well in a cellar for 10-plus years. 93 points *WS*, 94 points *ST*, 95 points *RP*: “Spottswoode’s 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon flows across the palate with gorgeous depth and purity. Warm hints of mocha, espresso, exotic spices and plums blossom in the glass in the dark, voluptuous Cabernet. This stunning wine remains incredibly primary, but it promises to drink well for several decades.”

Araujo

2010 Araujo “Eisele” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$465.00)

There has been a ton of hype surrounding the recent purchase of Araujo by the owner of Château Latour. Released September 1st of this year, the 2010 shows a great combination of elegance and power. The middle texture is lush, rich and seamless, while the finish is extremely long and spicy. The wine is still held together with a firm structure and plenty of acidity. Serious Napa Cabernet! It will be interesting to see what happens to this property after the sale. One of the goals may be to take Araujo “global,” which means less wine for us in the States. May want to buy now! 94 points *WS*, 95 points *ST*, 98 points *RP*: “Vibrant, precise and beautifully chiseled, the 2010 boasts serious depth and concentration. The aromas and flavors are incredibly vivid in this textured, dazzling Cabernet Sauvignon. Hints of dark blue and black fruit, mocha, espresso and grilled herbs flesh out on the huge finish.”

Joseph Phelps

2011 Joseph Phelps “Fogdog” Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$24.99) Very Bordeaux-like on the nose, spicy, nice fruit, sweet herbs with a slightly meaty quality. Good value from the same team that makes Insignia!

2010 Joseph Phelps “Insignia” Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$184.99) First impression of the 2010 Insignia is wow! It is a big, sturdy wine that is showing quite a bit of tannin right now. It is deep and powerful, but its power is somewhat hidden underneath huge doses of black currant, black cherry, cedar and cocoa powder flavors that coat the palate. Great candidate for mid-term cellaring! We like the overall balance of this wine. Some vintages can be a bit over the top, but Phelps nailed it with the 2010. 93-95 points *RP*, 94 points *ST*, 94 points *WS*: “Long, pure, driven and persistent, this seems set for a long life.”

O’Shaughnessy

2010 O’Shaughnessy Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon (\$84.99)* Dark, purple color; intense, opulent and concentrated fruit that is fleshy and sweet. It is rare for Howell Mountain wine to have such a fleshy, lush mid-palate of fruit combined with the typical power and concentration that you get from the region, but somehow O’Shaughnessy always

pulls this off. A tad bit of Merlot and Malbec are used in the blend, but it’s mostly Cab. 96 points *RP*. *Two bottle limit per customer.

Dominus

2010 Dominus “Napanook” Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$54.99)

This wine would be very easy to mistakenly guess as a Bordeaux wine in a blind tasting. All the elements are there. Cedar, spice, minerals, sweet herbs, red cherries and earth. Another solid wine from this estate! 91 points *ST*, 92 points *RP*.

2010 Dominus Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$169.00)

The 2010 Dominus is a blend of 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Petit Verdot. This wine is packed with concentrated fruits, hints of wet stone, cocoa powder, mineral and spice, which lead to a long, seamless finish. This wine shows finesse and balance. Should age very well over the next 10-plus years. 94 points *ST*, 96 points *RP*: “The sweetest and most succulent black cherries, plums, violets, graphite, cinnamon and cloves come to life in the 2010 Dominus, a wine that stands out for its superb precision and balance.”

Chateau Montelena

2011 Chateau Montelena Napa Valley Chardonnay (\$44.99)

The 2011 Napa Chardonnay is a great example of how the cooler vintage helped keep the acidity high in the white wines. The 2011 is far more focused and leaner in the mouth than the 2010, which is more typical Napa style. We love the 2011. Tons of mineral, citrus and melon jump from the glass. The wine shows a nice richness in the middle and a long, fresh finish. Rich but not heavy—the key to great Chardonnay! 93 points *RP*.



2010 Montelena Napa Valley

Zinfandel (\$32.99) A Cabernet drinker’s Zinfandel! Not overdone and jammy, this Zin is made in a more classical style. It has the ripe midcore of fruit but it is balanced and restrained. Pair this wine with dishes you normally would not pair with Zin—grilled chicken or lamb would be nice.

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Left and center: Clos Du Val colors and winery (photos by Marvin Collins). Right: Winemaker Kristy Melton (photo by Traci Seville).

Clos Du Val: Some Things Never Go Out of Style

By Bryan Brick

Ray-Bans, Levi's, Chuck Taylor All-Stars—there are some things that are just timeless, some things that will never go out of style, will never become boring or passé. Maybe it's due to comfort or maybe it's functionality, but I'd like to think that it is a combination of both of those things, plus reliable quality and relative affordability that keeps people coming back for more. In the wine world there are only a few brands in the U.S. that can really lay claim to this sort of timelessness. I believe that Clos Du Val is one of those brands.

Founded back in 1972 by entrepreneur John Goelet and winemaker Bernard Portet, Clos Du Val has been making some of the best wines Napa Valley has to offer on a yearly basis while keeping their pricing incredibly, and comparatively, reasonable. I was reminded of all of these traits recently when my coworkers and I visited the winery on an early Tuesday morning in August. Honestly, I don't think we saw a better trio of wines for \$25 or less on our trip, and I'm very excited to sell these wines throughout the upcoming months.

The first wine we tasted that day was possibly the best Sauvignon Blanc we tasted on the entire trip, which is saying something considering we tasted at least three others that topped \$35 and went up to \$60. The **2012 Clos Du Val Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$19.99)** was truly a great way to start the day, with its perky energy and great clarity. It certainly woke us all up from our early morning yawns and possible hangovers. Brisk and full of citrus overtones like pink grapefruit and lemon curd, this was a revelation, especially considering that it is Clos Du Val's first commercial release of the

varietal. I loved that this linear and wildly refreshing wine showed no signs of unnecessary oaking, nor did it have excessive, tropical-toned ripeness. After Clos Du Val's 40 vintages, it is amazing to me that they were keeping a wine like this in their back pocket. Lucky for us they finally released it!

One of the tried-and-true favorites from Clos Du Val has always been their Carneros Chardonnay, first released back in 1978. The **2011 Clos Du Val Carneros Chardonnay (\$19.99)** is far from oaky, and while it has a lovely weight it is not nearly as hefty as most out there these days. With a pretty nose of silica, green apple flesh and meringue, this wine really speaks of Carneros and the tangy, yet refined Chards that have become the hallmark of this cool region. On the palate there is a wonderful salted caramel aspect that runs through the entirety of the wine; some may think that could be a little cloying after a while, but it never reaches anything near that point. Add in layers of leesy richness, brioche, apple skin and a streak of something like sandstone and this is unmistakably Carneros Chardonnay of tremendous quality.

What the winery has truly gained worldwide renown for is their Cabernet. For the last 40 years they have made some of the Napa Valley's hallmark Cabs that have truly lasted the test of time. Heck, they even placed first in the 10-year "rematch" of the famous 1976 Paris Tasting that pitted Bordeaux versus California. The **2010 Clos Du Val Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$24.99)** is a blend of 86% Cab, 7% Cabernet Franc, 5% Merlot and 2% Petit Verdot that is made in the same way it has been for years: fermented in stainless steel tanks with twice-daily pumpovers and then aged for 18 months in 25% new oak. Nicely showing the energy and freshness of the 2010 vintage, this Cab has a touch brighter feel than the previous couple of vintages, with more of a red-fruited nature. Drinkable now and perfect for the upcoming holiday season's myriad parties and events, this is a classy and classic Cabernet full of cedar, red currant, sage and Bing cherry, with underlying tones of espresso and volcanic stone.



Amici: A Great K&L Friend

By Christie Cartwright

On our recent buyers trip to the Napa Valley we visited a great many wineries, met some big hitters in the industry and tasted some exceptional wines that most people only dream of tasting, and then, of course, we had to spit out that liquid gold as if it were mouthwash! At the end of a long day that started with Caymus for breakfast at eight in the morning—*sigh*—we headed for our last appointment at Amici Cellars. I have to give these folks major props because even the pros get palate fatigue from time to time, and tasting at our old friend Amici is like a breath of fresh air. These are good old boys just wanting to get together and relax, eat and drink some great wine, and every time I visit with Amici my experience is just that, usually involving a super chill barbecue at their home, or in this case at Clyde Jr.'s "up valley" Calistoga pad. It's the best tasting experience of the trip every time.

Amici's wines are getting better every year, and I am a bigger fan now more than ever because the quality of these wines far outweighs their price. Let's start with the **2012 Amici Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc (\$23.99)**. The new vintage is by far the most crisp, clean, bright and refreshing Sauvignon Blanc I've seen from them yet. It sees only 10% oak and 10% malo, and it is made with 50% Musqué clone Sauvignon Blanc. The hue is a very light straw/pale gold, with subtle aromas of clean tropical fruit and citrus without any of the über-grassy notes that you can sometimes get from Napa or New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs. At less than \$25, this is a steal for this level of Napa quality!

But wait, there's even greater value in Amici's Sonoma County wines, bottled under their Olema label. The **2012 Olema Sonoma County Chardonnay (\$14.99)** is my personal favorite style of Chardonnay. It's not a typical California oak and butter bomb that makes you feel like you're licking the inside of a freshly charred barrel. Amici ferments half the juice in French oak to get a rich leesy texture, the other half in stainless to retain the fresh, crispy, delicate balance between the two. And did I mention this is a delicious wine to drink on the deck

while watching the sunset? With subtle fruit, a touch of tropical notes, bright acid and creamy mid-palate texture, it's the perfect Chardonnay to please both your Old World and New World-biased wine-drinking friends.

The **2010 Olema Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon (\$19.99)** from Amici Cellars is one of the best deals to date for classic California Cab. The 2010 is really showing the strongest it's ever been. Super user-friendly with its juicy but not overripe mid-palate, the integrated tannins and balanced acidity keep it finessed and elegant, but bold at the same time. Showing gorgeous purple-ruby hues with great viscosity and depth, this will keep everyone at your dinner table happy, for sure!

When I was tasting through the lineup at Amici, I was wowed by how well their Cabernets were showing, especially since they're quite young. But I thought the star was their Rutherford and Yountville-sourced **2010 Amici Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$43.99)**. It was exactly what I would expect from well-made, no-expense-spared Napa Cab. Super classic in style, with that ultra-rich color of black and purple fruit and plush weight on the palate, making it feel luxurious but not over the top. Superbly elegant and finessed with integrated tannins and a polished finish. This is drinking great now, but can also cellar for another few years, if you like. *Wine Spectator*: "Firm, concentrated and well-built, with a tight band of cedar, dried berry, black licorice and crushed rock. Ends with good length and depth. Drink now through 2022."



Left to right: Bobby Donnell, assistant winemaker; owners Celia Shepard, Bob Shepard and John Harris; Joel Aiken, owner/winemaker (photo by Sara Matthews). Right: Oakville vineyards (photo by Jon van Bronkhorst).

New Releases from the Napa Valley at K&L

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2010 Chateau Montelena Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$44.99) The 2010 Montelena Napa Cabernet is a solid effort. Similar to Napanook, there is a more restrained, mineral driven backbone that defines this wine. Very Bordeaux-like, it is packed with hints of cedar, spicy red cherries, sweet herbs and coffee notes. 92 points *RP*: "A big, mouth filling wine, the 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon, shows the personality of the vintage in its intense fruit."

2009 Chateau Montelena Estate Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$114.99) The 2009 Estate Cabernet from Montelena is a lower alcohol (13.8%) wine that may be difficult for some to understand at this stage of its life. History has proven that these wines will age and develop in a cellar. We would think the 2009 is no different. The wine shows a core of fresh, restrained fruit, spice and fine, integrated tannins. Montelena makes the Estate wines to age, and this wine may be at its best in 5-10 years. 93 points *ST*, 93 points *RP*: "Even with all of its intensity, the 2009 has a silkiness that makes it incredibly delicious at this early stage. Red berries, flowers, tobacco and sweet herbs all flesh out on the generous, radiant finish."

Heitz Cellar

2008 Heitz Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$39.99) The Heitz Napa Valley is always a refreshing change of pace when it comes to Napa Cabernet. While many other Napa properties are releasing their 2010 and even 2011 Cabs, Heitz is just now releasing their 2008. This



is an excellent follow-up to the delicious 2007, even in a much more difficult vintage. Showing lots of complexity, bright cherry fruit and hints of sweet herbs, this wine is quite approachable now and should develop well in the cellar over the next five to seven years.

Dunn Vineyards

2010 Dunn Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$79.99) The 2010 Napa Cabernet is already a fairly approachable wine, given that the majority of the fruit comes from the Howell Mountain appellation. It is loaded with black currant fruit, laced with aromas of graphite, spice, cedar and mineral hints. The tannins are integrated and quite soft for a wine from Dunn. That being said, this is still a serious Cabernet that could be one of the best wines from the 2010 vintage!

Robert Mondavi

2010 Robert Mondavi "To Kalon Vineyard - Monastery Block" Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon (\$199.99) Only 20 cases of this amazing wine were made! Purchased at the 2012 Premiere Napa Valley Auction by our domestic wine buying team, here is an amazing opportunity to own a one-of-a-kind wine. The Monastery Block is a block of the To Kalon Vineyard that lies against the Mayacamas Mountains on the Oakville Bench. This part of the vineyard is planted with high-density spacing (four feet by four feet). Grapes from this block are very concentrated and intense. Winemaker Genevieve Janssens has created a wine that is not only intense and concentrated, but is



also balanced, seamless and pure. This wine will be a candidate for the cellar and will age well for many years to come.

More Napa Valley Values

2011 Carpe Diem Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$24.99) Fruit-forward with soft tannins and restrained oak, this Cab is made in a vibrant and substantial style that is very drinkable in its youth. From Christian Moueix's winemaking team (Dominus) in Yountville.

2011 Chappellet "Cervantes Mountain Cuvée" Napa Valley Bordeaux Blend (\$29.99) If you're looking for wine that is quintessentially Napa Valley, but more in the old-school style, where fruit and acidity and tannins are all in harmony, then Chappellet should be at the top of your list. In cool, rainy 2011, up in the mountains was where a grape wanted to be, with warmer nights and less humid conditions than down on the valley floor.

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