

NAPA

WINE, FOOD AND CONVERSATION FROM NAPA VALLEY VINTNERS

SPECIAL EDITION
Napa Valley's
Diverse Wines

Classic Acts

ALL ABOUT THE REGION'S
FIVE BEST-KNOWN WINES

The Merlot Renaissance

THE ICONIC WINE IS HAVING
A WELCOME RESURGENCE

On Their Own

A NEW APPRECIATION FOR
RED BLEND VARIETIES

BOUNDLESS VARIETY

The diversity of Napa Valley's
growing conditions produces a wealth
of distinctive wine grapes



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CONTACT US
Napa Valley Vintners
P.O. Box 141
St. Helena, CA 94574
707.963.3388

FOLLOW US



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Napa Valley contains, within this small and beautiful place on earth, some of the most diverse grape growing conditions in the world.



This special issue of NAPA magazine is devoted to that diversity: the grapes grown, the wines made and the winemakers who seek out a particular grape and why.

We hope this primer can act as a guide to exploring the kaleidoscope of Napa Valley grape varieties.

AMERICAN TASTEMAKERS ON NAPA VALLEY WINES

Leading sommeliers share their insights into why Pinot Noirs from the Los Carneros region are consistently excellent choices.



“For me, the appeal of serving Pinot Noir from Los Carneros is exactly what a named region is supposed to provide: a consistent assurance of quality and style. What is that style? Delicious, pure, luscious-but-balanced, ripe and red-fruited, with just a kiss of fresh herb and flower aromatics.”

—CHARLIE BERG, SOMMELIER, LANDRY’S, HOUSTON, TX



“With a cool, breezy and foggy climate, Los Carneros isn’t immediately what you think of when you hear Napa Valley. But I’m always delighted when reintroduced to this soft, mysterious and nuanced wine. Complex and vibrant, perfumed yet fresh, it’s a wine that rewards exploration.”

—CHRISTINA BROWN, SOMMELIER AND MANAGER, SOFIA RESTAURANT & BAR, TORONTO, ONTARIO



“In a restaurant that’s tasting menu-focused, Los Carneros Pinot Noirs have the versatility to stand up to the entire experience. From their bright and fresh nature, to their seductively toned fruit and savory nuances, these Pinots fit the bill for guests looking for a wine to take them through their multicourse meal.”

—RYAN NEVITT, SOMMELIER AND MANAGER, GEORGE RESTAURANT, CALEDONIA, CANADA



“Los Carneros Pinot Noir is unique because depending on the producer the wines can achieve full ripeness and be soft and fruit driven or can provide compelling, Old World-like acidity, lending themselves to a wide variety of pairings, including those with pork, duck or mushrooms.”

—DUSTIN CUTLER, BEVERAGE DIRECTOR, POST 390 RESTAURANT, BOSTON, MA



Here

Napa Valley's diverse growing conditions produce

We

an astonishing variety of wine grapes

—
BY MICHAELA JARVIS

Grow

People who think of Napa Valley as a uniform growing region—a land evenly endowed by Mother Nature to make luscious Cabs—don't know Napa Valley.

In fact, although Napa Valley is a small area, just 30 miles long and five miles wide, it would be difficult to name another wine region with as much diversity in the shape of its land, how it was formed, the types of soil it offers, its climatic influences, range of altitudes and varied exposures to sunlight.

For example, pick a Napa Valley summer day. A Pinot Noir vine in the southern Los Carneros American Viticultural Area (AVA) of Napa Valley would likely be enjoying calcium-rich clay soil, cool marine breezes off San Pablo Bay, a fog-chilled temperature of about 75 degrees and a somewhat modest amount of warm sun. Meanwhile, a Zinfandel vine growing at the northern end of the valley, at the top of the Calistoga AVA, might be spreading its roots in balanced, loamy soil, basking in 12 hours of warm sun and 90-degree temperatures, followed by a nip of cold fog from a gap in the Mayacamas Mountains.

With such diversity in growing conditions, scores of different varieties of grapes grow in Napa Valley. More than 30 of those varieties each represent 10 or more acres of vineyards.



After Cabernet and Chardonnay, Napa Valley produces Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Zinfandel, Petit Verdot, Malbec, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Petite Sirah and Pinot Gris. In some of the closer-in pockets and far-off reaches of the valley, there are more unusual grapes: Barbera, Grignolino, Mondeuse, Nero d'Avola, Grenache, Pinot Meunier, Tempranillo, Albariño, Grenache Blanc, Muscadelle, Malvasia Bianca, Pinot Blanc, Roussanne and Scuppernong, among others.

Not only can the valley produce a wide variety of grapes in its variegated topography, microclimates and soil types, but each of those grapes can be grown differently, depending on the particular terroir. Grape vines can be pruned a certain way to regulate how much sun the grapes get, vines can be irrigated and grape hang times can diverge greatly, depending on what's happening in a particular vineyard and what a winemaker envisions for a certain wine.

Even Napa Valley's soil has disparate qualities. Soils on the valley floor tend to be deep and loamy. Mountain soils are shallow and relatively infertile—the vines struggle and produce intensely flavored smaller berries. Soils toward Los Carneros tend to be calcium-rich clay.

The winemaking itself can also differ. Among the many methods winemakers use to capitalize on the attributes of a certain year's harvest are lees stirring, malolactic fermentation and fermentation in neutral stainless steel, concrete vessels or oak barrels.

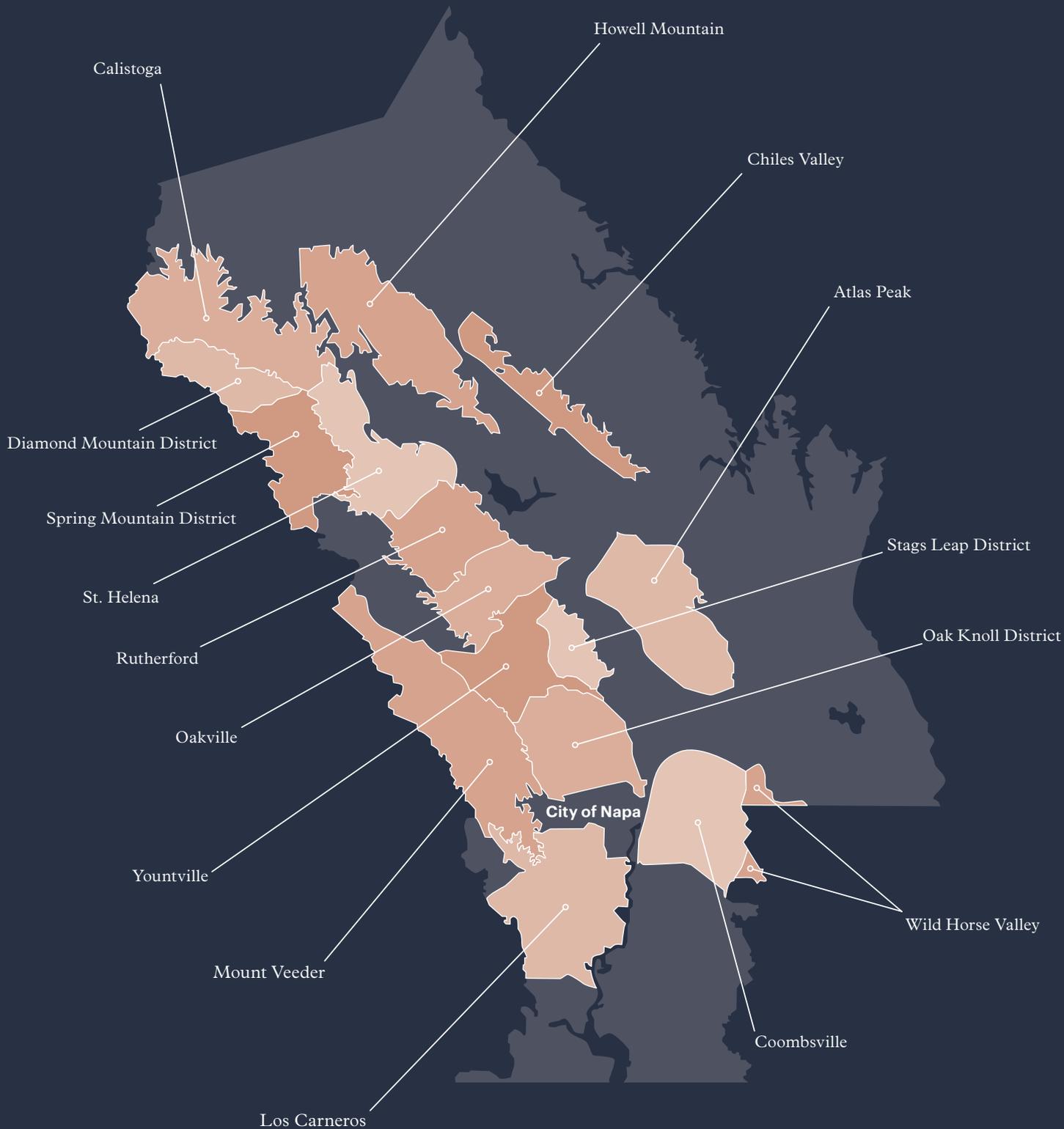
Unlike in Europe, vintners in Napa Valley can mostly grow what they want and craft their winemaking techniques according to what they think will be best for the individual grape of a particular site to produce a particular wine.

The result? An amazing variety of wines in an equally amazing diversity of styles.



NAPA VALLEY VARIETY

The United States formally uses the term American Viticultural Area (AVA) rather than the word appellation when recognizing specific wine regions. Napa Valley has 16 “nested” AVAs designated because of their unique characteristics.



CALISTOGA

This valley-floor AVA experiences huge temperature swings, higher daytime temperatures of up to 100-plus degrees and lower nighttime temperatures down to 40 degrees. The northern part of this AVA is cooled through a small gap in the Mayacamas Mountains that lets in air from the Pacific.

> ELEVATION: 300 to 1,200 feet

HOWELL MOUNTAIN

This AVA is warmer and drier than the other AVAs. There is little marine influence because this area sits above the fogline. Located on the eastern side of the valley, most of the vineyards cover western-facing slopes of the Vaca Mountains and receive intense afternoon sun.

> ELEVATION: 600 to 2,600 feet

DIAMOND MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

This AVA is far from the cool breezes of San Pablo Bay but is only moderately warm because of its altitude and eastern-facing slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains, which do not get the hot afternoon sun. Summer temperatures range from 50 to 90 degrees.

> ELEVATION: 400 to 2,200 feet

ST. HELENA

Far from San Pablo Bay, this AVA, in the narrowest part of Napa Valley, is warm, with little fog or wind. Summer temperatures often peak in the mid-to-high 90s.

> ELEVATION: 100 to 700 feet

CHILES VALLEY

This AVA is situated in the eastern hills of Napa Valley. Although there is little marine influence here, temperatures are lower than on the valley floor, peaking in the mid-80s and going down to below 50 degrees at night. With cooler temperatures, as well as strong winds, harvest comes later than on the valley floor.

> ELEVATION: 600 to 1,200 feet

SPRING MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

The temperatures here are cool to moderate, because of the above-the-fogline elevation and eastern-facing slopes, which avoid the hot afternoon sun. Hours of sunshine here are abundant, but days are cooler and nights are warmer than on the valley floor. Temperatures peak at about 85 degrees.

> ELEVATION: 600 to 2,600 feet

RUTHERFORD

This AVA is only slightly influenced by early-morning fog, so summer peak temperatures are a bit warmer than in Oakville and Stags Leap District, which are farther to the south. The western bench area is cooler, with less late-afternoon sun and marine air. Summer highs are in the mid-90s, with a dramatic range from day to night.

> ELEVATION: Sea level to 600 feet

MOUNT VEEDER

A mountain AVA, Mount Veeder has cool to moderate temperatures, with typical summer highs reaching 85 degrees. Most vineyards are above the fogline, meaning nights are warmer and days are cooler than on the valley floor.

> ELEVATION: 500 to 2,600 feet

OAKVILLE

This AVA is moderately warm, with temperatures often in the mid-90s, as it is situated mostly on the valley floor. Some vineyards, however, are on the hillsides. West-facing hillsides receive warm afternoon sun, while east-facing ones cool as the sun sets behind the Mayacamas Mountains.

> ELEVATION: Sea level to 500 feet

ATLAS PEAK

This cool mountain AVA has temperatures that are 10 to 15 degrees cooler than the valley floor, rarely rising above 90 degrees. Because it is above the fogline, however, it gets more hours of sunlight and has less temperature differential between summer days and nights.

> ELEVATION: 760 to 2,600 feet

YOUNTVILLE

Although on the valley floor, Yountville has cool summer mornings and comfortable summer afternoons because of the cooling marine air and fog it gets from San Pablo Bay. Summer highs may reach 90 degrees; lows can drop into the mid-50s.

> ELEVATION: 20 to 200 feet

STAGS LEAP DISTRICT

Also on the valley floor, this AVA gets late afternoon marine winds that lower warm temperatures. Summer temperatures can reach 100 degrees, but more regularly are in the mid-90s.

> ELEVATION: Sea level to 500 feet

OAK KNOLL DISTRICT

This district gets a lot of marine influence from San Pablo Bay, with fog often remaining until late morning and afternoon breezes, so it is cooler than its up-valley neighbors. Its temperatures are moderate to cool, reaching only 92 degrees, despite being on the valley floor.

> ELEVATION: Sea level to 500 feet

COOMBSVILLE

Because of its proximity to San Pablo Bay and the Petaluma Gap to the west, this AVA is moderately cool, rarely exceeding 80 degrees. It is warmer than Los Carneros and its many western-facing slopes get extra sun in the afternoon.

> ELEVATION: Sea level to 700 feet

WILD HORSE VALLEY

In the Vaca Mountains and close to San Pablo Bay and Suisun Bay, this is one of the cooler nested AVAs of Napa Valley.

> ELEVATION: 600 to 1,900 feet

LOS CARNEROS

At sea level, but with marine winds right off of San Pablo Bay as well as the Petaluma Gap, this AVA is cool, with temperatures rarely exceeding 80 degrees.

> ELEVATION: Sea level to 700 feet

NAPA VALLEY

CLASSICS



THE PERSONALITIES BEHIND THE REGION'S FIVE BEST-KNOWN WINE VARIETIES

—
BY JESS LANDER

There are more than three dozen grape varieties grown in Napa Valley, but these five—Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel and Sauvignon Blanc (along with Merlot, featured on page 16)—are an integral part of the region's history and what it is best known for. Yet within each of these classic varieties, a diverse range of styles is being produced and poured by Napa Valley vintners.

Of course, one glass of wine is not fully representative of the grape variety, but just one of the many ways that a grape can express itself. This range is influenced by a number of factors in both the vineyard and winery, including soil, climate, fermentation vessels, oak barrels and

cellar aging. As a result, the flavors, aromas and mouthfeel of a wine vary from winery to winery and vintage to vintage.

Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon is famous for being big and powerful, yet there are many expressions of the grape that are soft and elegant. Chardonnay can taste crisp and lean, or round and buttery. As for Zinfandel? It's no longer crafted sweet and pink, but red, dry and complex. Once you understand the dynamic personalities of these varieties and the factors that contribute to each one, you'll be better able to select your perfect bottle from the shelf and pair it with a favorite food.

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

The undeniable king of red grapes in Napa Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon accounts for 50 percent of the total production and 68 percent of the crop value. This vine is grown throughout Napa Valley and achieves a variety of expressions depending on its vineyard site. Cabernet Sauvignon displays a wide range of black fruits on the palate, including currant, cherry and plum and often shows notes of spice, a result of oak aging.

These full-bodied wines can be dense and powerful in youth but are known to age gracefully in the cellar, oftentimes for more than 10 to 20 years. When young, they are best decanted for one to two hours and matched with robust red meat dishes, such as game and braised lamb, while older Cabs can be enjoyed right from the bottle and are superb accompaniments to roasts, steaks and aged cheese.



PRIMARY NOTES



BLACK CHERRY



BLACK PLUM



TOBACCO



GRAPHITE

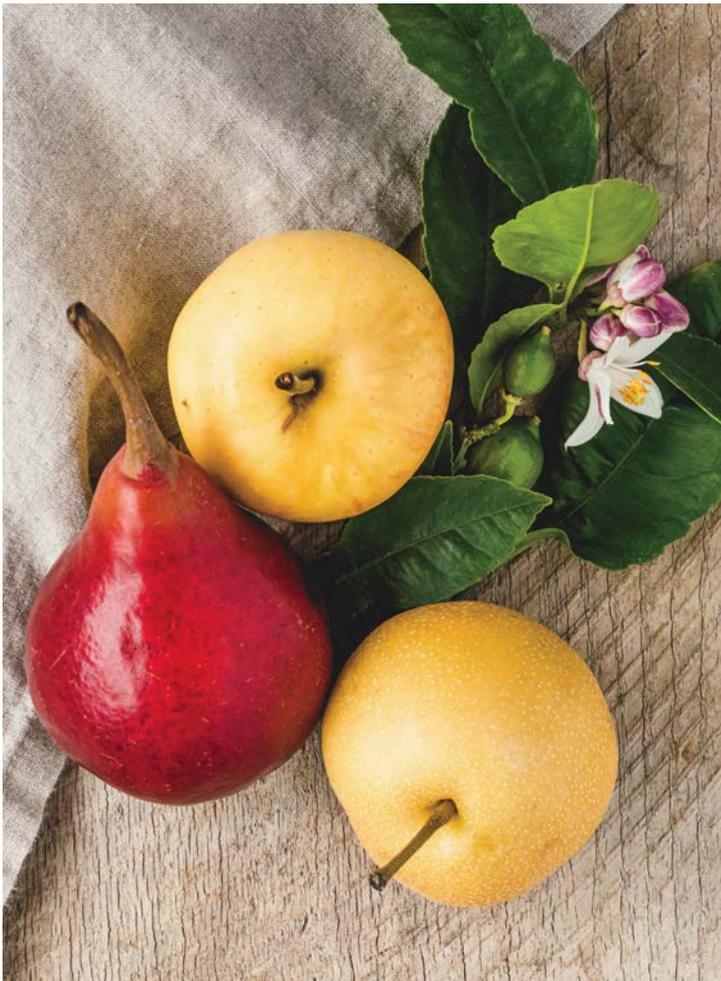


BAKING SPICE

CELLAR LIFE
10-20+ YEARS

SERVING TEMP.
60-68°F (16-20°C)

DECANT TIME
1-2 HOURS



PRIMARY NOTES



YELLOW APPLE



VANILLA



PINEAPPLE



CITRUS BLOSSOM



HONEYCOMB

CELLAR LIFE
5-10 YEARS

SERVING TEMP.
45-55°F (7-13°C)

DECANT TIME
< 30 MIN.

CHARDONNAY

The second-most planted grape variety in Napa Valley (14 percent of all vines planted), Chardonnay is extremely adaptable and thrives throughout many corners of the region. From the cooler AVAs like Los Carneros and Coombsville to sun-kissed, high-elevation vineyards on Mount Veeder and Spring Mountain, and coveted parcels on the valley floor, Chardonnay grapes can provide winemakers with a breadth of characteristics to play with.

Chardonnay has long been called “the wine-maker’s grape,” for few wines are as influenced by winemaking practices as profoundly as this grape variety. Barrel fermentation, lees stirring and malolactic fermentation are the primary techniques used to create complex aromas and flavors in this wine, like apple, vanilla, pineapple and citrus. As a result, Napa Valley Chardonnay can range in style from fresh, crisp and lively to rich, round and buttery—and thus can accompany a wide variety of dishes, like seafood, pork and poultry.



PINOT NOIR

The earthy, ethereal aromas and silky texture of Pinot Noir have beguiled wine connoisseurs for centuries, yet there are few areas on earth that can coax the magic out of this fickle grape variety that's notoriously hard to grow and challenging to handle in the winery. While coastal California possesses several areas that produce first-rate Pinot Noir, Napa Valley's cool-climate Los Carneros was one of the first in the state to recognize its potential.

A thin-skinned grape with less pigmentation than many red varieties, most Pinot Noir goes through a cool maceration period (called a cold soak) before fermentation begins to extract additional tannin. Medium-bodied with red-fruit flavors of cherry and raspberry, one of the trademark qualities of Pinot Noir is its bright acidity, which makes it a versatile partner with food. Perfect with game birds and grilled lamb chops, it's also one of the few red wines that pairs well with seafood—think salmon, tuna and bouillabaisse.



PRIMARY NOTES



CHERRY



RASPBERRY



MUSHROOM



DARJEELING TEA



VANILLA

CELLAR LIFE
10+ YEARS

SERVING TEMP.
55-60°F (13-16°C)

DECANT TIME
30 MIN.



PRIMARY NOTES



BLACKBERRY



TOBACCO



STRAWBERRY
PRESERVES



CINNAMON



LICORICE

CELLAR LIFE
5-10 YEARS

SERVING TEMP.
60-68°F (16-20°C)

DECANT TIME
30 MIN.

ZINFANDEL

An exceedingly versatile grape variety with a rich history, Zinfandel was the mainstay of 19th-century winemaking in California. After Prohibition, it had a renaissance in the American wine scene as White Zinfandel (the slightly sweet rosé), but today, it's crafted into the dry, complex style of red wine that the original winemakers of Napa Valley would know well.

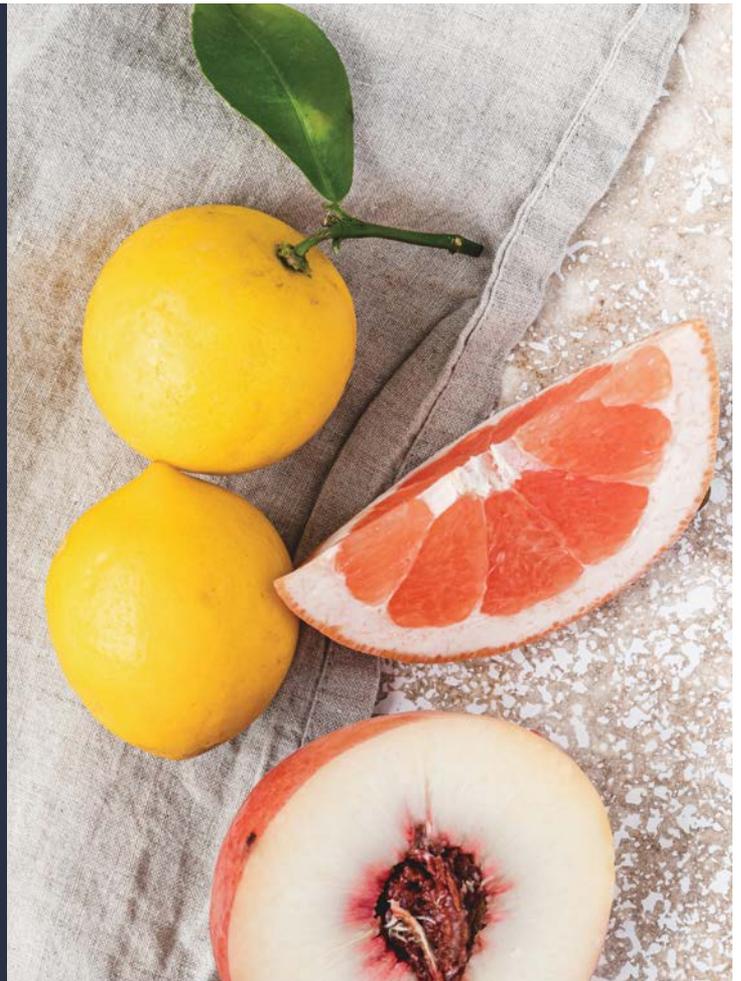
Old Zinfandel vines in Napa Valley are capable of producing rich, heady and jammy wines with notes of spice and black pepper. Zinfandel is also made in lighter, more food-friendly renditions and is often used as the base for fortified wines. The bold, spicy character of Zinfandel makes it a perfect partner with barbecue.



SAUVIGNON BLANC

The intense flavor profile of Sauvignon Blanc grabs your attention at first sip. Herbaceous, grassy notes and vibrant acidity that makes your mouth water are hallmarks of this grape and it is capable of showing an array of fruit characters, including honeydew, guava and grapefruit.

Most Sauvignon Blanc is fermented in neutral vessels, such as stainless steel and concrete eggs, to allow its distinctive character to shine through. Some Sauvignon Blanc, however, is fermented and aged in oak, creating more layered flavors and texture in the finished wine and is often labeled Fumé Blanc. Fresh, bright and perfect for warm weather, Sauvignon Blanc goes well with light summer fare and fresh salads and is wonderful with shellfish and goat cheese.



PRIMARY NOTES



HONEYDEW



GUAVA



MANGO



GRAPEFRUIT



LEMON

CELLAR LIFE
3-5 YEARS

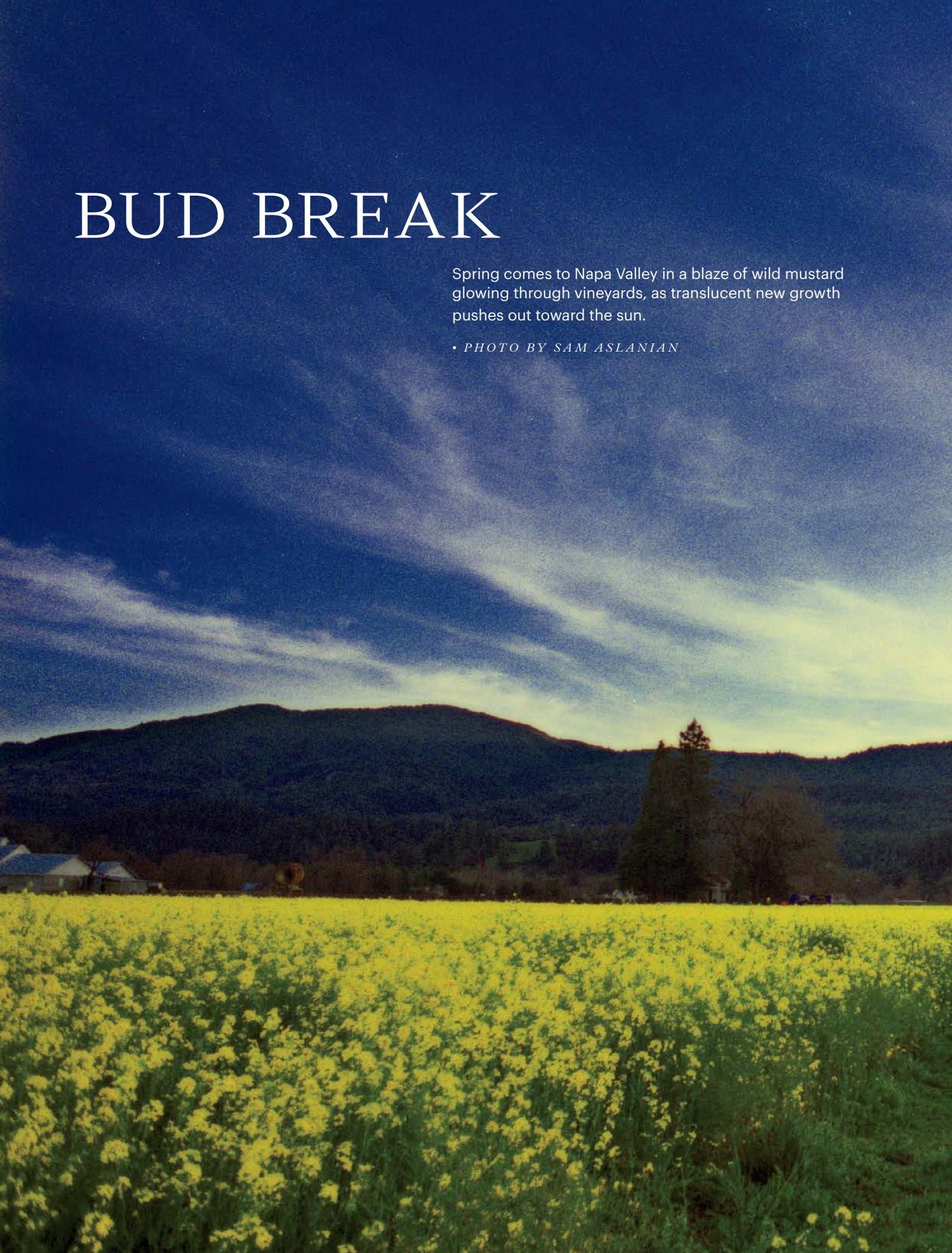
SERVING TEMP.
45-55°F (7-13°C)

DECANT TIME
< 30 MIN.

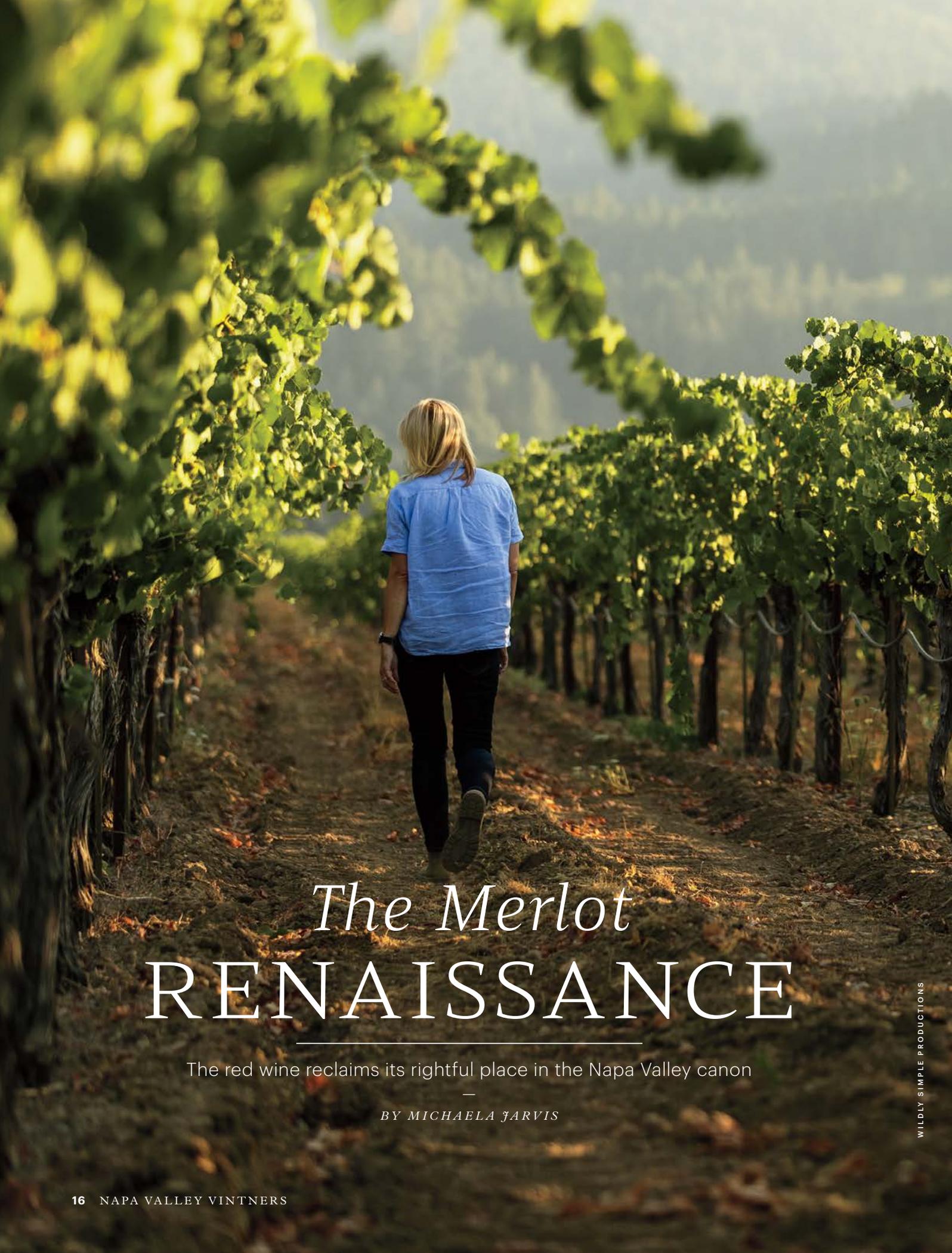
BUD BREAK

Spring comes to Napa Valley in a blaze of wild mustard glowing through vineyards, as translucent new growth pushes out toward the sun.

• *PHOTO BY SAM ASLANIAN*







The Merlot
RENAISSANCE

The red wine reclaims its rightful place in the Napa Valley canon

—
BY MICHAELA JARVIS

WILDLY SIMPLE PRODUCTIONS



A beloved grape of Bordeaux since at least its earliest recorded mention in 1784, Merlot has been going strong for more than 200 years in Europe. In the 1990s, as red wine became more popular in the United States, the grape—thought to be named after a blackbird (*merle* in French) that ate the berries—saw a fast rise in popularity and was correctly associated with the production of lush, silken red wines.

Then in 2004, everything went sideways. *Sideways*, that is, as in the popular film where the main character pronounced: “If anyone orders Merlot, I’m leaving, I am NOT drinking any (expletive) Merlot!” The impact of the film went beyond the box office and Merlot sales dropped; according to one estimate, the Merlot market, particularly in the United States and Great Britain, lost \$400 million in the decade following the movie. By 2010, California’s Merlot-planted acreage had dropped by about 10 percent.

Thankfully, consumers have now put that cinematic stigma behind them. And in the meantime, the downturn discouraged regions that were producing lower-quality Merlot intended to appeal to a mass audience from growing the grape.

These days, particularly in Napa Valley, Merlot has been resuming its rightful place as a much-loved variety. In general, the valley’s climate and soil are perfect for growing Merlot, and it is one of the most planted grape varieties after Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay. At the same time, differences among Napa Valley’s nested AVAs allow for a wide diversity of Merlot out of the vineyard. Whether those grapes result in an intense, full-bodied style with notes of plum and blackberry; a more medium-bodied wine with fresh, red fruit flavors (raspberries, strawberries); or some variation or combination of the two, Merlot is easy to love—drinkable on its own or as a perfect complement to many foods.



Barnett Vineyards' Merlot grapes are grown on the steep sides of Spring Mountain.



Clos Du Val President Jon-Mark Chappellet and winemaker Ted Henry sample the winery's Merlot.

A PASSION FOR MERLOT

Steadfast Merlot lovers Margaret and Dan Duckhorn of Duckhorn Vineyards have been championing it as a stand-alone variety since their winery's inaugural vintage in 1978.

"At Duckhorn Vineyards, we have always carried the torch for New World Merlot," says winemaker Renée Ary. "Our founders' passion for it has been a part of our DNA for the past 40-plus years."

According to Ary, Merlot has "a pleasure factor that is off the charts," "a gorgeous supple texture," and "a brightness and purity that makes it wonderful with food." She recommends that people who have not been drinking it in recent years should discover, or rediscover, "how phenomenal it is."

"If there has been a knock against Merlot, it's that it's too delicious, too supple and basically too easy to love," Ary says. "I don't see it that way. We

"IF THERE HAS BEEN A KNOCK AGAINST MERLOT, IT'S THAT IT'S TOO DELICIOUS, TOO SUPPLE AND BASICALLY TOO EASY TO LOVE. I DON'T SEE IT THAT WAY. WE MAKE SERIOUS MERLOTS WITH THE STRUCTURE, COMPLEXITY AND AGING POTENTIAL TO STAND ALONGSIDE THE BEST WINES IN THE WORLD." — RENÉE ARY

make serious Merlots with the structure, complexity and aging potential to stand alongside the best wines in the world."

TASTE OF THE TERROIR

To winemaker David Tate, Merlot is one of the varieties that best expresses the terroir where it is grown. The Merlot he makes for Barnett Vineyards comes from grapes grown in the steep and rocky terraces on top of Spring Mountain; the wines reflect the struggle of the vines in the infertile, volcanic soil.

"The beauty of the fruit that you get off these hillside vines is amazing," Tate says. "When you crush the bunches of smaller berries, the extraction, the flavor is so much more concentrated."

The hard-won smaller berries are so intensely flavored, with a very low juice-to-skin ratio, that Tate says he has to be cautious with the extraction—or drawing out of the grape skins' flavor, color and tannin—so the resulting wine has structure and aging potential without being overly tannic.

"A great Merlot, in my opinion, has black plum, heading toward blackberry, with cinnamon and clove," Tate adds. "Merlot is viscous and lush."

Tate has also witnessed Merlot's post-*Sideways* comeback.

"Merlot had been stagnant ever since that terrible movie came out and told everyone to stop drinking it," Tate explains. "Now, they go back to it and say, 'This is wonderful.'"

RANGING REDS

Clos Du Val is a storied institution in Napa Valley, with two very distinct Merlots from two vastly



Twomey Cellars creates Merlot from grapes harvested at Soda Canyon Ranch.

different areas.

“We grow Merlot in Stags Leap District as well as Carneros within Napa Valley,” says winemaker Ted Henry, explaining that the difference in temperature between the two areas makes for two dramatically different styles. “I find the Stags Leap Merlot is more powerful and rich, and the Carneros Merlot tends to be more fruit-forward and fresh.”

Henry reveres the Merlot grape, pointing out that it is the main grape planted in Bordeaux and he says Napa Valley is one of the ideal wine regions in which to grow it.

Like the two very different styles of Merlot that Clos Du Val creates, Napa Valley can produce a wide range of Merlot styles, due to the vineyards’ different elevations, aspects (exposure to the sun) and soil types.

Henry’s preferred flavor profile for Merlot includes “a considerable amount of body and some spice and chocolate notes to complement the red fruit that the wine typically shows. It should be rich and have a long, lingering finish.”

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT

Gary Brookman, of Miner Family Winery, thinks Napa Valley Merlot should get more respect.

“I do not believe Merlot gets its due,” says Brookman, Miner’s general manager and director of winemaking. “Consumers, rightly so, associate Napa Valley with world-class Cabernet Sauvignon. However, the climatic and soil conditions that are necessary for growing great Cabernet Sauvignon are also required for outstanding Merlot.”

In general, Brookman says, Merlot is silkier,

softer and more fruit-forward than Cabernet, often pairing better with less hearty meals. “Consumers deserve more choices of wines to drink and Merlot is a wonderful alternative to Cabernet Sauvignon.”

How does Brookman describe his perfect Merlot? “Great Merlot should have a very dark fruit character that is reminiscent of boysenberries and blueberries, with floral notes and hints of vanilla,” he says. “Acidity, while present, should be on the lower side to really showcase the inherent silky smoothness of the fruit. Well-made Merlot should also be age-worthy.”

A PERFECT PAIRING

One of the reasons Nate Weis of Twomey Cellars loves Merlot is its ability to pair with a huge variety of foods. Weis, who is vice president of winegrowing, says Twomey’s executive chef, Dominic Orsini, “has found it wildly fun with all sorts of dishes, from vegetable to protein to cheese courses.”

“The acidity and bright fruits make it a very versatile wine that can complement many different cuisines,” Weis says.

Weis thinks that Merlot’s texture makes it extremely approachable and enjoyable. “The critical piece of Merlot is always the texture,” he says, “velvety tannins and a round and giving mid-palate.”

Over the past 20 years since its founding, Twomey Cellars has remained focused on Merlot, standing by it through its ups and downs in popularity.

“We’re stubborn, passionate and not particularly concerned with external validation,” says Weis. “We make wines we love to drink.”



TINY JEWELS

GROWN IN SUPER-SMALL QUANTITIES, THESE FOUR VARIETIES ARE WELL WORTH THE EFFORT IN SEEKING THEM OUT • BY JESS LANDER

While classic red wine varieties are what people often conjure when it comes to Napa Valley, a handful of producers are going against the grain and working with a particular passion to introduce consumers to lesser-known grapes, like Mondeuse, Albariño, Charbono and Barbera. Some of these grapes were as widespread in Napa Valley 100 years ago as Cabernet is today, while others have always been elusive, grown in the tiniest pockets of land.

For each of these winemakers, their gravitation to unconventional grapes is not economically driven. Instead, they are individually inspired by deeply personal sentiments—perhaps a desire to preserve Napa Valley’s rich history, a chance to educate consumers beyond the traditional or to share their love for a wine discovered on travels across the globe.



MONDEUSE

This grape is undoubtedly the rarest of them all, for there's only one Napa Valley producer making it today. Stephen Lagier and Carole Meredith of Lagier Meredith planted Mondeuse vines on Mount Veeder in 2007, effectively bringing the variety back to California, where it was widespread in the 1800s.

Related to Syrah, this medium-bodied, light-colored red wine hails from France's Savoie region and is known for its spice, floral characters and earthiness, but because Napa gets more heat, Lagier Meredith's Mondeuse has more color and weight than what's typical. "We knew the wines from the Savoie were really interesting, flavorful wines," says Stephen Lagier, who admits that Mondeuse isn't the easiest grape to work with. "One of the challenges is it tends to be fairly productive in terms of yield, so you really need to thin it down aggressively to get it ripe. It takes a bit of work to make fine wine out of it."

BARBERA

There were only five tons of this Italian red grape—which produces a high-acid wine showcasing dark fruits and earthiness—crushed in Napa Valley in 2018 and Calistoga's Robert Biale Vineyards accounted for 1.5 tons of that. The vineyard's proprietor, Robert Biale, sources it from the 100-year-old Gaudi Carli vineyard in Calistoga.

"It's a variety that's undervalued and underutilized," says Biale, who grew up in Napa Valley and recalls drinking Barbera from Louis M. Martini Winery. "One of its best attributes is that it comes in at a lower alcohol naturally. It really reveals its best self because it retains its acidity. We don't have to do anything to it and it's fresh and pure."

ALBARIÑO

A longtime lover of aromatic white wines, when Peter Franus of Peter Franus Wine Company had the chance to work with the Spanish variety Albariño in 2009, he jumped at it, joining a very small club of Napa Valley vintners. "It's in the vein of a Sauvignon Blanc and a Pinot Grigio, but it has its own characteristics of citrus and an almond note with great acidity," Franus says.

Franus' Albariño comes from the Stewart Vineyard in Los Carneros. Most California Albariño is grown in the Central Coast area, but this vineyard has a special X-factor that makes the growing conditions more similar to the terroir of Spain. "It's surrounded by a levee, so there's a bit of a saltwater infusion," Franus says. "Famous Albariño in Spain grows near the sea, so this saline impact kind of mimics that."

CHARBONO

Andy Jones, winemaker for Vermeil Wines, describes this late-ripening, easy-drinking red grape as a cross between Syrah and Pinot Noir, with a deep color and medium body. Most famously produced by Inglenook for more than 100 years, Charbono was planted prominently throughout Napa Valley at the turn of the 20th century, but those vines have since almost entirely been replaced with other varieties. Today, only 45 acres of Charbono exist in Napa Valley. "People used to use Charbono as a blending varietal because it has that deep, dark depth to it," Jones says.

Vermeil sources Charbono from Frediani Vineyard in Calistoga, where many of the 11.5 acres of vines are 85 years old. "I think it's a pretty distinct varietal," he says, "especially in today's day and age where there's nothing quite like it and it's grown in such small areas and amounts."





Surprising Summer Whites

DISCOVER THE PLEASURES OF VIOGNIER, CHENIN BLANC, SEMILLON AND PINOT GRIS

—
BY CATHERINE BUGUÉ

Summer warmth. Time for tending to a garden, salads and grilling, listening to music, reading in some quiet, shaded spot and, generally, just being outside.

Perhaps it's time, also, for a bit of wine adventure in exploring Napa Valley's lesser-known crisp white wines during your summer reveries.

Who knows? You might just come upon a new favorite and imagine the conversations you might have with your other wine-loving friends.



A QUARTET OF UNEXPECTED WHITES

VIOGNIER is just sexy; perhaps there is no better word for it. With heady aromas of succulent peaches, apricots, honeysuckle, jasmine, orange blossom and spice, it is a dry, soft-textured wine whose fruity freshness pairs delightfully with goat cheese toasts drizzled with local honey. A discussion ensues about the grape's great rise in popularity, with plantings from Los Carneros to Calistoga, and numerous nested AVAs in between.

The CHENIN BLANC grape holds a special place in Napa Valley's heart: it was once the most planted white grape variety here before many of its historic vines were replaced by red grape varieties. Numerous producers, however, keep the torch lit for Chenin Blanc wines in the valley. A fun variety of aromas and flavors from lemon and tangerine citrus to guava and ripe red apples with mineral, crushed-rock notes can be found in the wines. Chenin Blanc pairs deliciously with chilled Kumamoto oysters, especially when the latter are squeezed with lemon juice, bridging the fresh citrusy flavors in the wine.

SEMILLON's magic, you discover, is in its yin-yang of freshness and richness. It has the weighty feel of a Chardonnay with refreshing flavors of lemon, pear and apricot when used to make a dry, white wine. It's the richness that makes the wines stand up to seafood steaks, and simply seasoned foods are best so the flavors don't overpower the delicate fruits of a dry Semillon wine.

PINOT GRIS is a chameleon: it can produce crisp, fresh citrusy wines such as those made in northern Italy under the name Pinot Grigio, or honeyed, exotic elixirs like those in Alsace, France. Napa Valley brings the best of these two famed styles together, joining fresh, juicy peach and apricot flavors with a bit more of the honeyed weight from our sun-ripened fruit. The wines can be deliciously paired with grilled shrimp, a tangy-sweet teriyaki glaze bridging the fruitiness of the wine and the Pinot Gris' fuller body working well with shrimp's richness.

STANDING ON THEIR OWN

ONCE USED PRIMARILY IN RED BLENDS, THESE APPEALING WINE VARIETIES ARE GAINING NEW STATURE • BY JESS LANDER

While Cabernet Sauvignon is the star in Napa Valley, there's usually a cast of lesser-known supporting actors that help refine and perfect each bottling. Historically, varieties like Petit Verdot, Malbec and Cabernet Franc have been grown for and blended into red wines, especially Cabernet Sauvignon. Though blended in small quantities, these grapes contribute important factors such as tan-

nin, color and complexity to the finished wine.

The Cabernet Sauvignon grape often gets most of the credit, but lately, these blending grapes have been getting their moment in the spotlight. Napa Valley vintners have started to recognize the unique varietal characters and nuances of these individual grapes and have identified specific sites where they thrive.

HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM THESE UP-AND-COMING STAND-ALONE WINES



PETIT VERDOT

Full-bodied and intensely aromatic, Petit Verdot contributes tannin, deep color and beautiful florality to red blends, but when bottled on its own, it's known for expressing rich dark fruits, fresh tobacco and coffee notes. Like Cabernet, it can also age for more than 10 years.

Joe Shirley, winemaker for Napa Cellars, first discovered Petit Verdot when he inherited a small amount originally planted for a Meritage blend. "At the end of its time in barrel, the wine was so impressive that we decided to bottle a small amount of it on its own, and over time it proved to be an interesting wine with excellent aging capability," he says. Today, Napa Cellars makes a Petit Verdot from Coombsville, which Shirley says is the perfect climate for the grape. "It's warm enough to ripen a modest crop, but not so warm that it ripens too quickly. This allows for a longer growing period, which seems to result in better tannin and color development."

MALBEC

Malbec is most widely produced in Argentina but is beloved in Napa Valley for its ability to add tannin, color and a deep complexity to classic red blends. When it's bottled as a single varietal wine, this full-bodied red possesses dark fruit flavors like blueberry and plum.

The Hess Collection originally planted Malbec vines more than 20 years ago on Mount Veeder for blending, but chief winemaker Dave Guffy says that the quality of fruit it produced made it an "obvious choice" to showcase as a single varietal. The wine is one of Hess' most sought-after offerings in its Small Block Series. "Our Malbec grows exceptionally well on Mount Veeder where our thinner soils and cool climate help to deliver fruit that is soft, juicy and luscious," says Guffy. "Supple on the palate, Malbec is truly a beautiful varietal because it is full-bodied and complex, with a structure and remarkably smooth finish that set it apart."



CABERNET FRANC

One of the genetic parents of Cabernet Sauvignon (along with Sauvignon Blanc), Cabernet Franc has long contributed finesse and a peppery perfume to red blends around the world. But Oakville Ranch has long recognized the potential of Cabernet Franc and has been bottling it as a single varietal wine since 1993.

"My first exposure to Oakville Ranch Cabernet Franc was revelatory," says winemaker Jennifer Rue. "I had previously regarded it almost exclusively in a supporting role. But in the eastern hills of Oakville, the varied aspects and exposures, intense late afternoon summer sun and almost technicolor red, well-drained soil is precisely what Cabernet Franc needs to create a dynamic and stunning stand-alone wine." On its own, Rue says the more ethereal characters of Cabernet Franc—rose petals, raspberry, and the coveted combination of cassis and violets—reveal themselves, while the traditional herbal notes take on a sappy freshness.

★
PERFECT FOOD
SAUVIGNON
BLANC
PAIRINGS

Stylish Variations on a Theme

The diverse characteristics of Sauvignon Blanc make it an ideal complement for many summer foods



CALI GODLEY

WINE & FOOD PAIRINGS

Growers and winemakers in Napa Valley are creating an exciting array of Sauvignon Blanc styles by carefully timing harvests and giving great attention to the wines in the cellar.

When Sauvignon Blanc is picked earlier, the grape's inherent grassy zestiness can add intriguing warm weather flavors to the wine's citrus and stone fruits. This style pairs deliciously with lemon-spritzed seafoods.

A longer hang time on our sun-splashed vines and the wine will show juicy tropical fruits, making them particularly tasty with barbecue chicken or seafood lathered in a tangy pineapple or mango sauce.

Delicate white blossom aromatics can be retained by a cooler fermentation in the cellar, and these wines are wonderful with summer salads, especially one with aromatic strawberry slices.

A richer texture can be attained by stirring the wine on its lees and that extra body makes these wines pair well with weightier fish steaks such as ahi.

Toasty, spicy complexity from time in oak barrels will enhance the fruity character of Sauvignon Blancs and these wines are delicious with pulled pork sandwiches or grilled chicken.

With so many Sauvignon Blanc styles made in Napa Valley, it will be a tasty adventure to find your favorite.



DEVILED EGGS WITH ALMONDS AND CHIVES

SOMETIMES THE SIMPLEST OF FOODS SHOW A WINE'S CHARACTER TO BEST ADVANTAGE, WITH JUST A TOUCH OR TWO OF FLAVORS THAT MAKE CONNECTIONS TO WHAT'S IN YOUR GLASS.

In this make-in-advance and chilling-in-the-fridge dish, the creaminess of the filling acts as counterpoint to the acid in Sauvignon Blanc, the surprise hint of almond flavor can touch upon oak notes and chives echo any herbaceous flavors.

INGREDIENTS

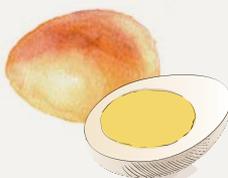
- 6 large eggs, room temperature
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons finely minced roasted almonds
- 2 tablespoons finely minced dill pickles
- 2 tablespoons finely minced chives
- Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Prepare an ice-water bath. Put eggs in a medium saucepan. Cover with water by 1 inch. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cook for one minute once water has come to a high simmer. Cover and remove from heat. Let stand 10 minutes. Transfer to the ice-water bath to cool.

Peel eggs; halve lengthwise. Gently “pop” yolks from whites. Pass yolks through sieve into a medium bowl using the back of a spoon (this will make for a very smooth filling). Stir in mayonnaise, mustard, almonds and dill pickle. Stir in chopped chives (saving some for garnish). Season with salt and pepper.

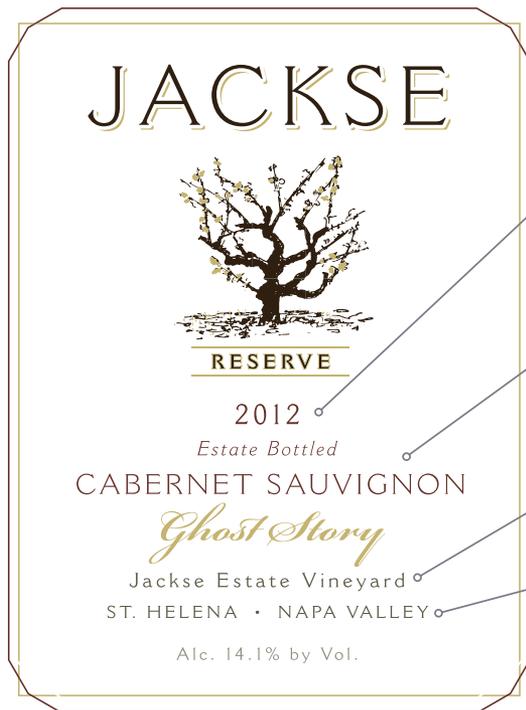
Transfer yolk mixture to a pastry bag fitted with an open-star tip. Pipe mixture into whites, filling to ½ inch over surface. Garnish with remaining chopped chives. Eggs can be refrigerated in an airtight container, up to three hours.



▶ For more recipes, please visit nvv.li/recipes.

Every Bottle Tells a Story

WE'VE SHARED STORIES IN THIS ISSUE OF NAPA MAGAZINE ABOUT GRAPE VARIETIES, NESTED AVAS AND OTHER DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS THAT THOUGHTFULLY COME TOGETHER TO CREATE A DISTINCTIVE BOTTLE OF NAPA VALLEY WINE.



So, just how do these stories of a *particular* wine from a *particular* place translate to what you see on a label of Napa Valley wine?

HERE'S A FEW CLUES:

VINTAGE

For wines labeled Napa Valley or one of its nested AVAs (American Viticultural Areas), at least **95%** of the grapes must be from the stated vintage.

WINE TYPE

Wines using varietal names such as Chardonnay or Cabernet Sauvignon must derive at least **75%** of their volume from the grape designated.

VINEYARD DESIGNATE

95% of grapes must come from named vineyard.

AVAS OF ORIGIN

If you read Napa Valley on a wine label—or any of the 16 AVAs within Napa Valley—at least **85%** of the grapes must come from the named AVA.



Discover which Napa Valley wineries make your favorite (and new favorite!) varieties at nvv.li/winery-finder.





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AERATE YOUR DRIVE

THE LC 500 CONVERTIBLE

The LC Convertible is proof that when you add a little air, the results can be amazing. Not just above your head, but under the hood. That's because the LC is powered by a 471-horsepower* naturally aspirated V8. All of which makes the 2021 LC Convertible a very good year for exhilaration. The LC Convertible arrives Summer 2020.

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