

NAPA

WINE, FOOD AND CONVERSATION FROM NAPA VALLEY VINTNERS



Premiere Napa Valley

THE MAKING OF
ULTRA-RARE WINES

Pride of Place

THE EVOLUTION OF
SINGLE-VINEYARD REDS

Library Wines

BEAUTIFULLY AGED
VINTAGES HAVE RICH
STORIES TO TELL

WINE COUNTRY GEMS

Why Napa Valley Cabernets are
the jewels in the crown



J.P.Morgan

J.P. Morgan extends sincere congratulations on the
75th anniversary of Napa Valley Vintners.

It's an honor to partner with an organization
that is committed to contributing to
the local community.

About JPMorgan Chase & Co.

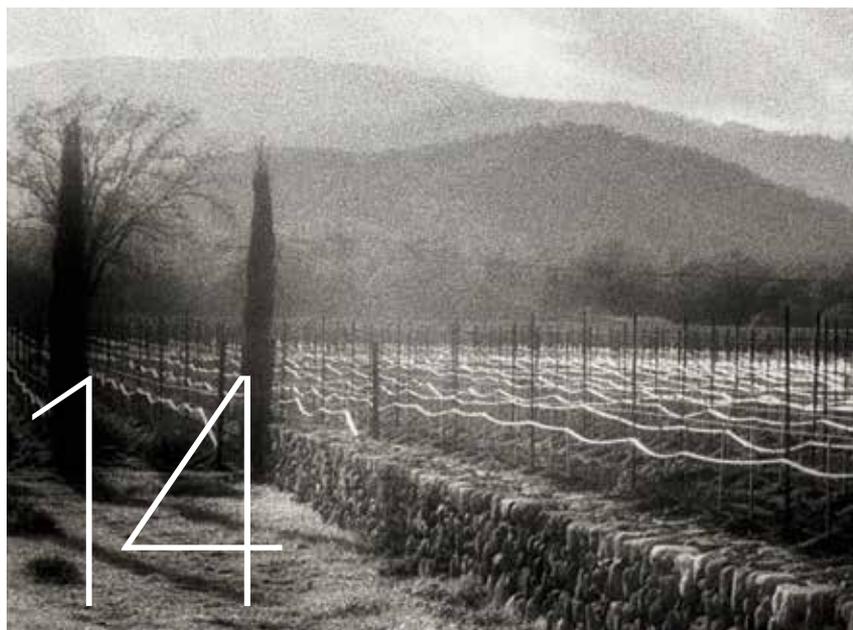
JPMorgan Chase & Co. (NYSE: JPM) is a leading global financial services firm with assets of \$2.6 trillion and operations worldwide. The firm is a leader in investment banking, financial services for consumers and small businesses, commercial banking, financial transaction processing and asset management. A component of the Dow Jones Industrial Average, JPMorgan Chase & Co. serves millions of customers in the United States and many of the world's most prominent corporate, institutional and government clients under its J.P. Morgan and Chase brands. Information about JPMorgan Chase & Co. is available at www.jpmorganchase.com.

FEATURES

8 THE MOSAIC OF NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON
 Many factors contribute to the creation of one of the region's preeminent varieties.

14 PICTURE PERFECT
 Photographer Sam Aslanian captures the serene beauty of dormancy—the period when bare grapevines rest for the vintage to come.

16 NAPA'S SECRET GEMS
 Three top winemakers reveal what it's like to make some of the world's rarest wines for Premiere Napa Valley—and how their bottles can be yours.



DEPARTMENTS

2 NEWS AND NOTES
 What somms are saying; the evolution of single-vineyard reds; and vintner vignettes.

23 VINTAGE PROFILES
 Library wines—aged 10 years or more—tell nuanced stories.

24 IN THE CELLAR
 Developing a fine Napa Valley wine often entails a carefully calibrated aging in oak barrels.

26 WINE & FOOD PAIRINGS
 When a younger Cabernet accompanies succulent lamb chops, it's a surefire palate pleaser.

28 LAST LOOK
 Fun facts about Cabernet Sauvignon.



napa valley vintners

NAPA MAGAZINE
 Fall/Winter 2019
 Issue #9
 Produced by | DCP

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

FOLLOW US



NAPA magazine is published by
 Napa Valley Vintners. ©2019
 All rights reserved.

WHAT SOMMS ARE SAYING: AMERICAN TASTEMAKERS ON NAPA VALLEY WINES

We asked top sommeliers to share their insights into a hot topic in our region: mountain vs. valley floor Cabernet Sauvignon?



“

They both have different roles to play. As a sommelier I tend to recommend valley floor Cabs to guests if I am not sure of their palates, knowing that they will love all of the charm and ripe fruit Napa is known for. However, for the guests that I have built up an understanding of what they like and a rapport, and for developing verticals for aging, I think that mountain fruit wins.

—FAYE MACLACHLAN, DIRECTOR OF WINES, LANGDON HALL COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL & SPA, ONTARIO, CANADA

“

For me, it mainly depends upon what I'm eating alongside the wines. Do I want mountain tannins or something more indicative of the valley floor? I guess it comes down to this: In a perfect world, my meals would always be accompanied by several bottles of Napa Cabernet from a range of elevations. That, to me, would be a great day, indeed.

—BRIAN FREEDMAN, WRITER AND CONSULTANT, BRIAN FREEDMAN CONSULTING, LLC, PHILADELPHIA, PA



“



Coming from a steakhouse background, I prefer to work with mountain Cabernet fruit. Power and concentration, resulting from struggling vines, provide structure to stand up to red meat cuts. Bright acidity balances the depth of fruit, while allowing for longevity and ageability, leading to high levels of complexity in the wine.

—LINDSEY YOUNG, BEVERAGE DIRECTOR, ITTORYU GOZU, SAN FRANCISCO, CA

“

The discussion between valley floor sites and mountain sites—with the right guests—can lead to even more in-depth conversations about how site can affect the characteristics of a wine. These are the kinds of interactions sommeliers love.

—KARL KAZAKS, SOMMELIER AND FOOD AND BEVERAGE DIRECTOR, PRIMLAND, MEADOWS OF DAN, VA





PRIDE OF PLACE

The evolution of single-vineyard Cabernet Sauvignons

• BY CHRISTOPHER
SAWYER

W

hen Adelle “Boots” Brounstein, the beloved co-proprietor of Diamond Creek Vineyards, passed away on July 31, Napa Valley lost one of the true matriarchs that helped put single-vineyard designates of Cabernet Sauvignon on the map.

This unique story began when Boots and her late husband, Al, purchased an isolated 70-acre parcel on Diamond Mountain, south of Calistoga, in 1967. While getting acclimated to the rustic charm, rugged terrain, high elevation and densely wooded area around the property, the newlyweds soon discovered they hit the jackpot when they began planting separate blocks of Cabernet Sauvignon and the other red Bordeaux varieties on the four distinct soil types at the estate. Soon thereafter, they developed what would become four distinctive single-vineyard wines—Gravelly Meadows, Volcanic Hill, Red Rock Terrace and Lake—all of which were originally released from the 1972 vintage.

Diamond Creek became the first Napa Valley winery to charge \$100 for Cabernet, and the terroir-driven character of its wines became a benchmark for high-quality estate fruit and mountain farming,

becoming an inspiration to a multitude of gifted winemakers and premium producers that have gone on to create some of California's most prized red wines.

These elite vineyard-designate red wines are made with grapes grown at special sites that are distinguished by their unique soils, microclimates, variable elevations and slopes, sun exposure and other natural influences that represent a true sense of place. To be a vineyard designate, 95 percent of the fruit must be from the estate.

As a benefit to consumers, these limited-release wines not only feature signature profiles that dazzle the nose and palate but also showcase the character and personality of the vineyard. The end result is an impressive series of distinct wines that are elegant, complex, profound and age-worthy.

THE POWER OF A GREAT SITE

An exceptional case in point is the full-bodied red wine from the Continuum Estate, a project started by veteran winemaker Tim Mondavi and his family in 2005. Located at 1,500 feet on Pritchard Hill, above Lake Hennessey, the Cabernet Sauvignon vines and smaller blocks of Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Merlot are grown in rocky, iron-rich volcanic soils and receive ample sunlight in the late afternoon.

These ideal conditions create a balanced blend of deep, rich and concentrated flavors; firm structure; and elegant tannins that have become a signature of the annual release. In addition to the notes of dark fruits, cassis, tobacco and blood orange peel on the palate, the personality of the wine is further enhanced by the enticing garrigue smells of rose petals, wild sage, bay laurel, bristly chaparral and craggy madrone trees that grow around the property.

"It's a humbling feeling and one that makes you believe the winemaker is never as important as the power of a great site," says Mondavi, who purchased the property with his sister Marcia Mondavi Borger in 2008 and 2009.

SPECIALTY GRAPES, DIFFERENT SOILS

The Spring Mountain Vineyard estate includes four distinctive vineyards and 226 acres planted on eight different soil types that stretch from 400 to 1,450 feet in the Spring Mountain District, a special nested appellation of Napa Valley in the Mayacamas Mountains.

For these reasons, vineyard manager Ron Rosenbrand works with Cabernet Sauvignon and other specialty grapes that are divided into 135 separate blocks that ripple down the steep hillside. The finest of these selections are used to make Elivette, the winery's world-class Cabernet-based blend, which is layered with dense flavors of wild berries, black cherry, dark chocolate, lively acidity and earthy nuances that represent various elevations on the estate. The multitude of grapes to choose from provides Rosenbrand and the winemaking team with the luxury of being very picky and always having options during challenging vintages.

"There is no doubt there is a direct line between the highest quality of fruit and the top wines that are made in Napa Valley," says Rosenbrand, who has been working with the grapes at Spring Mountain Vineyard since 2003.



“

There is no doubt there is a direct line between the highest quality of fruit and the top wines that are made in Napa Valley.”

—RON ROSENBRAND, VINEYARD MANAGER, SPRING MOUNTAIN VINEYARD



TOP RIGHT: JASON TINACCI



FLOOR SHOW

Other dynamic sites that birth single-vineyard wines can be found on the valley floor. Although he has earned an admirable reputation for crafting sophisticated single-vineyard Cabernets for his Atelier Melka clients, French-born winemaker Philippe Melka does the same for the Melka Estates portfolio he started with his wife, Cherie, in 1996, including working with two distinctive vineyards near St. Helena for their Métisse label.

West of downtown, the Jumping Goat Vineyard is located at the base of the Mayacamas Mountains next to the Spottswoode Vineyard. This small three-acre parcel is planted on gravelly soils that are well-drained and create tiny berries with intensive flavors and mineral notes that remind Melka of the prestigious grapes he worked with in Bordeaux before becoming a full-time resident of Napa in 1994. In contrast, the Montbleau Vineyard is at the base of the hillside on the eastern edge of town and more exposed to the late afternoon sunbeams that shine on Glass Mountain. The result is an energetic wine with great depth, expressive flavors and plenty of backbone.

Although both sites can be challenging on any given vintage, Melka says the combination of climate conditions, soils and row direction makes the profiles of each of these wines distinctive from all the rest he makes with Napa Valley fruit.

“By developing different vineyards, a winemaker is able to tap into the distinctive flavors, finesse and other characteristics that distinguish vines grown on the valley floor, as well as the more robust flavors, tannins and structure that can be found in vines planted at higher elevations,” says Melka. “In the end, they are mojo wines with personalities that resonate for many years to come.”

And that quality—a deeply resonant personality—is precisely what makes vineyard-designate wines some of Napa’s most prized creations.

Vintner Vignettes

Napa Valley's vintners are a unique group, to be sure. Fun. Smart. Thoughtful. Check out a few of the facets that make them who they are.

IF YOU WEREN'T A NAPA VALLEY VINTNER, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?



I'd be a pilot or a world-famous soccer player.

.....
Dario De Conti,
Co-founder/Winemaker,
Ca' Momi



Playing in a rock 'n' roll band!

.....
Tres Goetting,
Winemaker,
Robert Biale Vineyards



I love to read, so I'd probably be working in a bookshop or library.

.....
Nicole Marchesi,
Winemaker,
Far Niente



I would be an architect.

.....
Harvey Parsley,
Proprietor,
Silver Stag Winery

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER SOMEONE TRYING TO GET INTO THE NAPA VALLEY WINE INDUSTRY?



Participate in the community; it is always rewarding. Be a good steward of your land.

Kale Anderson,
Vintner, Kale Wines



Work as a harvest intern somewhere for an entire harvest.

Anne Vawter,
Head Winemaker,
Hoopes Vineyard

IF YOU COULD OPEN A BOTTLE OF YOUR WINE AND SHARE IT WITH THREE PEOPLE, WHO WOULD THEY BE?



George S. Patton, Bob Marley and Elon Musk.

Bryan Avila,
Winemaker,
Pope Valley Winery



My father, Eduardo Galeano and the Dalai Lama.

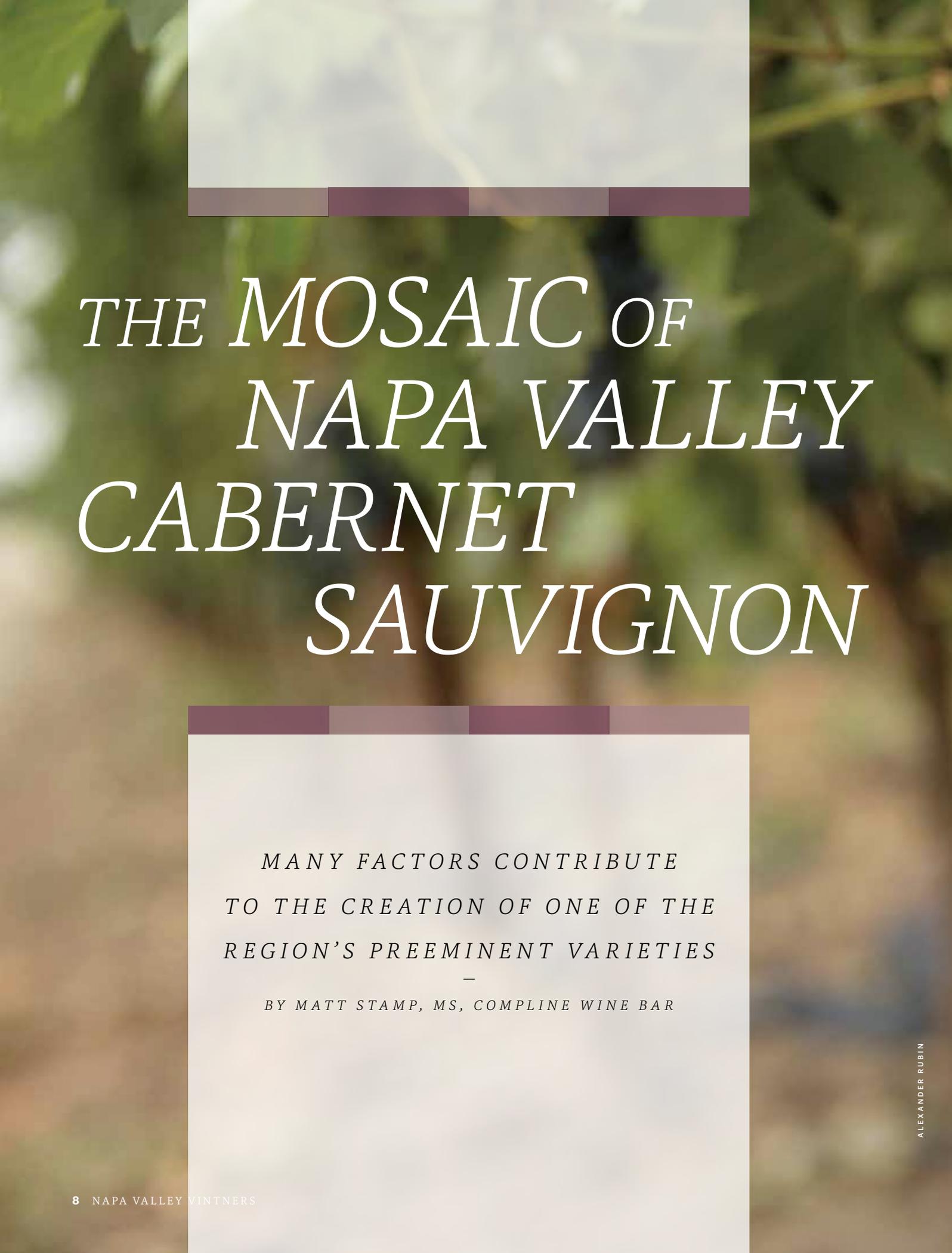
Laura Diaz Munoz,
Winemaker,
Ehlers Estate



My grandmother, Magic Johnson and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Josh Widaman,
Winemaker,
Lewis Cellars

▶ For more vintner vignettes, visit napavintners.com/vintners.



*THE MOSAIC OF
NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET
SAUVIGNON*

*MANY FACTORS CONTRIBUTE
TO THE CREATION OF ONE OF THE
REGION'S PREEMINENT VARIETIES*

—
BY MATT STAMP, MS, COMPLINE WINE BAR



Sun-blanketed afternoons and milky fog-drenched mornings. Seemingly endless summers.

Winters cloaked in green and petrichor. Vacationers flock here in droves, craving our climate, this splendid valley, our food. And of course—the wine.

Over the past decades, Napa Valley has become increasingly synonymous with high-quality Cabernet Sauvignon. For a time, it seemed as though a preeminent style of Napa Valley Cabernet would emerge, reflecting the similar aspirations and approaches of many vintners in this tiny corner of California.

Thankfully, even as the grape continues to cement its number-one status in the Napa



WINE SPEAK

What words do we use to describe wines governed by one of these elements?

ACIDITY: FRESH, RACY, ENERGETIC, VIBRANT, CRISP, BRIGHT

ALCOHOL: GENEROUS, WEIGHTY, LUSH, POWERFUL, HEDONISTIC, HEADY

TANNIN: DRYING, GRIPPY, ASTRINGENT, BITING, SAVORY AND, WELL, TANNIC

Valley AVA—Cabernet Sauvignon accounts for over half of the current vineyard plantings—the valley’s producers are fanning out, producing a wider array of styles and interpretations. It’s a good time to be a Napa Valley Cabernet fan.

As a sommelier, one of the first questions I ask our guests is what they want to spend. This used to be forbidden territory tableside, but why add to the minefield that already stands between a buyer who wants to drink what they like to drink (you) and a seller who also wants you to drink what you like to drink (me).

To land on a Cabernet in your comfort zone, set a price point or range that works for you. I think you can find good Napa Cabernet, typically made from valley floor sources, in the \$25- to \$50-per-bottle range at retail. You can find great, special-occasion Napa Valley Cabernet by spending \$50 to \$80. The more you spend, the more likely the wine comes from a definitive estate or site.

When reading tasting notes, one might suspect that wine is all about aroma. Cherries, black currants, cedar, sage, graphite (I dare!) and all the rest. Aromas complete the picture of a wine, but I believe most taste preferences are born from how wines, well, taste.

There are four components that drive the taste of wine: acidity, alcohol, sugar and tannin. Each of these components—collectively, the structure of a wine—informs how wines feel and taste. Ripe grapes have tartaric acidity, which gives wines vibrancy and lift, and contributes a slightly sour zest to wine. Some wines (think Sauvignon Blanc) have a lot of acidity; others, like Petite Sirah, have quite a bit less. Tannin is

an almost opposing force on the palate—instead of inducing salivation, tannin is an astringent, drying sensation. Tannins can be rough and really sandpapery, or they can feel almost powdery and refined. Tannins and acid help create the “skeleton” of the wine, and alcohol and sugar fill it out.

When we talk about the body of a wine, we are really just talking about the weight that alcohol and sugar create. Most quality Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa Valley is dry—in this case, meaning without residual sugar—so it’s the alcohol that generates the body and weight of the wine. Additionally, wines with higher levels of alcohol will have riper, more overt fruit notes and can create a heady feeling of warmth. When you consider the types of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon you like best, it’s worth thinking about these sensations and the words used to imply their intensity in a wine.

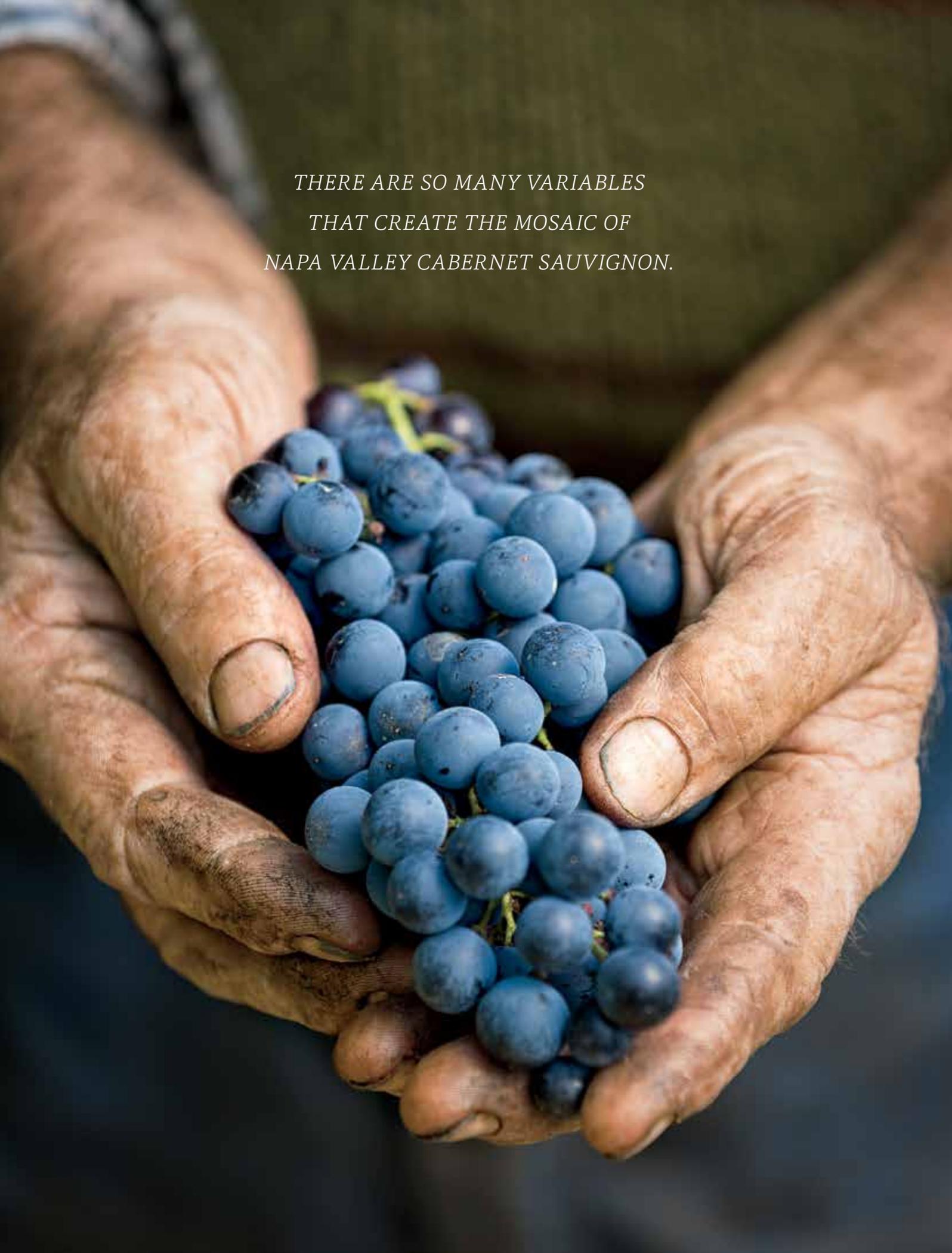
Wines described by critics as generous, hedonistic or opulent are often powerful and full-bodied styles governed by weight/alcohol. Wines described as savory, austere or herbal may likely show more tannin and/or acid in front, with less body and alcohol. Wines deemed fresh probably have a lot of up-front acidity; wines called powerful tend to show more tannin and alcohol.

Once you’ve figured out your inner blueprint (Do I like plush, ripe, heady Cabernet? Or do I prefer medium-bodied, tannic styles?) you can really start to parse Napa Valley styles. We have lots of Cabernet on the valley floor here, but it grows in the mountains above the fogline as well.

In the mountains, the climate is cooler overall but there is more



*THERE ARE SO MANY VARIABLES
THAT CREATE THE MOSAIC OF
NAPA VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNON.*





sunshine—meaning the wines often have more tannin and acid than alcohol. The skeleton of the wine is really rigid and these wines reward a lot of time in the cellar. On the valley floor, grapes ripen readily and sooner; producers can more easily make wines with lush fruit flavors and plenty of body and richness. Tannins may be less intense and acid will be diminished. Mountain and valley floor styles can therefore be very different!

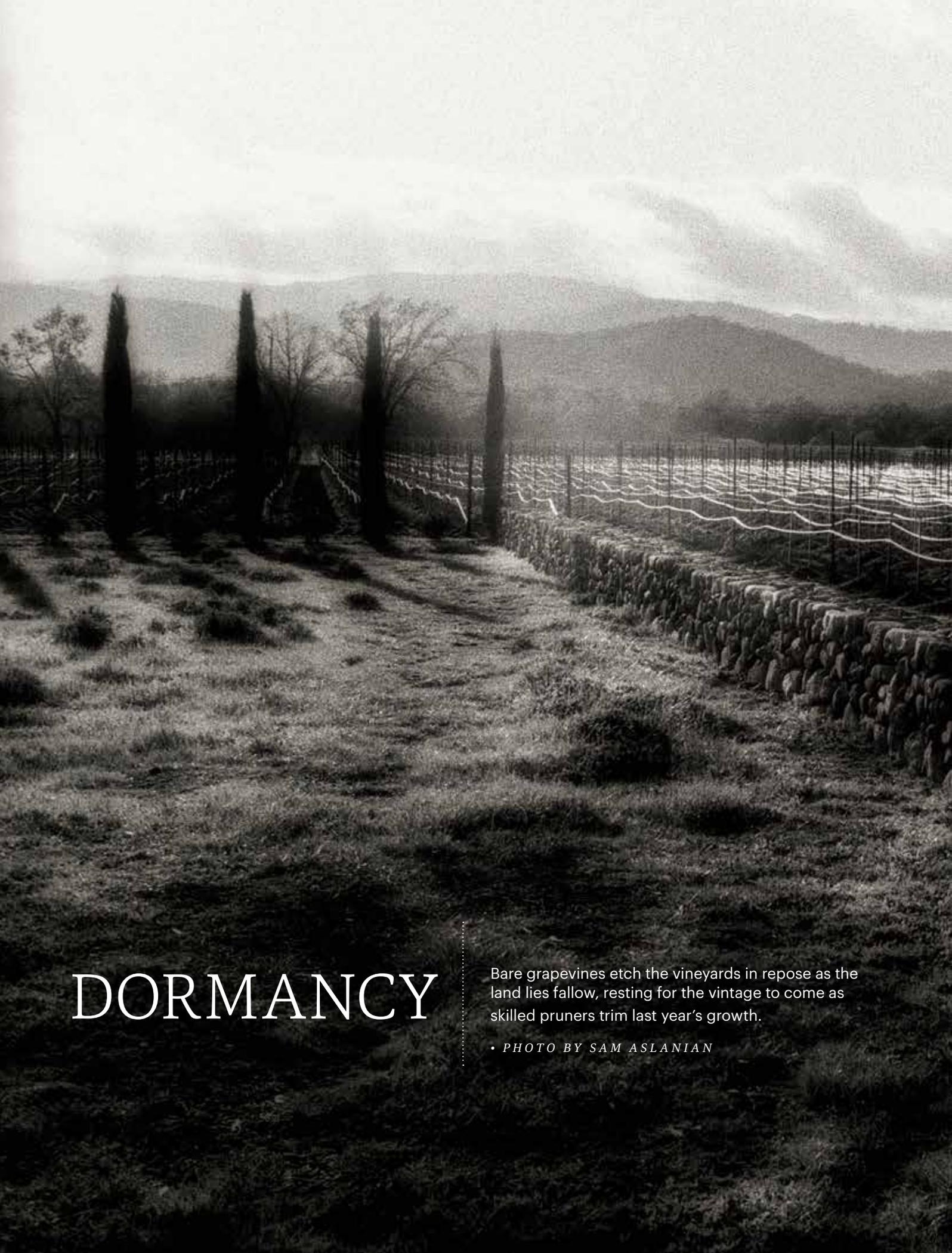
Of course, it's not that simple: Different vineyards and soils behave differently. Producers may choose to emphasize different elements of a wine in the cellar, or harvest earlier or later to retain different raw elements in the grape. Here it's helpful to know if a certain producer in the valley or the mountains is considered modern or more traditional.

The word modern often connotes more interest in rich texture, new oak and more supple, easy tannins. Traditional is usually shorthand for wines made in a style that champions tannins and/or acidity over alcohol and need a little more time in the cellar before they're ready to drink. Wines from the valley floor can feel a little more like a mountain wine in the hands of a traditional producer, and vice versa.

This is where it gets complicated—you just need to know what kind of Cabernet you like (rich and plush, or savory and old-school) and a good retail shop or sommelier can find the producers making wine in that style.

Once you've got a handle on the basic style you enjoy most and a comfortable price point for the occasion, the real diversity of Napa Valley Cabernet

Sauvignon becomes clear. You can explore different sides of the valley, where rainfall patterns, soil structures and average temperatures can differ dramatically. You can explore blended wines (Merlot often adds a riper, plusher character) or focus solely on 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon—a pure varietal wine pioneered in California, without equivalent in France. You can geek out over single vineyards or small corners of the valley. There are so many variables that create the mosaic of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. If you step back, the overall picture is of a full-bodied, deeply colored, ripe and powerful wine, but as you get closer, all the little iterations and variations on the theme come increasingly into focus.



DORMANCY

Bare grapevines etch the vineyards in repose as the land lies fallow, resting for the vintage to come as skilled pruners trim last year's growth.

• PHOTO BY SAM ASLANIAN





PREMIERE NAPA VALLEY

AUCTION 24 | LOT NO. 219

PREMIERE RESERVE
NAPA VALLEY

VINTNER SIGNATURE

BOTTLE 2

NAPA'S SECRET GEMS

Three top winemakers reveal what it's like to make some of the world's rarest wines for Premiere Napa Valley—and how their bottles can be yours.

RARITY: SINGULARITY, UNIQUENESS

In 2012, Andy Erickson, winemaker and co-proprietor at Favia, did something unusual—he combined Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc in a concrete egg (a vessel used often in white winemaking) to ferment together and left the wine on its skins for 100 days (rather unprecedented). He went on to break more new ground, aging the wine for 100 weeks in 100 percent new French oak. (He grins at the litany of 100s.) “We were just seeing what would happen,” Erickson says, “when the wine was left on the skins that long.” The result, he reports, was so good that the red became the wine he contributed the next February for Premiere Napa Valley (affectionately referred to as Premiere).

Little known among the general public, Premiere Napa Valley is an auction attended by trade representatives from around the globe—wine retailers and restaurant wine buyers. And each year winemakers across the valley craft unique wines in quantities of as few as 60 bottles and never more than 240 bottles. No Premiere wine has ever been made before nor will ever be made again. The wine buyers who gather for the auction are on the hunt for what essentially are some of the world's rarest wines. Whoever buys the wine gets every bottle for his or her customers.

A MOMENT IN TIME

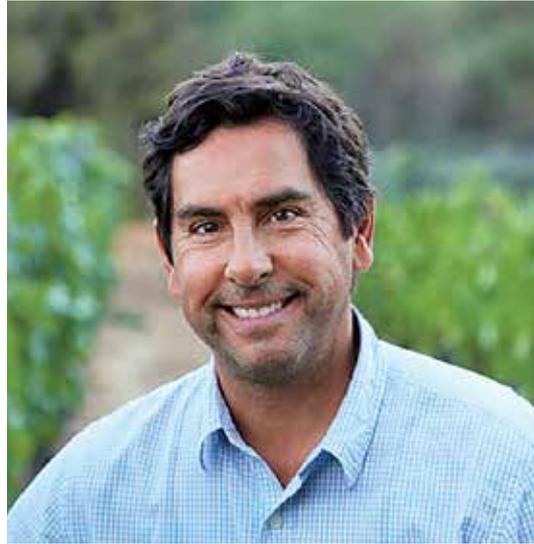
Sam Kaplan, winemaker for Howell Mountain-based Arkenstone Vineyards describes the pleasure he gets from creating a wine for just one moment in time and for the people who will share these

— BY SARA SCHNEIDER —





Below: Andy Erickson, winemaker and co-proprietor at Favia. Far right: Renée Ary, winemaker at Duckhorn Vineyards.



rare bottles with their friends and families. Of course, there's the rush at the live auction when the paddles—and the prices—start going up. His heart is always racing. "I'll never forget our first Arkenstone Premiere lot," he says, "when we were just starting out as a winery. We had gotten some buzz on the ground beforehand and we ended up doing really well." It's a modest understatement, to be sure; with that first lot, Arkenstone became one of the wineries to watch in subsequent years. In fact, Kaplan is consulting winemaker for other brands as well now and there've been years when he's had multiple lots take the top spots when the last gavel came down.

And for Kaplan, creating one-off wines for Premiere Napa Valley provides excitement all year, with the potential constantly on his mind. "It's fun!" he says of the process. "It's neat to play with new terroirs," speaking of the elements in a vineyard—soil, climate and nuances of farming—that determine the character of the wine. He might, for instance, choose a barrel from a new vineyard he's just starting to work with. It's a chance for him to give the auction bidders—and their customers back home lucky enough to end up with the bottles—a preview of where the winery is headed, what it's capable of. "I can make something no one can get unless they buy the lot," he says. But clearly that's

not enough for Kaplan. "It has to be stunning—blow people away," he adds. "If I'm putting my name on a wine, it has to be top-notch." And setting the bar at personal-best levels, in turn, means labels on which Premiere Napa Valley shares space with names like Kaplan's are marks of special wine indeed.

IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

Beyond the process of making a wine that's never been made before and the rush of live bidding, though, Kaplan describes where his real satisfaction lies—in connecting with the buyers of his bottles. He looks forward to traveling to wherever in the world the bottles land, to meet his customers, share wine dinners with them (even if that's Switzerland, he says—true story, he has fans there).

For those who gather each February for Premiere, the hunt for fine wines is based on relationship-forging as well. The tasting before the live auction, with the chance to discuss each wine with its maker, is actually the culmination of almost a week's worth of research, in the form of tastings and homecoming-like dinners hosted by the vintners. It's a preview week, a chance to interact with prospective buyers, that Renée Ary, winemaker at renowned Duckhorn Vineyards and honorary chair of the 2020 Premiere Napa Valley, acknowledges



“

I MIGHT SEE SOMETHING IN
THE VINEYARD AND THINK,
‘I COULD TREAT THAT
DIFFERENTLY.’”

—RENÉE ARY, WINEMAKER, DUCKHORN VINEYARDS



“

I CAN MAKE SOMETHING NO ONE CAN GET
UNLESS THEY BUY THE LOT. IT HAS TO BE
STUNNING—BLOW PEOPLE AWAY.”

—SAM KAPLAN, WINEMAKER, ARKENSTONE VINEYARDS



Top left: Sam Kaplan, winemaker at Arkenstone Vineyards.





that the winemakers value highly as well. “We get important feedback about what clients like,” she says. And they, in turn “get a great snapshot of Napa Valley for the vintage being presented.”

It’s an early glimpse, to be sure. The 2020 auction, for instance, will focus mainly on 2018 wines, which are babies in the barrel still. As Kaplan puts it, “I have to strategize about what will be great years down the road but will also show well this early.” Because of this, and the sheer transparency of making such a small amount of wine, Ary admits that it’s one of the hardest wines she makes. But, she says, it’s always one of her favorite blends.

Ary starts planning her auction lot as early as harvesttime, looking for things that stand out to her as she walks her vineyards or jump out at her in the cellar. “I might see something in the vineyard,” she says, “and think, ‘I could treat that differently. That might be a really good match with that Icon barrel I just got.’” The fruit Ary’s referring to is from Block 5 in Duckhorn’s sought-after Three Palms Vineyard, always her best in any given vintage. Her goal is not to stray far from Duckhorn’s core, traditional winemaking (which the winery’s loyal clients expect), but create something fun, a little different.

FOR WINE LOVERS WRIT LARGE

And what might all this rare winemaking and trade bidding have to do with wine lovers writ large? Short answer: The relationships formed and the one-of-a-kind wines tasted here move on to be shared in the wine shops and restaurants these bidders preside over across the country and around the globe. Along the way, Napa winemakers have regaled their trade friends with stories of the vintage. And you can be sure they’ll pass along the details as every bottle is sold—fuel, in turn, for conversation when the bottle is on the table among friends.

While only 60 to 240 bottles of each Premiere wine are made every year, the bottles are not hard to find. They make their way to great wine shops around the world. A few questions at your favorite store would likely lead you to a winning Premiere bidder. And a relationship with one or more of them just might put some of Napa’s rarest wines in your cellar.

To browse the complete Premiere Napa Valley wine portfolio and discover a retailer or restaurant that sells these micro-production wines, visit premierenapavalley.com.



The Art of Library Wines

Aged 10 years or more, these special wines have nuanced stories to tell

Library wines don't have anything to do with books, but Amanda McCrossin's description of these 10-year-old and older wines makes them sound like great works of literature.

"They're more developed and have more stories to tell," says McCrossin, wine director of PRESS Napa Valley. And, in the same way that you might prepare to read a classic rather than a best-seller, she suggests adjusting your expectations—and your palate—as you explore the test of time.

"You might find an older wine to be earthier, more tea-like, not as robust," she says. "It's like the difference between a fresh jar of jam and something more savory, like an aged steak."

To buy a bottle of library wine, go as close to the source as possible, to the winery if you can. Many retailers and restaurateurs also offer extensive library wine selections. Take a look at the color of the wine by shining a flashlight through the neck of the bottle when it is horizontal. A red wine should be red, not brown or murky. A white wine can be



“

You might find an older wine to be earthier, more tea-like, not as robust. It's like the difference between a fresh jar of jam and something more savory, like an aged steak.”

—AMANDA MCCROSSIN, WINE DIRECTOR, PRESS NAPA VALLEY



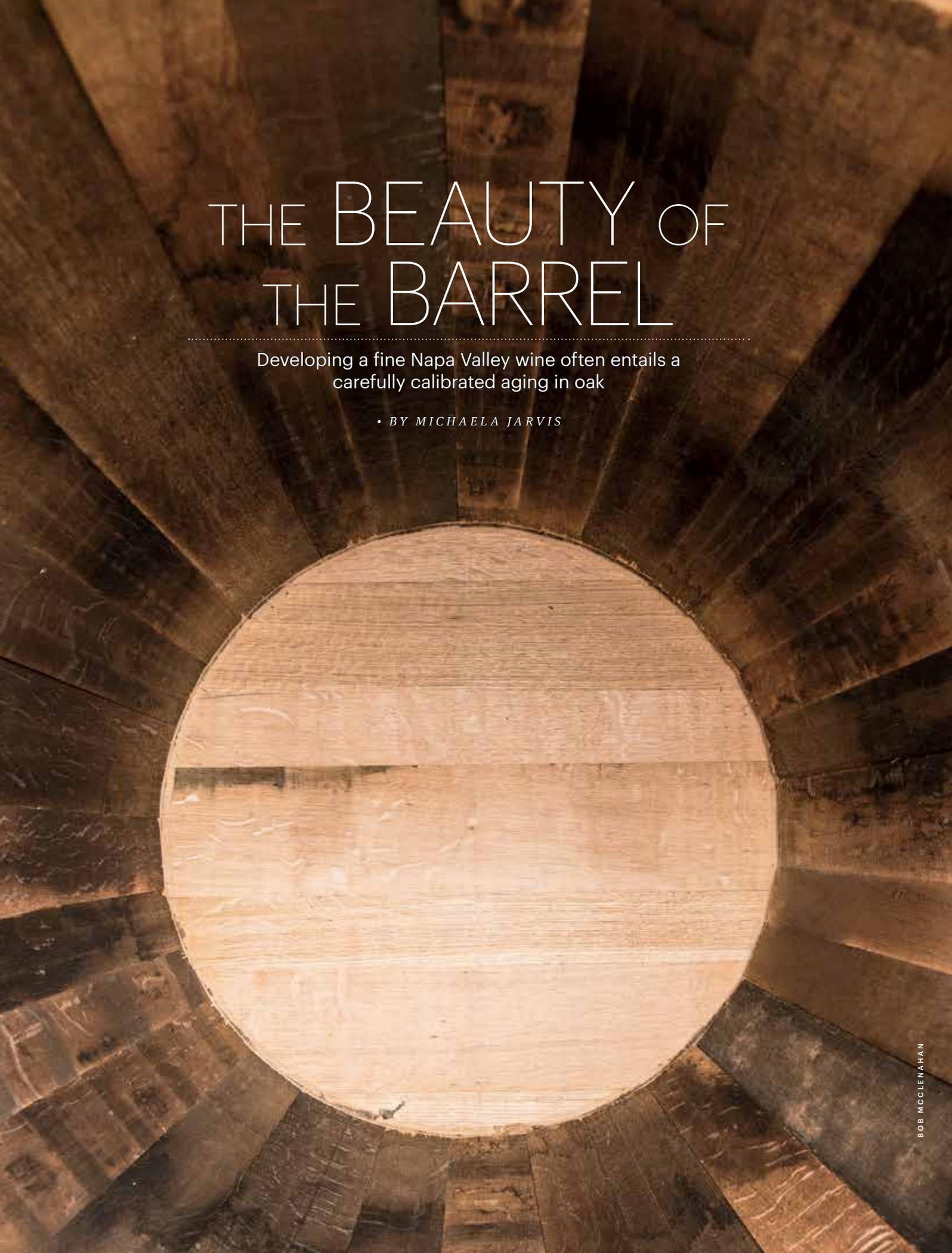
golden, but not brownish. Make sure there is no seepage around the cork.

Twenty-four to 36 hours before it's time to open the wine, stand it up to let the sediment sink to the bottom. Proceed slowly with removing the cork. One opener often used for this purpose is a Durand, which will help keep the aged cork from splitting or crumbling. If cork goes into the wine, pour the wine through cheesecloth to strain it.

McCrossin says not to decant. Oxygen “will change a wine, for better or worse,” she says. If you

trust yourself to make your own determination about decanting, pour a couple of ounces of wine into a glass, taste it and then leave it for a few hours, then taste it again. If you prefer it that way, then you'll want to decant that wine in the future.

Napa Valley wines, particularly its legendary Cabernet Sauvignons, are of a quality that allows them to be aged for a decade or more. “Napa Valley has a reputation for producing wines that are age-worthy,” McCrossin says. “They have more nuances, and there can be a lot of layers.”



THE BEAUTY OF THE BARREL

Developing a fine Napa Valley wine often entails a
carefully calibrated aging in oak

• BY MICHAELA JARVIS



Back in antiquity, the world's earliest wine lovers made quite the fortunate discovery. Having found that wooden barrels were good for storing and shipping wine, it was only a matter of time before they realized those barrels were changing the wine—and often for the better.

Fast-forward to 2019 in Napa Valley and barrels used to age wine are revered, representing a complicated science and an art applied to the region's more full-bodied varieties, ranging from Chardonnay and Merlot to, especially, Cabernet Sauvignon.

"My goal is to assemble a mix of barrels that complement my wine," says Cathy Corison, winemaker and proprietor at Corison Winery. "I source different coopers, forests and toast levels to attain a small but important complexity from the mix, looking for subtle flavors that dovetail with the Cabernet Sauvignon flavors in the wine."

Basically, the first purpose of barrel aging is to mellow the wine and improve its tannic structure. Oak, which is a relatively tight-grained wood, allows very gradual exposure of the wine to oxygen. Throughout this process, nuanced flavors are imparted by the oak, whether it be European or American oak, new or used, from a cooperage that sources wood from forests known for their delicacy or for their power and whether the barrel has been lightly or heavily fire-toasted before being shipped to the winery.

The flavors that originate with oak, often subtly detected but sometimes more pronounced, include vanilla, caramel, pie spices like cinnamon and nutmeg, coconut and burnt sugar.

"That's the painter's part," says John Skupny, winemaker and proprietor at Lang & Reed Wine Company. "You get different shades, different colors."

Such attention to the aging of a wine before it is bottled doesn't come cheap. An oak tree, which takes decades to grow, can provide only about two barrels. And fashioning wooden staves and metal bands into wine barrels is a process requiring great skill. Because of this, each new oak barrel costs the winery from \$600 to \$1,200.

Napa Valley winemakers use new oak barrels at widely varying percentages, depending on the intensity of the wine being aged. Lang & Reed's Skupny rotates only about one new barrel into his 30-barrel lot each year, he says, for his signature Cabernet Franc. The rest of the barrels he uses are generally one or two years old.

Barrel-aging times for oaked wines in the Napa Valley vary from just a few months to a few years. "Cabernet Franc thrives with less time in less aggressive oak," Skupny says. "Our goal is to allow the complex aromatics and delicate fruit flavors to be predominant."

Corison says she couldn't make her Cabernet Sauvignons without using about 50 percent new oak each year, but she explains that she doesn't want anyone to taste the oak "as a distinct component."

"It's a matter of style and objective," says Skupny, adding that how oak is used depends on the winemaker's goal for the wine. "There is no right or wrong."

WINE & FOOD PAIRINGS

★
PERFECT
FALL FOOD
PAIRINGS



A Perfect Match

When a younger Cabernet accompanies succulent lamb chops, it's a surefire palate pleaser

Lamb has a richness and succulence to it that helps rein in tannin and bring polish to younger Cabernets, rendering the wine, or your perception thereof, softer and more expressive. The crust offers a sweetness and spice that complements not only the flavor of the lamb, but the notes of fruit and herbs in the wine. The richness of the creamy carrot purée helps create a barrier on your tongue that softens the tannin even further. At the risk of overwhelming your palate with decadence, the tabbouleh offers brightness with fresh fruit, lemon and herbs, cutting through the fat, refreshing your palate for the next bite and sip.



PISTACHIO CRUSTED LAMB CHOPS WITH ROASTED CARROT PURÉE AND RED QUINOA TABBOULEH

RECIPE AND INTRODUCTION BY CHEF BRITNY SUNDIN, SEQUOIA GROVE WINERY



PISTACHIO CRUSTED LAMB CHOPS

Note: Serve with roasted carrot purée and red quinoa tabbouleh (recipes at napavintners.com/recipes). The tabbouleh, purée and pistachios can be prepared in advance. Makes 4 servings.

- 1 cup roasted pistachios, shelled
- ¼ cup dried currants
- 1 teaspoon harissa spice blend
- ½ cup flour
- 8 lamb rib chops, frenched
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 egg plus 2 tablespoons water, whisked
- 3 tablespoons olive oil

Preheat oven to 425°F.

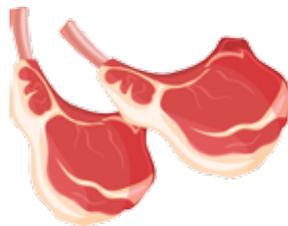
In a food processor, pulse the pistachios, currants and harissa until finely chopped. Pour pistachio mixture onto a plate. Pour the flour on another plate and the egg mixture on another.

Season each lamb chop with salt and pepper. Place each lamb chop

into the flour, followed by the egg, followed by the pistachio mixture. Make sure each chop is thoroughly coated. The flour and egg will ensure the crust binds to the lamb and won't fall off in the pan. Place the chops on a baking sheet.

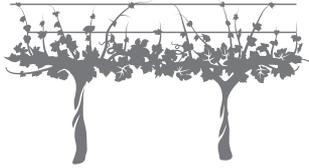
Heat olive oil in a heavy skillet over medium high heat. Sear the lamb chops, crust side down, until fragrant and barely beginning to brown, about 30 seconds. Flip and brown for another minute on the other side, then return to the baking sheet. Finish in the oven until internal temperature reads 130°F, about 3-5 minutes, depending on thickness of the chops.

TO SERVE: Place ¼ of the carrot purée on a plate. Make a well in the purée and place ¼ of the tabbouleh in well. Crisscross two of the lamb ribs over the top and serve immediately.



▶ Roasted carrot purée and red quinoa tabbouleh recipes online at napavintners.com/recipes.

Fun Facts: Cabernet Sauvignon



24,045

Vineyard acres planted to Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa Valley



CABERNET SAUVIGNON

is America's top-selling red wine variety.

50%

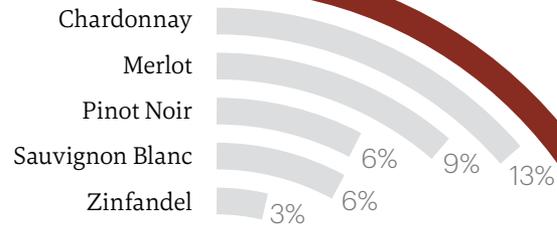
of the world's soil orders are found in Napa Valley.

Diversity of soils creates complexity.



Often blended with Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Malbec

Cabernet Sauvignon



NAPA VALLEY TOP PLANTED VARIETIES

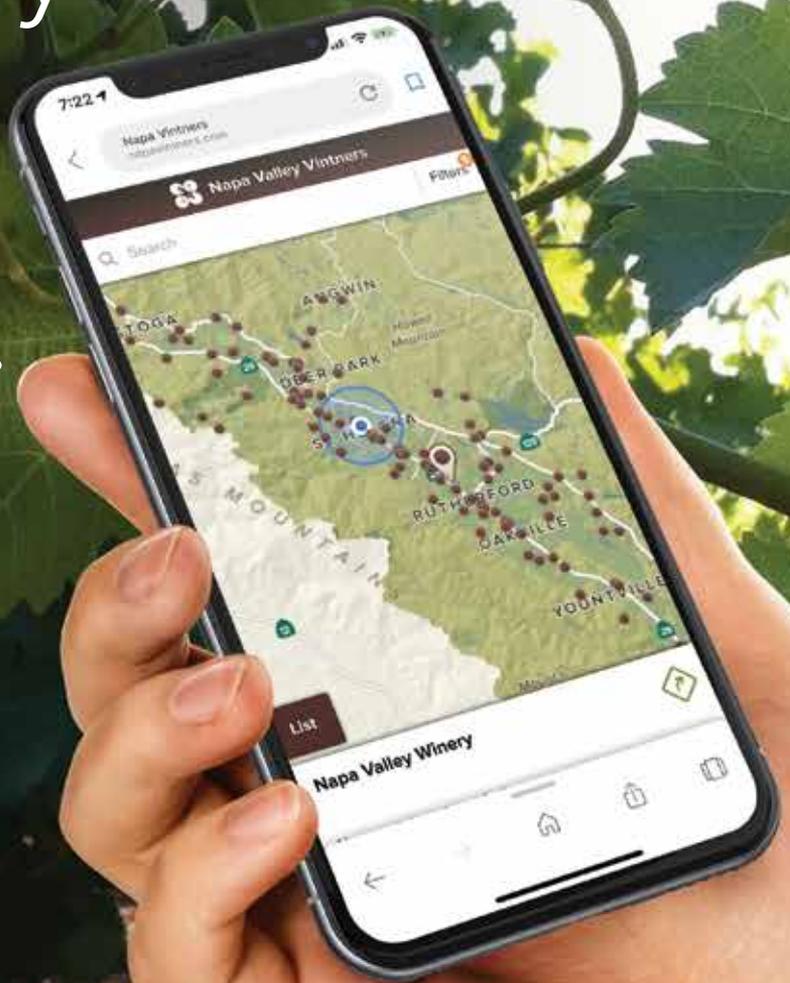
51%



HARVEST

of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes generally begins later than most other varieties and typically lasts longer.

Napa Valley
wineries
at your
fingertips...



**The Napa Valley
Winery Map and Trip
Planner will make it
easy for you.**

Browse and search hundreds of comprehensive winery listings, create your itinerary, plan your route and text it to your mobile device. While you're here, use the mobile version to discover wineries and get directions.

Click. Plan. Go.
napavintners.com/maps

TWO PASSIONS. ONE UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE.



Prepare for a one-of-a-kind pairing powered by a direct-injection V6. Crafted with refinished-oak wine-barrel accents, this special custom, culinary-inspired Lexus ES 350 F SPORT* also features a temperature-controlled wine fridge, a Cabernet Sauvignon-inspired exterior finish and wine-cork floor mats. Designed to be the centerpiece at the most distinguished culinary events, the Lexus ES 350 F SPORT will serve as an irresistible invitation to Experience Amazing.

Lexus is a proud partner of Napa Valley Vintners. Congratulations on your 75th anniversary.

 **LEXUS**
EXPERIENCE AMAZING

lexus.com | #LexusCulinary