

WINE, SPIRITS & FINER FOODS SPEC'S Update!



Mon-Sat February 1
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WINE OF THE MONTH!

El Bon Homme DO Valencia, 2008 \$14.24 cash
50% Monastrell/50% Cabernet Sauvignon
Big strawberry and red fruit on the nose followed by light mocha notes. The palate displays generous acidity and highlights flavors of strawberry candy with an underlying truffle nuance. Easy finish with medium tannins.

If you enjoyed this selection try some more of the new Spanish selections:

Real de Aragon Garnacha 2007 (Calatayud)
88pts Wine Advocate - \$9.98 cash

Milcampos Tempranillo 2006 (Ribera del Duero)
90pts Wine Advocate - \$12.72 cash

Wine Grapes: CABERNET SAUVIGNON by Charles M. Bear Dalton



Of the three main factors that determine the taste of a wine – grape variety, terroir, and technique – grape variety may be the most important. In this new series for Spec's Update, I will take a periodic look at the grape varieties both popular and obscure that make the wines we like to drink.

Cabernet Sauvignon

We might as well start with the most popular, or at least the most popular of red grape varieties. Of all the varieties of grapes that are listed as the "varietal name" of wines sold by Spec's, Cabernet Sauvignon is second only to Chardonnay in units sold and is clearly in first place when you look at the dollar value of the wines sold.

As grape varieties go, Cabernet Sauvignon is fairly new. Genetic studies tell us that Cabernet Sauvignon resulted from a (most likely chance) crossing of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc sometime late in the 17th century in the vicinity of Graves in Bordeaux. This new variety combined some of the herbal character of Sauvignon Blanc with the black pepper and tobacco nuance of Cabernet Franc while adding more black fruit potential (Cab Franc is primarily a "red fruit" variety) all the while adapting very well to the deep gravel and well-drained soils of both the Graves and subsequently the Medoc regions of Bordeaux.

From this late start the amount of Cabernet Sauvignon planted in Bordeaux steadily grew along with the reputation of the new variety. By 1855, Cabernet was recognized as the best grape for potential quality in Bordeaux. By this time, a small amount of Cabernet Sauvignon had made its way to California and soon (before phylloxera hit Bordeaux) a large number of cuttings had been exported to Chile, where they became the basis of the Chilean wine industry.

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Inside This Issue: *Deli Specials, Collin's Column, Delicious Mischief, Wine and Cheese of the Week & more!*

Wine & Cheese of the Week

JRE Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2006 \$14.99 bottle \$167.83 case 12x750ml

Texan John Eppler assembled this 14.4% alcohol 100% Cabernet Sauvignon blend offering mostly black cherry berry fruit accented with notes of tobacco and dusty gravel with a hint of pencil shavings and black pepper. It is dark purple with fine legs, bright and almost opaque with a full body, balanced acidity, and chewy phenolics. Perfect with a grilled top sirloin. Fine. BS:90HR.

Beaufort A.O.C. \$18.99 lb.

Named after a small town in the French Alps where the cows graze exclusively on natural pastures, it is said you can taste the grass and flowers of the mountains in this cheese. With a nice scent of milk, butter and honey, the supple paste has flowery and herbal aromas. Beaufort is richer and creamier than other mountain cheeses. It is wonderful with smoked salmon, it melts well and is a good choice for a cheese fondue or in a hot sandwich.

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Produce Feature of the WEEK (Houston Superstore)

Week of February 1, 2010

**Red
Gooseberries**

\$3.99 1pt



February

The month of **February** we are featuring **Columbia Supremo (Regular, Dark or Swiss Water Decaf coffee)**. A full bodied, sweet tasting coffee with a rich flavor and aroma, considered by many to be the best of Colombian coffees. It is noted for its rich, full taste with roasted nut flavors and hints of fruit aftertastes as the cup cools down. As the acidity emerges there is a firm coffee fruit flavor lurking behind a good bittersweet roast taste.

ONLY \$5.99 LB. WITH KEY



SANDWICH of the WEEK

Monday, February 1-Saturday February 6, 2010

Veggie Burger Basket

Everything you love about a burger—without the beef! Our garden veggie patty is chargrilled and served up on a soft grilled bun with mayo, mustard, shredded lettuce, fresh tomatoes and pickles, and the basket comes with our seasoned fries.

\$5.99 w/key



BEERS OF THE WEEK

Week of February 1, 2010

Southern Star
Pale Ale

4PK 16oz Cans

\$4.99

Southern Star

Bombshell Blonde Ale

6PK 12oz Cans

\$6.49

Southern Star

Buried Hatchet Stout

4PK 12oz Cans

\$6.99



CABERNET SAUVIGNON *from page 1*

When phylloxera – the root louse native to the American east coast – hit Bordeaux, the vineyards were devastated. Over a 20 year period, virtually all the Bordelaise plantation was effected and so all the vines would have to be replanted using a technique developed by Texas horticulturist Thomas Volney Munson of Denison. He grafted the native vine onto naturally phylloxera resistant American root-stocks. The roots were able to thrive in phylloxera infested soils while the vine above the graft was genetically the same and produced the same kind and flavor of grapes that an un-grafted vine would produce.

Grafting saved the international wine industry and the replanting of Bordeaux gave Cabernet Sauvignon a big boost as, since they were replanting anyway, a lot of growers switched significant acreage over to the new high quality variety. A lot of what got replanted to Cabernet Sauvignon had previously been planted to Cabernet Franc (still the third most planted red grape in Bordeaux) and Carmenere (which, although it lived on in cuttings taken to Chile in 1855, almost disappeared from Bordeaux in the replanting after phylloxera).

Cabernet became more and more important in Bordeaux and as such became a larger factor in the international fine wine community, especially among English speaking countries and countries served by largely Dutch-owned merchant ships. In pre-prohibition California, Cabernet Sauvignon existed as a high quality grape variety but Zinfandel and its blending partners were much more important. It was only after the repeal of prohibition that wineries began to focus on making high quality, varietally labeled dry table wines. Beaulieu Vineyards and Inglenook were two of the earliest pioneers with Cabernet Sauvignon. They were followed by Souverain, Louis Martini, and Charles Krug among others. By the 1950s Cabernet was the acknowledged quality king in California. By the late 1960s, most of the best sites for Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa and Sonoma counties had been discovered. By the late 1980s, it was clear that much of the Cabernet Sauvignon (and in fact most of the grape vines of every variety) in Napa and Sonoma would have to be replanted because it turned out that the UC Davis certified phylloxera resistant rootstock AxR wasn't – phylloxera resistant.

As with the phylloxera outbreak and subsequent replanting of the second half of the 19th century, this replanting in northern California had its silver lining. The replanting of Napa Valley got rid of a lot of lesser vines and replaced them with the higher quality Cabernet Sauvignon. The new vineyards were planted with a lot less space between vine, with better clonal selections, and with orientation and trellising to take better advantage of the sun. This new Cabernet planted in the 1990s offers the best and ripest Cabernet fruit Napa has ever produced.

At the same time that Cabernet was emerging as fine wine option from California, things were heating up in Australia and Chile. As the dry table wine industry evolved from the sweet fortified wine industry in Australia, Cabernet was beginning to be seen in the better areas around the Barossa Valley, in Coonawara, and in McLaren Vale. In the 1970s, Robert Mondavi in his role as consultant persuaded the Horgan Family to plant Cabernet Sauvignon in Margaret River (Australia). Their project became Leeuwin Estate and the home of some of Australia's best Cabernet Sauvignon.

In Chile, Cabernet Sauvignon is usually grown un-grafted as Chile is protected - at least so far - from phylloxera by the Andes to the east, the desert to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The resulting wine gives a lot of Cabernet character at an everyday price. Cheap but palatable Cabernet Sauvignon put Chile on the world wine map. Over the last few years, excellent and even potentially outstanding Cabernets such as Alma Viva and Mont Alpha have been made in Chile.

Halfway around the world in Bulgaria, Cabernet was taking off as a top value wine producer. By the late 1980's, Bulgaria was growing more Cabernet than France, although you'd never have known it from the US market where these sort of wines made nary a peep. Where'd they go? Most were sold in the UK and some in southeastern Europe.

Even in Argentina where Malbec is king, there are producers (Nicolas Catena among them) who feel like Cabernet Sauvignon (often blended with Malbec Syrah, and even Merlot) is still making many of Argentina's very best wines.

In Italy, Cabernet Sauvignon is grown as the basis for the great Sassacaia and Ornellaia wines of Bolgheri and is blended with Sangiovese both to make "super Tuscan" red and added to the Chianti mix to bring color, fruit, and a style appealing to the new "world palate".

Why is Cabernet out of all the red grapes so popular? And why are people willing to pay so much more for wines made from Cabernet Sauvignon than from other grapes? Both go back to Cabernet Sauvignon's position as the top quality grape on the famous left bank of Bordeaux. All the famous "first growths" of Bordeaux – Chx. Haut Brion, Lafite, Latour, Margaux, and Mouton – contain Cabernet Sauvignon and all but Haut Brion are always dominated (at least 60%) by Cabernet Sauvignon. The other most famous wines of the Medoc such as the Leovilles, Pichons, and Rauzans, Ducru Beaucaillou, Cos d'Estournel, and Lynch Bages, are all dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon. In fact, of all the top wines of the Medoc, I can think of only one, Ch. Palmer, that is ever as much as half anything other than Cabernet and in most years even Palmer is Cabernet-dominant. As producers in the new world began to make higher and higher quality wines, the left bank of Bordeaux provided the wines they most imitated so naturally those wines were heavily influenced by Cabernet Sauvignon.

As to the price of the world's best Cabernets, that is ultimately determined solely by the market. A winery can offer a wine at a high price but it can only maintain that price if the consumers in the market are willing to pay it. If they do buy the wines in "sell through" number, the market is agreeing to the price. If they decline to buy the wines in sufficient numbers, the producer has to lower his price or risk going out of business. In either case, by the time a wine has been on the market for a few years, the market has determined the price. Of all the larger production fine wines of the world, those dominated by Cabernet Sauvignon have had the most success maintaining high price levels in the world's markets.

Cabernet Sauvignon Growing and Winemaking

While Cabernet's home turf in Bordeaux is deep well drained formations of sand and gravel, Cabernet also grows well in a variety of other soils. It needs more warmth than Merlot in order to ripen fully and it prefers drier soils. Outside Bordeaux, great Cabernet is often grown in mountainside vineyards but most of the most classic Cabernets reference back to dusty gravelly terroirs. Cabernet responds well to vertical trellising and is rarely seen grown as a "bush vine."

In the winery, Cabernet based wines are usually made using pump-over fermentations in tall closed top tanks. Some producers (such as Lynch Bages) use a variation on pump-overs known as rack and return (or in French, *delestage*). Some producers in the US use punchdowns in open top tanks and a very few use a submerged cap fermentation. All these techniques can produce excellent results with Cabernet. While some of the cheapest Cabernet is aged only in tank, most Cabernet with any pretensions to quality is aged in oak barrels. French oak is classic but American and eastern European oaks are gaining more and more acceptance. Even moderate quality Cabernet often benefits from some oak exposure and the best wines can handle from 50% to even 100% new barrels in the best years. As Cabernet Sauvignon tends to be on the reductive side, Cabernet aging in barrels is racked several times in the wine making process to provide it with enough air to keep the stinkies at bay.

Today, Cabernet Sauvignon is bottled as a varietal and is a key component in numerous blends. Varietal Cabernet is anywhere from 75 to 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. The balance of these usually varietally-labeled blends can be a mix of anything from the traditional blending partners (Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, and Petite Verdot) to Syrah, Zinfandel, or even Sangiovese. Many of the blends feature over 50% Cabernet Sauvignon but can't be called Cabernet Sauvignon. Rather these blends are often known by proprietary names (Opus One, Quintessa, Franciscan Meritage, Phelps Insignia, etc.). It should be noted that some of the wines labeled with proprietary rather than varietal names do contain enough Cab to be called Cabernet but, usually for marketing reasons, the producers choose not to.

The Wines

Here are a few Cabernet Sauvignon dominant wines that, for me at least show what Cabernet is all about in a variety of price ranges.

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Wine Grapes from page 3

LEWIS Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2006
12x750ml \$108.74 \$1208.88

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 96% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Cabernet Franc aged 19 months in 100% new French oak barrels. Sensory: Deep inky purple in color that paints the glass; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Pure, focused, lovely, juicy ripe Cabernet offering black fruit (hint of red), tobacco, dusty-gravelly earth, integrated oak, pencil shavings, black pepper, and dark spice. Hints at Bourbon even though it is all French oak. Chewy but very drinkable. Long, perfumed, complete, integrated, and delicious. Outstanding. BS: 97R

RUDD Oakville Estate Red, Oakville - Napa Valley, 2005
6x750ml \$123.76 \$696.86

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petite Verdot, 4% Merlot, and 4% Malbec fermented with native yeast and aged 20 months in French oak (93% new). Sensory: Deep purple in color, bright and medium clear, well formed legs; dry, full-bodied, balanced acidity; chewy phenolics; dusty-earthly-gravelly. Elegant but big Cabernet dominant red offering predominantly black fruit accented with tobacco and cedar, mixed spice, and gravel. There are hints of leather, pencil shavings, coffee grounds, and a fine dusty (somewhere between a dry road and Grandma's attic) note. The fruit, earth, and oak last and last. Finishes dry with a final wisp of fruit. A rough decanting helped it and time in really large glasses (such as Riedel Vinum Bordeaux) helped more. Delicious. Outstanding. BS: 96+R

VINA ROBLES Suendero, Paso Robles, 2006
12x750ml \$46.31 \$515.97

Tech 14.5% Alcohol. 53% Cabernet Sauvignon and 47% Petite Verdot. Fermented in two-ton fermenters with hand punch downs and pressed off in a small basket press, this was aged a total of 18 months in all French oak barrels (45% new). It was racked out of barrels and assembled at 10 months and then put back into barrel for another eight months. Sensory: Deep purple in color, bright and medium clear with well formed legs; dry and full-bodied, softly balanced with chewy phenolics; gravelly dusty earthy. This is a great big chunk of a Meritage (but with 47% Petite Verdot, I guess you'd expect that) offering black fruit and dark earth. The fruit is in the black grape, mure, blueberry, and black berry range. There is tobacco, dark spice, and black pepper along with subtler notes. It tastes strongly of both the varieties and the place. Give it a rough decanting or plenty of time swirling in the glass and it will slowly open to reveal more complexity and brighter fruit. Delicious and still improving. Really Excellent. BS: 95+VHR

OAKVILLE EAST "Exposure" Cabernet Sauvignon, Oakville, 2006
12x750ml \$57.86 \$651.63

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Cabernet Franc, and 3% Petite Verdot fermented using open tops with punch-downs and aged 20 months in French oak barrels (80% new). Sensory: Black-red-purple in color, bright and medium clear with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Offers ripe black and red fruit with gravelly earth, supple dusty oak, and accents of tobacco, cedar, savory spice, black pepper, and a hint of leather; very long finish. Quite delicious, ripe and rich, satisfying even though it is very young and still a bit tight. Really Excellent. BS: 95.

FRAZIER Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2004
12x750ml \$49.99 \$557.73

Tech: 15% Alcohol. 94.5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3.5% Petit Verdot, 1.5% Cabernet Franc, and .5% Merlot made utilizing a 3 day cold soak. Sensory: Deep purple in color, bright and clear, well formed legs; dry, medium-full-bodied with balanced acidity, medium plus phenolics, and a dusty gravelly earth note. Delicious, juicy, ripe Cabernet Sauvignon. Red and black fruit with tobacco, black pepper, cedar, dusty oak. Juicy textured with a bit of chewiness at the end. Long and lovely. Really Excellent. BS: 95VHR

NADIA Santa Barbara Highlands Red, Santa Barbara County, 2005
6X750ML \$27.95 \$157.38

Tech: 14.4% Alcohol. A cooler-climate blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc aged 20 months in oak barrels (all French; 65% new). Sensory: Purple-deep red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity; moderately chewy phenolics. Dusty, lively, spicy, red & black cherry berry fruit with minerally terroir, well integrated oak, and accents of black pepper, tobacco, cedar, subtle cocoa, and sweet spice. Really long finish; alive-in-the-mouth; delicious, elegant, exciting, and complete. Classic cooler climate Cabernet. Gains richness as it opens in the glass. Excellent. BS: 94+.

LANCASTER ESTATE Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley, 2005
6x750ml \$71.50 \$402.60

Tech: 14.5% Alcohol. 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec, 2% Merlot, and 1% Petite Verdot aged 22 months in French Oak barrels (all new) and bottled unfiltered. Sensory: Black-red in color with well formed legs that stain the glass; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Developed fresh juicy black & red fruit, supple with blackberry, mure, and kirsh perfume. Offers accents of tobacco, pencil shavings, old leather, cigar box, attic dust, black flowers, and black pepper. Very long finish; complete, integrated, satisfying and delicious. Excellent. BS: 94+.

QUINTESSA, Rutherford, Napa Valley, 2006
3x750ml \$96.80 \$266.40

Tech: 14.6% Alcohol and 82% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petite Verdot and 1% Carmenere aged 18 months in 100% French oak (85% new). Sensory: Red-black-purple in color, bright and almost opaque with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Developed elegant black raspberry, black currant, blackberry, kirsh, cassis, and even mure with gravelly coffee grounds, earth, supple oak, and accents of pencil shavings, tobacco, black pepper, a hint of menthol, and a beefy note. Very long, chewy finish; elegant but still big & a bit tight. It's all there but it needs a few more months to come together. Excellent. BS: 94(++)VHR

SHAFER One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon, Stag's Leap, 2006
12x750ml \$64.34 \$724.53

Tech: 14.9% Alcohol. 99% Cabernet Sauvignon and 1% Petite Verdot aged 20 months in 75% new oak barrels, of which 70% are French (Allier & Tronçais) and 30% are American (Missouri). The overall barrel regime also includes 25% in one-year-old oak (all French). Predominately from two Stags Leap District sites – Shafer's hillside estate vineyard and "Borderline" vineyard located about two miles south of the winery. Sensory: Deep purple-black-red in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Dark, juicy ripe and spicy with mostly black fruit over earthy gravelly terroir and supple but not at all subtle oak, and accents of cedar, pencil shavings, tobacco, black pepper. Really long finish. Focused, delicious, somewhat rustic, but integrated and satisfying. Excellent. BS: 94HR. (Note: this is the wine James Laube of the Wine Spectator blasted as a "bret bomb". I think he went too far. Try it for yourself and see.)

Ch. LASCOMBES, Margaux, 2005
12x750ml \$68.90 \$775.92

Tech: 13.5% Alcohol. 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Merlot, and 3% Petit Verdot aged in all new French oak barrels. Sensory: Deep purple-black-red in color with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Developed, spicy, juicy, ripe, & rich black & red fruit with cherry, black currant, blackberry, kirsh and mure with dusty gravelly terroir, dusty spicy oak, and accents of tobacco, pencil shavings, cocoa, and savory spice. Really long finish. Delicious, elegant, complete, rich & ripe; lovely-in-the-mouth. Excellent. BS: 94.

continues on page 5

This Week on

DELICIOUS MISCHIEF



John DeMers

So, friends, you have to join us for Delicious Mischief, Houston's own food, wine and arts radio program, this Saturday from 11 a.m.-Noon on KTRH 740.

BLOG WITH US

To get involved in some Delicious Mischief of your own, check out the www.deliciousmischief.blogspot.com. Delicious Mischief can be heard on the 50,000-watt NewsRadio 740 KTRH.

Check out the new www.deliciousmischief.com!

ROLLIN' WITH RYAN

One of our favorite local chefs has long been Ryan Pera, who moved from #17 at the Alden Hotel to Robert Del Grande's new restaurant called The Grove when it opened downtown at Discovery Green. We catch up with Ryan on today's show, learning how his perennially fresh, local, seasonal menu has been evolving, as well as about his recent explorations of so-called "snout to tail" cooking.

CUPCAKES FOR ALL!

Despite some predictions that the trend was little more than a flash in the pan, America's obsession with cupcakes continues. We'll chat with the folks from Ooh La La about what keeps their cash registers ringing, right along with what new flavors of cupcakes they've created to keep is coming back. Theoretically, of course, a cupcake is nothing but a cake you can eat more kinds of...

SPAIN, AT LAST

Collin Williams of Spec's had to postpone his visit with us about Spanish wines – since he found himself smack-dab in the middle of Australia Day, and we definitely wanted to hear what he was pouring for that. But this week, for sure. After all, thanks to the Romans, who called the peninsula Iberia, Spain has one of the oldest winemaking traditions on earth. And many say today's Spanish wines are the best ever made there.

'DELICIOUS MISCHIEF' IN AUSTIN

Delicious Mischief, the popular food and wine radio show that began in New Orleans more than 20 years ago and moved to Houston eight years ago, has a bright new sibling coming to Austin's TalkRadio 1370 beginning Feb. 6. The program, hosted by veteran journalist John DeMers and showcasing Austin's best chefs and restaurants along with winemakers and master distillers from every corner of the globe, will air Saturdays from 10-11 a.m. Like its older brother in Houston, this new Delicious Mischief is a presentation of Spec's Wines, Spirits and Finer Foods, which now operates seven stores in the Austin area.

The first Austin show features two important Austin chefs: Tyson Cole of Uchi, who has done so much to celebrate Japanese culinary influence deep in the heart of Texas, and Terry Conlan of Lake Austin Spa – who cooks delicious food that's actually healthy. In between those bookends, there's an extended Grape and Grain segment devoted to "winetales," the hip new spin on cocktails that

use wines where the booze used to be. Upcoming Austin broadcasts include behind-the-scenes visits to Lockhart, the officially legislated Barbecue Capital of Texas, as well as to the international chili cook-off way out in Terlingua, complete with an extended tasting of Austin-based Republic Tequila. Well, at least the company is based in Austin – the tequila, of course, is "based" in the state of Jalisco in Mexico.

"Over the years I've been in Texas, more and more food stories take me to Austin more and more often," John says. "In food and drink, as in music and politics, Austin has a remarkable amount of fascinating stuff going on. Great drama, great personalities, great ambitions – oh, and did I mention great things for me to eat and drink? This new Austin show gives me the opportunity to say what I love about Austin, each and every Saturday morning."

Wine Grapes from page 4

RUBICON ESTATE Cask Cabernet, Rutherford, 2005
6x750ml \$69.99 \$394.11

Tech: 14.7% Alcohol. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 24 months in 500 liter American oak puncheons (50% new). Sensory: Deep purple-red in color, bright and medium clear with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity and chewy phenolics. Big, rich, ripe, juicy black fruit Cabernet offering tobacco, gravel, black pepper, oak, and a hint of pencil shavings. Still tight but already showing lots of flavor and character. Long and lovely with a perfumed finish. Excellent. BS: 94.

MEANDER Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa, 2006
12x750ml \$59.80 \$673.44

Tech: 14.6% Alcohol. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon aged 22 months in all French oak barrels (75% new). Sensory: Purple-red-black in color with well formed legs; dry, medium full-bodied with balanced acidity and lightly chewy phenolics. Developed rich ripe black & red fruit black with cherry, black currant, and blackberry with dusty gravelly terroir, dusty French oak, and accents of cigar box, pencil shavings, dark, spice, black pepper, and a hint of mocha. Very long finish. Elegant, ethereal, satisfying, and delicious; lovely-in-the-mouth. Excellent. BS: 94.

DAVIS FAMILY Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, 2005
12x750ml \$42.25 \$475.80

Tech: 14.3% Alcohol. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon fermented using pump-over and aged 22 months in all oak barrels (all French; 45% new). Sensory: Deep purple-black-red in color, and with well formed legs; dry, full-bodied with balanced acidity; chewy phenolics. Juicy, lively, spicy, ripe mostly black fruit offering blackberry, black cherry, and black raspberry with some cassis-mure perfume, gravelly dusty terroir, spicy-dusty somewhat Bourbon oak, and accents of tobacco, black pepper, chocolate, and a hint of pencil shavings. Very long finish. Satisfying, complete, integrated but still a bit rustic; robust and alive-in-the-mouth. Excellent. BS: 94.

DRY CREEK VINEYARDS "The Mariner" Meritage, Dry Creek Valley, 2005
6x750ml \$37.99 \$214.04

Tech: 13.9% Alcohol. 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, 6% Petit Verdot, 5% Malbec, and 3% Cabernet Franc from the DCV #9 and Bullock house vineyards aged 25 months French oak barrels (50% new). Sensory: Inky purple in color, and with well formed legs that stain the glass. Dry, very full-bodied with balanced acidity and moderately chewy phenolics. Juicy, rich, and integrated offering black and red fruit with mixed dark berry and subtle cherry with pencil shavings, chocolate, tobacco and black pepper, gravelly earth and supple oak. Lovely in the mouth. Not huge but quite satisfying. YUM. Excellent. BS: 93+. ■