

MINER FAMILY WINERY 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON STAGECOACH VYD. NAPA VALLEY (\$90.00) RED 89

MINER FAMILY WINERY 2005 PROPRIETARY RED THE ORACLE NAPA VALLEY (\$125.00) RED 92

The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Stagecoach Vineyard (95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc, aged 20 months in mostly French oak and some American wood) shows well. It is deep ruby/purple with notes of blackcurrants, licorice and earthy underbrush tones. Drink this medium-bodied wine over the next 7-8 years. The 2005 Proprietary Red The Oracle is a proprietary blend of 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Cabernet Franc, 14% Merlot, 7% Malbec, 6% Malbec, aged similarly to

the Stagecoach. This wine seems to have more nuance, complexity, a broader, more savory mouthfeel and longer finish. It is complex, medium to full-bodied, and pure, with loads of cedar wood, forest floor, underbrush, and black and red currant fruit. The color is dense purple and the wine still vigorous and youthful. I would guess it is just entering its plateau of maturity, where it should stay for at least another decade. Tel. (707) 944-9500

MICHAEL MONDAVI FAMILY ESTATE 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON M NAPA VALLEY (\$200.00) RED 93+

From Michael Mondavi, this is another great Cabernet Sauvignon, which seems to be in the DNA of this family. Michael Mondavi's 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon M has an opaque ruby/purple color and a gorgeous nose of *crème de cassis*, licorice, a touch of graphite and background oak. Fresh, youthful and belying its ten years of age, it

tastes more like 3- to 5-year-old Napa Cabernet. The wine is full-bodied, impressively endowed, and set for a good two decades of aging. This wine probably merits some patience, although it's certainly showing well at present. Tel. (707) 226-1395; www.michaelmondavifamilyestate.com

ROBERT MONDAVI WINERY 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON RESERVE NAPA VALLEY (\$135.00) RED 95

This is a beautiful 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve from Mondavi. The wine, a blend of 94% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Cabernet Franc, has a youthful, opaque bluish/purple color and a classic nose of lead pencil shavings, *crème de cassis*, licorice, and subtle, toasty French oak. Some chocolate also makes an appearance. Approachable, this full-bodied, beautifully concentrated and handsome Cabernet Sauvignon strikes me as one of the superb efforts the Mondavi Winery has produced,

and should age effortlessly for another 20+ years. Given the bevy of \$200+ Napa Cabernets these days, at \$135.00, this is not a best buy, but it's certainly a compelling price point, given this stunner. Drink it over the next 20 years. P.S. Once again, the vintage's incredible freshness, vibrancy and precision are well displayed in this wine and, as I have indicated so many times in this horizontal, this is a striking characteristic in the manner the 2005s have evolved. Tel. (707) 226-1395

CHATEAU MONTELENA WINERY 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON CALISTOGA (\$165.00) RED 93+

Beautiful Montelena Winery was established in 1882, which says a lot. It has been owned by the Barrett family for a long time, becoming one of the iconic wines of Napa Valley. (There's probably as much Château Montelena in my California collection as any Napa Cab.) However, the aging curve of Montelena is irrefutable, with the estate Cabernet easily going the distance of 20-30 years, even in lighter vintages. The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon at age ten is still a young, vibrant, dense

ruby/purple-colored wine with lots of classic cassis fruit and a touch of earth undertones. It offers relatively soft and silky tannins by the standards of Montelena, but they're there. It is full-bodied, rich and impressive. Cabernet Sauvignon from the northern end of the Napa Valley in Calistoga tends to be the St.-Estèphe of Napa. This wine is certainly one of the great ones. Forget it for another 3-4 years and drink it over the following 20-25. Tel. (707) 942-5105

MONTICELLO VINEYARDS 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON NAPA VALLEY (\$125.00) RED 92+

MONTICELLO VINEYARDS 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON STATE LANE YOUNTVILLE (\$95.00) RED 90+

MONTICELLO VINEYARDS 2005 PROPRIETARY RED CORLEY NAPA VALLEY (\$55.00) RED 90

The outstanding 2005 Proprietary Red Corley is a blend of 54% Cabernet Franc, 28% Merlot, 10% Syrah and 8% Cabernet Sauvignon. This is a heck of a value, especially from high-priced Napa Valley. It offers up loads of perfume, especially flowers, red and black fruits, and forest notes. It is soft, round, opulent, medium to full-bodied, and very seductive. Drink it over the next 5-6 years. The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon State Lane is either contiguous or the same parcel that is now the foundation for the brilliant wines of the Kapcsandy family in Yountville. The wine has beautiful *crème de cassis*, licorice and floral notes, a dense, nearly opaque purple color, and a youthful, concentrated style. This is a promising, full-bodied,

young Napa Cabernet Sauvignon with at least 10-15 or more years of upside potential. Lastly, the 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa, which is the most expensive of these wines, is a blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest equal parts Cabernet Franc and Merlot. This is the most backward and concentrated of these three wines. This wine offers copious quantities of *crème de cassis*, licorice, incense, and a touch of spicy oak in the background. It is full-bodied, young, ripe and impressive. Patience will be a virtue, as this wine begs for another 3-4 years of cellaring and should drink well for two decades or more. As a group, these are the most impressive wines I've tasted from the Corley family in many a year. Tel. (707) 253-2802

MOUNT VEEDER WINERY 2005 PROPRIETARY RED RESERVE NAPA VALLEY (\$120.00) RED 89+

A blend of 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Merlot and 7% Malbec, this is an outstanding effort from Mount Veeder. Medium to full-bodied, pure and

well-endowed, as well as youthful, after ten years, this wine still has considerable upside. Drink it over the next 10-12 years. Tel. (707) 224-4039

NEWTON VINEYARD 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON UNFILTERED NAPA VALLEY (\$60.00) RED 93

NEWTON VINEYARD 2005 PROPRIETARY RED THE PUZZLE SPRING MOUNTAIN DISTRICT (\$175.00) RED 94+

Newton was probably the first estate in Napa that benefitted from the consulting services of Michel Rolland. They were also one of the pioneers of unfiltered wines. The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Unfiltered is young and vigorous with an opaque ruby/purple color, an appealing set of aromatics consisting of plum, allspice, cassis, new saddle leather, spice box and earth. medium to full-bodied, elegant, yet authoritative, it possesses silky tannins, adequate acidity and a long, layered, multidimensional finish. The acid gives vigor and delineation, and this wine is another example of a vintage that seems to retain remarkable freshness and youthfulness. At age ten, this full-bodied classic from the lower slopes of Spring Mountain should age effortlessly for another 20 years.

Newton's 2005 Proprietary Red the Puzzle is a blend of 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 29% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot from Newton's estate holdings on Spring Mountain. I was somewhat shocked to see this wine tip the scales at 15.6% alcohol, as it is totally hidden and there is no trace of heat. Dense ruby/purple with notes of forest floor, graphite, blueberry and black raspberry, the aromatics are super-fresh and complex. Full-bodied with the level of glycerin one would expect with this potency, but very fresh with well-delineated and precise flavors that clearly are the advantage of the cool mountain climate. The finish is long and the wine approachable and drinkable now, but promises to last at least another two decades. Tel. (707) 963-9000

NOTRE VIN 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON HOWELL MOUNTAIN (\$150.00) RED 91

NOTRE VIN 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON CUVÉE L'ETRIER NAPA VALLEY (\$75.00) RED 90

Consultants Denis Malbec and his wife are the principles behind this label. The 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Cuvée L'Etrier is a blend of 85% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, and the rest Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, but it has a relatively modest, Bordeaux-like alcohol level of 13.5%. Fresh plum, spice, and black and red currants jump from the glass of this deep ruby/plum/purple-colored wine. Good, fresh acids, medium to full body, elegance and freshness are all present in this wine, which quickly shows a Bordeaux-like *savoir faire* and personality. Of course, Napa advocates may want a bit more flesh and fat, but this wine is by no means wimpy or undernourished.

It is elegant, stylish and pure. Drink it over the next 7-10 years. The more expensive 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain, which is 89% Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest Cabernet Franc, Merlot and Petit Verdot, is aged in 100% new French oak and is another moderately alcoholic wine (13.8%). Juicy plum, blackcurrant, licorice and graphite are present in this medium to full-bodied, beautifully concentrated, elegant and nicely textured wine. Although these wines don't hit peaks of what great Napa Cabernet can be, they certainly prove that you can stay under 14% alcohol and produce outstanding wine. Tel. (707) 963-9606

OAKVILLE RANCH VINEYARDS 2005 CABERNET FRANC ROBERT'S OAKVILLE (\$90.00) RED 91

OAKVILLE RANCH VINEYARDS 2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON OAKVILLE (\$60.00) RED 85?

Another terrific example of Cabernet Franc in Napa, the delicious 2005 Cabernet Franc Robert's (90% Cabernet Franc and 10% Cabernet Sauvignon) aged 18 months in 100% French oak, of which 50% was new.

It has a dense ruby/purple color and loads of forest flora, in addition to mulberry, boysenberry, and a sort of wild mountain blue and red fruit. Complex, light on its feet, but intense in flavor, this wine is soft, round and