

RED ROGUES
FALL/WINTER 2007



PLUMP JACK
WINES

The reigning king of red wines is Cabernet Sauvignon, which is the varietal wine that we have chosen for our Red Rogues quarterly club. In the past we have elected not to write about this varietal because of the familiarity that many people have of this very important wine; we decided that we would throw caution to the wind after we discovered three superb Cabernet Sauvignons—all from the esteemed Napa Valley. The three wines for this quarter are from: Downing Family, Anderson's Conn Valley Vineyards, and Vinifera.

Numerous books and articles have been written about Napa Valley so it's quite easy to learn about this highly-regarded Northern California Wine-Growing Region. After the Mexican-American War, the Bear Flag Revolt, and the Mexican Secession in 1848, settlers were allowed to purchase deeds and acquire land in Napa. Napa County, one of the original counties in California, was founded when California became a state in 1849. As entrepreneurs developed ferry boats, spas, resorts in Calistoga, railroads, and silver mines, many people from San Francisco went north to visit Napa to soak in mineral waters and to take in a much warmer, summertime climate. Hence, the population grew rapidly, and now has more than 150,000 full-time residents.

By 1889, there were 619 vineyards planted in Napa Valley with as many as 50 working wineries, while today, there are more than 300 wineries making wine there.

Napa has been a strong and resilient growing area rebounding from two bouts of phylloxera, disastrous economic climates, and the worst—Prohibition. Needless to say, many creative vintners began producing medicinal or “sacramental” wine.

Although in the early 1950's, Stony Hill Winery started producing some of the first wines after prohibition, it was

Robert Mondavi, producing large quantities of wine in the 1960's, who really created the current day wine boom. The one event that nearly went unnoticed by some, but became extremely important to the popularity of Napa, was a wine competition in Paris. The 1976 Wine Competition in Paris pitted some of California's finest wines against the finest wines in France. To almost everyone's shock—especially the French--the top-rated wine was the 1973 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon, catapulting Stag's Leap, California, and Napa Valley into historic wine prominence.

It's no secret to anyone who has visited the picturesque Napa Valley why this area is second only to Disneyland, as California's leading tourist attraction. But why is it such a great place for growing premium Cabernet Sauvignon grapes? One answer is that while there are several microclimates in Napa, the overall climate is nearly identical to Bordeaux. The Napa Valley Vintner's Association states: “The area's topography supports a wide variety of soils—more than 30 different types have been identified. Ranging from well-drained gravelly loams to moisture-retaining silty clays, these soils vary in depth and fertility. The structure and composition of the soil greatly affects the vegetation, including grapes, which it sustains.” Great climate, plus good soils, add a little magic, and you have the reasons for Napa Valley's reputation.

Napa Valley has evolved as one of the most prestigious, well-recognized areas for producing some of the best world-class Cabernet Sauvignons, and Cabernet is still the top selling red wine in the world.

Here are a few common descriptors for Cabernet Sauvignon: berry, cedar, eucalyptus, briary, chocolate, vanilla, black cherry, black currant, cassis, cocoa, black pepper, spice, violets, and many, many more.

THIS MONTH'S SELECTIONS . . .

2005 Anderson's Conn Valley Vineyards
\$23.99

Winery Location: Conn Valley

Proprietors: Gus and Todd Anderson

Winemaker: Todd Anderson

Vineyards: 26 acres planted near Howell Mountain in Conn Valley

Other wines produced: Pinot Noir, Reserve Cabernet, and Chardonnay

Cases Produced: 2,100

Alcohol: 14.4%

Blend: 100% Cabernet

Tasting Notes: Deep, ruby color, with a cocoa nose; deep berry, and some hint of blackberry with prominent tannin; the finish is round and friendly; well developed.

Aging Potential: We think you should drink now or hold for 3-4 years and the winery says 5-7 years.

Food Pairings: Flank steak, lamb chops, and pasta with red sauce

Interesting Fact: Conn Valley Vineyards was one of the first wines PlumpJack Wines carried when we opened 15 years ago. The Anderson's produce Eloge, which is a blend of Cabernet, Cabernet Franc, and Petite Verdot. They also produce a Right Bank wine which is a blend of Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

2004 Downing Family
\$32.99

Winery Location: Tasting room is located at the Napa Wine Company in Oakville where the wines are made.

Proprietors: John and Tracy Downing

Winemaker: Randy Mason of Mason Winery

Vineyards: Del Bondio vineyard on Bella Oaks Lane in Rutherford and Volker's Eisele Chiles Vineyard in the eastern hills of Napa.

Other wines produced: Zinfandel, Shiraz, and Petite Syrah

Cases Produced: 713

Alcohol: 14.3%

Blend: 100% Cabernet.

Tasting Notes: Deep purple, ruby color; great berry flavor, with big tannin; full-bodied and round, and chewy mouthfeel; cocoa and chocolate, cedar; lingering, pretty finish.

Food Pairings: Grilled duck sausage, beef cheeks, or meatloaf

Aging Potential: 5-7 years.

Interesting Fact: John and Tracy Downing are passionate about fly-and-release fishing, bicycling, and sailing. On each of their varietal labels, they have a symbol representing their passion. On the Cabernet label, is a delicate line with a toothless fly.

2005 Vinifera
\$39.99

Winery Location: Napa Wine Company in Oakville

Proprietors: Tuck Beckstoffer

Winemaker: Rob Lawson

Vineyards: The vineyards come from the renowned Andy Beckstoffer Vineyards. The specific vineyards are the To Kalon vineyard and the Dr. Crane Vineyard, originally planted in the 1800's.

Other wines produced: Cabernet Sauvignon

Cases Produced: 2,500

Alcohol: 14.2%

Blend: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon

Tasting Notes: Sweet fruit aromas, with a dark purple color; dark plum flavors, some cassis, dark chocolate and cocoa flavors; sexy on the tip of the tongue; subtle tannins; juicy and flavorful.

Aging Potential: Drink now or hold for 2-5 years.

Food Pairings: New York steak au poive, cheeseburger, or lamb shanks

Interesting Fact: Tuck Beckstoffer is the son of Andy Beckstoffer. The Beckstoffer's own the largest number of privately held acres in Napa Valley.

Why PlumpJack Loves Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa Valley.

1. It is **the wine** for a steak.
2. There are hundreds of great wines to choose from.
3. While it's typically a masculine wine, it can be pretty and elegant.
4. What a bonus to support something fabulous from your own back yard.
5. They are rich, full-bodied, and delicious!