

THE WASHINGTON PANEL

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The Year of the Artisan Brand

*Tatratea Is Steeped
In Versatility*



Giovanni Labile of Ocean Avenue
Brewery in Laguna Beach, CA.

Legends of Napa Valley

What if you decided to put on a tasting to illustrate the evolution of Napa Valley—from sleepy backwater to the epicenter of the American wine industry? That was the idea and for nearly six months THE TASTING PANEL office along with the staff of Karlitz & Co. in New York wheedled, cajoled and begged Napa's most historic and important wineries to open up their cellars to us. We planned a chronological look at historic wines on the first day, leading into current superstars on the second day.

We cadged two bottles of each of 77 target wines for the tasting, enough for 36 lucky tasters. Along the way, we discovered that many of the top wines were grown in vineyards owned by Andy Beckstoffer and that many of them were made by Heidi Peterson Barrett, so it made sense to feature a special tribute to each of these Napa giants as part of the event.

The tasting took place over two rainy days at the Rudd Center at Greystone, California headquarters of the Culinary Institute of America in St. Helena. I was the moderator, assisted by a stellar panel that included Karen MacNeil, Director of the CIA's Rudd Center for Professional Wine Studies; Nicolas Jackson, fine wine expert from Sotheby's; and Alder Yarrow, America's top wine blogger. The tasting cost \$3500 per taster, with proceeds going to the CIA Scholarship fund.

What follows are my tasting notes for this historic tasting. It was definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

TASTING THE HISTORY OF AMERICA'S MOST CELEBRATED WINE REGION

by Anthony Dias Blue

DAY 1, SESSION 1

2001 Schramsberg Vineyards Blanc de Blancs, Late Disgorged

Bright and juicy with yeast; vibrant, lush and crisp with a hint of oak and minerals; complex, layered and quite stunning. Disgorged November 2011. **94**

presented by Keith Hock, Winemaker

2004 Stony Hill Chardonnay Silky smooth, mellow and balanced with lovely intensity; lush and clean; ripe; pure Chardonnay. **91**

presented by Peter McCrea, Principal

1976 Chateau Montelena

Chardonnay Creamy and deep; clean and juicy pineapple; toasty and elegant with burnished color and rich flavors; stunning and timeless. **94**

presented by Bo Barrett, Winemaker

2010 Grgich Hills Estate

Chardonnay, Paris Tasting Tribute Bright, fresh, juicy and smooth; elegant minerality and finesse; lovely. Biodynamic. **92**

presented by Ivo Jeramaz, Vice President of Vineyard and Production

1957 Louis M. Martini Pinot Noir;

Carneros Fresh! Smooth and toasty; elegant and lovely with maturity and depth; vibrant and alive; a revelation! **93**

presented by Mike and Jacquie Martini, Winemaker and wife

1966 Charles Krug Cabernet Sauvignon, Vintage Selection

Smooth and lush; elegant with earthy minerals and herbs; lovely depth and seamless cedar; red plum and spice; long, lovely and balanced. **93**

presented by Alycia Mondavi, Mondavi family

1967 Inglenook Cabernet

Sauvignon Rich and spicy; mature, smooth and toasty; elegant and balanced. (This wine was not sanctioned by the winery. It was purchased from a private collector.) **90**

1968 Beaulieu Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Georges de Latour

Powerful, intense, rich and luscious; sweet plum and red meat; spicy and mature. **93**

1977 Beringer Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Private

Reserve Rich and powerful; luscious, supple and vibrant; meaty, minty, concentrated and minerally with great depth and length. The first Beringer Private Reserve. **94**

1978 Chateau Montelena

Cabernet Sauvignon, Estate Rich and spicy with lovely maturity; long, seamless and very vibrant; graceful soft tannins; notes of earth and plum. **94**

presented by Bo Barrett, Winemaker

1978 Heitz Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon, Martha's Vineyard Smooth and lush with mint and vibrant acidity; lush and mature; vivid fruit- at its best. **95**
presented by Kathleen Heitz Myers, Proprietor

1979 Robert Mondavi Winery Cabernet Sauvignon, Reserve Rich and dense, vibrant and alive; lovely depth, rich plum and notes of earth and spice; fine texture and seamless character; balanced and long. **94**
presented by Genevieve Janssens, Director of Winemaking

1979 Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, S.L.V. Intense, meaty, complex and vivid with cloves and spice; amazing depth and structure; spice and rich plum/blackberry; dense, long and stylish with elegance and power. **94**
presented by Nicki Pruss, Winemaker

1983 Shafer Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Hillside Select, Stags Leap District Lush and spicy with charming notes of cinnamon and chocolate; gorgeous plum fruit that is ripe, rich and intense; powerful and vibrant, supple and long. **94**

1986 Raymond Cabernet Sauvignon, Private Reserve Smooth and juicy, fresh and tangy; vibrant and racy with lovely style and finesse; nervy and long. **93**
presented by Stephanie Putnam, Winemaker

1990 Freemark Abbey Cabernet Sauvignon, Bosché Vineyard Smooth, lush and showing herbs, spicy dark cherry and bright plum; long and tasty with deep flavors and good balance; lovely, smooth texture with earthy notes. 17.8% Merlot. **92**
presented by Ted Edwards, Director of Winemaking

1995 La Jota Vineyard Co. Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain Dense and firm with rich spice; deep with complex flavors of plum; lovely. **93**
presented by Christopher Carpenter, Winemaker

1976 Joseph Phelps Insignia Rich and complex with amazing depth; ripe and luscious with lovely fruit, spice and earth; tangy acidity and great structure; long, fresh and tannic, masterful. **96**
presented by Damian Parker, Director of Winemaking

1979 Opus One Juicy and tangy with great finesse and lovely acid structure; racy and charming; vibrant, long and balanced. 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Cabernet Franc, 4% Merlot. **94**
presented by Roger Asleson, VP Public Relations



PHOTO: JANE RENNERT

DAY 1, SESSION 2

2001 Trefethen Chardonnay Bright and juicy with smooth, tangy flavors and good balance; fresh, lovely fruit; fig and very subtle oak; balanced and full; long, vibrant and fresh. **93**

presented by Zeke Neeley, Winemaker
1990 Duckhorn Vineyards Merlot, Three Palms Vineyard Smooth and juicy with lovely structure; lush and spicy, herbal and smooth. **92**

1986 Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon Elegant structure; balanced with perfume and lovely finesse, spice and plum; juicy and long; tangy and racy. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc. **93**
presented by Dirk Hampson, Chairman and Director of Winemaking

1988 Clos du Val Proprietary Red, Reserve Clear and bright, juicy and edgy; tangy and spicy with dried

berries; long and lovely. 96% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Cabernet Franc, 1% Merlot. **93**

presented by Kristy Melton, Winemaker

1992 Araujo Cabernet Sauvignon, Eisele Vineyard Rich and juicy with lovely mocha and spicy plum; long and luscious structure; beautiful and deep with seamless flavors; stunning. **95**

presented by James Hayes, VP of Sales and Marketing

1992 Caymus Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon, Special Selection Smooth, ripe and lush with lovely ripe fruit and racy acidity; long, intense, balanced and fresh. **94**

presented by Chuck Wagner, Winemaker and Proprietor

1997 Bryant Family Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Estate Grown Intense, powerful, thick and plummy;