



More on Bespoke Gallery and Tasting Room at the Riverfront

This week in NapaLife

A Day in the Dust

Each year, the Rutherford Dust Society, the trade organization of vintners and growers in the Rutherford American Viticultural Association, holds a tasting for the wine trade and media.

This year's tasting at Inglenook Estate highlighted 14 exceptional 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon wines that were among 32 samples submitted by the 48 winery members of the group. (Some haven't released their 2013s or sell all they make anyway, so why take the chance of not excelling?). I wondered about the wines that weren't there — some of my favorites in the past, like Frog's Leap, Honig and Inglenook.

The tasting only amplified the reputation of the vintage, which followed the also-excellent 2012, a relief after the challenging 2011.

2013 was pretty mild, with few heat spikes and very even ripening though a long season and the growers and winemakers have learned how to make wines that are drinkable young, yet can age well. They're a far cry from the tannic monsters that marked wines intended for aging when I was younger (and are still often found in Washington).

The wines were so good that it was difficult to choose, but this gave some of the sommeliers and critics a chance to demonstrate their refined and remarkable vocabularies of wine aromas and tastes. It's always entertaining to listen for the most colorful descriptions.

If I had to pick one of the wines as my favorite it was the Jon Nathaniel Windfall Cabernet from the Komes family that co-owns Flora Springs Winery.

It was elegant and refined, though none of the wines were the over-ripe, over-extracted fruit bombs that once were Napa's signature wines.

The wine was aged in the usual French oak, not mostly American oak like the Flora Springs Cab, though that wine didn't smell like American oak. That's good, for I hate American oak flavors, including Bourbon.

The wine costs \$200, but none of the wines are likely to be served for Tuesday night spaghetti and meatballs.

Many of the tasters preferred the other bigger wines, as is often the case.

I also really liked the **Raymond** and St. Supéry Cabs, too. Most of the wines listed alcohol levels below 15 percent and none seemed hot.

For the record, the wines, all 2013, were:

- Alpha Omega Beckstoffer George III
- Chaix Family Vineyard
- Conn Creek Rutherford Estate
- Flora Springs
- Foley Johnson
- Frank Family Rutherford Reserve
- Hewitt Vineyards
- Jon Nathaniel Windfall
- Quintessa
- **Raymond District Collection Rutherford**
- Rutherford Grove
- St. Supéry Rutherford Estate
- S.R. Tonella Cellars
- Wm. Harrison