

02.25.2017

A Look at 2015 Napa Cabernet: Tasting at Premiere Napa Valley



Each year, the [Napa Valley Vintners Association](#) pulls out all the stops to host its annual fundraising event known as [Premiere Napa Valley](#). Not to be confused with its star-studded charity auction in the spring (known as Auction Napa Valley), Premiere Napa Valley is a more focused event. It is a barrel tasting and auction, in which the wines on offer are all unique creations made specifically and only for this event, offering purchasers the opportunity to own an incredibly rare wine that often represents the very pinnacle of the winemaker's efforts in that vintage. All the invited bidders are ostensibly in the wine trade (retailers, distributors, etc.), while other attendees include the media and winery staff. The proceeds from the auction of more than 200 unique lots of wine go to help fund the Vintners Association itself.

The auction action at Premiere always serves as something of a barometer for California wine, measuring both the strength of the Napa brand in the marketplace, as well as the interest in the upper echelon of fine wine (many auction lots sell for well over \$2000 per bottle).

This afternoon, the Vintners [raised \\$4.2 million dollars at the auction](#), which was a bit less than the \$5 million earned last year, and the roughly \$6 million earned in 2014 and 2015. Had I been the betting type, I would have predicted a higher take this year, given the apparent strength of the economy, and the generally high praise for the 2015 vintage, which most of the lots represented.

Each of the auction lots at Premiere usually represents something approximating the best possible wine that a given winery can make in the vintage. Consequently, the wines offer a unique window into the pinnacle of quality for that particular vintage.

Every year, I attend Premiere with the goal of tasting as many of these wines as I can, in an effort to get a bead on the vintage as a whole in Napa, and to compete in my own personal marathon of tasting, which has become something of an annual tradition for me.

WINES WITH A SCORE BETWEEN 9 AND 9.5

2015 Raymond Vineyards "Masquerade " Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley