

Benchmark Beauty: 2024 Lights Up Premiere Napa Valley

March 2, 2026 - By Ryan Montgomery

First impressions often set the tone for a vintage in a top wine region such as Napa Valley, and the 2024 vintage left a lasting one with James, Editor at Large Jim Gordon, Staff Writer and Critic Ryan Montgomery, Senior Editor Jacobo García Andrade and COO Andrew McMurray during Premiere Napa Valley (PNV) last month, a weeklong event full of tastings as well as a final auction on Feb. 21.

From the hundreds of barrel samples we tasted of reds, it sits among some of the best vintages in recent memory, especially 2023, bringing freshness, charm and ageability with almost immediate drinking pleasure. The 2024 samples filled the week's events with a sense of excitement and anticipation from the outset, and we look forward to tasting them in bottle.

James quickly noted that “2024 follows 2023 in a beautiful way, with the same balance and drinkability but a touch more fruit. I think we’ll be talking about these two vintages for years, the way we still talk about 2018 and 2019.”

The comparison is natural, given that 2024 follows a highly lauded 2023 and seems almost a step up from the wines of that year, bringing more fruit and body yet retaining the same finesse, taut structure, bright acidity and fine tannins, along with plenty of early drinking appeal. It is, undoubtedly, an excellent vintage.

The consistency of the 2024 auction lots spread across the entirety of the valley for the team. Cabernet sauvignon, of course, dominated the auction lots, with lots from all AVAs shining. Some highlights included CADE in Howell Mountain, Spottswoode in St Helena, Gamble in Oakville and Inglenook in Rutherford, and there were also excellent whites. The team attended a chenin blanc tasting at Ballentine Vineyards, with producers such as Lang & Reed – whose 2022 chenin lot James brought – as well as **Larkmead Vineyards** and Ballentine. They all showed the versatility of both Napa and the variety, as well as the purity and charm of '24.

There is much to be excited about for the 2024 releases as maturation comes to an end and bottlings are being booked. In the meantime, the 2023s continue to show freshness and tension, while the 2024s appear slightly more generous, yet still fresh. Together, they sit among the very best vintages in recent memory.

Obviously, the close to 1,000 participants at PNV, which is strictly an event for the wine trade, appreciated the quality. This year's auction sold more than \$3 million worth of mostly 2024 wines from Napa.