

Panel tasting results: Napa Valley red and white blends

September 6, 2026 - By Jonathan Cristaldi

A tour de force tasting

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While the results were remarkably consistent, the blends were consistently variable, showing how far the 'Napa red blend' category has expanded beyond yesterday's Left Bank Bordeaux-inspired 'Meritage' wines. Cabernet Sauvignon still led half the wines, but the panel also tasted Merlot-driven cuvées, Sangiovese 'SuperTuscan' style wines, Zinfandel field blends, even Tempranillo and a Syrah-Mourvèdre that Cara Patricia likened to 'a Napa take on a Côtes du Rhône'. At every price tier, the judges found blends of genuine, pure fruit character, ample structure, freshness and energy.

Napa Valley blends

Held at Napa Valley Vintners in St Helena, this extensive tasting of premium non-varietal/blended wines yielded an extraordinary swathe of impressively high-scoring results

REPORT JONATHAN CRISTALDI

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THE JUDGES

JONATHAN CRISTALDI
is Decanter's Napa Valley correspondent. Based in California, he is also wine critic for both The States Journal and The Tasting Panel magazine, also hosting podcast *WineTalks*

JENICA FLIPPO
is senior producer at Open One Winery in California, Napa Valley. With more than 20 years' experience as a hospitality professional, she is an advanced sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers Americas

CARA PATRICIA
is a founder and brand creative director of Open One Winery & Bar across its two locations in San Francisco and Napa. A wine consultant, judge and educator, she is an advanced sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers Americas

95

● **Larkmead, Keyline Estate Red Blend 2023**
JC 94 JF 95 CP 95
larkmead.com
Larkmead dates to 1895 and has been owned by the Solari family since 1948, making it one of Napa Valley's longest-established family estates. Winemaker Avery Heelan helms the cellar. Keyline forms part of Larkmead's Research Block Series, part of an experimental initiative exploring grape varieties suited to warmer growing conditions. The 2023 is a blend of Shiraz, Malbec, Petite Sirah, Charbono, Touriga Nacional and Zinfandel. It was matured for 20 months in neutral French oak.
JC A glass-staining, inky black

93

● **Larkmead, Contour Estate Red Blend 2023**
JC 94 JF 94 CP 90
larkmead.com
Dark and dusty red fruits show power and aromatic intensity, joined by fennel, cedar and cigar. Fresh energy drives this intriguing, characterful blend towards a lively finish.
Drink 2026-2034 **Alc** 14.7%

WHAT TO EAT

Although the tasting featured wines other than the Cabernet and Merlot-based reds with which Napa is most closely identified, we're still talking mostly about Northern (Bordeaux) blends here, and high-end Meritage blends at that, many of which will take time to come into their own. But if you can't keep your hands off them, what do you get with them? Here's a few ideas. The best quality, simply cooked steak and lamb, maybe with a classic red wine sauce of the Marcellino de Vintners. A good char or your meaty chops with a simple herb and olive oil sauce. A perfect pairing. If you're looking for a more sophisticated, but still simple, pairing, try a perfectly grilled Portobello mushroom. Then there's cheese – not necessarily a full board, but some rough-cut slices of well-matured Parmesan or Arrogance. Perfect to nibble while you sip contemplatively.



95 points

2023

KEYLINE ESTATE

RED BLEND



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"A glass-staining, inky black wine, deeply concentrated with a full-bodied palate expression. Glycerol and polished wet-stone minerals on the finish. Certainly a crowdpleaser."

- Jonathan Cristaldi

"An opaque red full of intense blackberry, plum and blueberry compote character. Subtle eucalyptus and graphite emerge on the finish, all framed by long, gripping tannins."

- Jenica Flippo

"A true blend, tasting how I think people believe Napa blends do taste. Blackberry syrup and intensely dark fruit, like a dry Port. I can see folks loving this."

- Cara Patricia

Decanter



95 points

2023

CONTOUR ESTATE

RED BLEND



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By any measure, this was a very strong showing for Napa blends (*see 'Entry criteria' below*), with half the field of 76 rated Outstanding or Exceptional, and all but four scoring 90 points or more, confirmation that the valley's long, cool 2023 growing season delivered structured reds (and a few whites) with complex flavours and expressive personalities.

'There's good concentration and freshness here,' Jenica Flippo noted of one top performer – a refrain that echoed across a full day of blind tasting. Critical to note, these wines fall mostly in the luxury-to-super-luxury tier, priced from US\$50 to \$100, with one third of the blends above \$100 per bottle, so the calibre of submissions was high.

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Bordeaux-inspired 'Meritage' wines. Cabernet Sauvignon still led half the wines, but the panel also tasted Merlot-driven cuvées, Sangiovese 'SuperTuscan' style wines, Zinfandel field blends, even Tempranillo and a Syrah-Mourvèdre (*see p134*) that Cara Patricia likened to 'a Napa take on a Côtes du Rhône'. Another Merlot-led red, from Patel (*see p129*), prompted Patricia's boldest claim: 'This is a wine that can bring Millennials and Gen Z back to Merlot.'

Where the judges aligned, they aligned emphatically; Miner Family's The Oracle drew scores within a point of each other. On the other hand, ripeness proved a dividing force. With the wines' alcohol levels spanning 12.9% to a heady 16.2%, the panel split over where ripeness tips into excess. Hill Family Estate's Like a Hawk (*see p133*) at 14.8% alcohol was downright delicious to me; but Patricia noted, 'I taste the winemaking more than the wine'.

While the number of 2024 whites submitted was small and focused on Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon, they held their own in the ratings.

At every price tier, the judges found blends of genuine, pure fruit character, ample structure, freshness and energy.

THE SCORES 76 wines tasted

Exceptional 2 Outstanding 36 Highly recommended 34 Recommended 3 Commended 1

Entry criteria: producers and UK agents were invited to submit their dry, still Napa Valley wines, 2023 reds or 2024 whites, made using more than one grape variety and not labelled as a single-varietal wine

WHAT TO EAT by Fiona Beckett

Although the tasting featured wines other than the Cabernet- and Merlot-based reds with which Napa is most closely identified, we're still talking mainly about Meritage (Bordeaux) blends here, and high-end Meritage blends at that, many of which will take time to come into their own. But if you can't keep your hands off them, what do you pair with them? Keep it simple is my mantra. The best-quality, simply cooked steak and lamb, maybe with a classic red wine sauce of the Marchand de Vin variety. A good char on your meat helps with tannins that might have a couple of years to go before they're fully integrated. Looking ahead to winter, braised beef short rib would be a perfect pairing. Pigeon/squab works well with these kinds of wines, too; as, perhaps more surprisingly, do grilled Portobello mushrooms. Then there's cheese – not necessarily a full board, but some rough-cut slivers of well-matured Parmesan or Asiago. Perfect to nibble while you sip contemplatively.



THE JUDGES



JONATHAN CRISTALDI

is *Decanter's* Napa Valley correspondent. Based in California, he is chief wine critic for both *The Somm Journal* and *The Tasting Panel* magazine, also hosting podcast @cristaldiandco



JENICA FLIPPO

is winery ambassador at Opus One Winery in Oakville, Napa Valley. With more than 20 years' experience as a hospitality professional, she is an Advanced Sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers Americas



CARA PATRICIA

is co-founder and brand & creative director of Decant Bottle Shop & Bar across its two locations in San Francisco and Napa. A wine consultant, judge and educator, she is an Advanced Sommelier with the Court of Master Sommeliers Americas

PHOTOGRAPHS ALEXANDER RUBIN, VLADIMIR MIRONOV/GETTY IMAGES

Exceptional 98-100pts



● Amuse Bouche, Napa Valley Red 2023

Jonathan Cristaldi 98
Jenica Flippo 96
Cara Patricia 99
£168.34 (ib) Four Corners
Amuse Bouche was founded in 2002 by winemaker Heidi Barrett and longtime friend John Schwartz with the aim of producing a small-batch interpretation of a Pomerol-style Merlot. Each vintage carries an original work commissioned from a noted artist. The 2023, featuring the late Jennifer Garant's *Days of Wine and Roses*, comprises 92% Merlot and 8% Cabernet Franc, aged for 16 months in 60% new French oak.

Jonathan Cristaldi A coiled-up energy makes me think this will cellar quite well, but it can be enjoyed in its youth. Balanced, expressive, elegant, and driven by restraint.

Jenica Flippo Intense black and red fruit aromas. Velvety and decadent on the palate, showing plump plum fruit with a savoury backbone.

Cara Patricia Very soft and luxurious, tannins like a mink coat. Black fruit and botanical garden aromas, green moss and orchid. Really bringing out the heights of Napa Merlot. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alcohol** 14.6%



● Miner, The Oracle 2023

JC 98 **JF** 97 **CP** 98
minervines.com
Dave and Emily Miner founded Miner Family Winery in 1996, establishing their hillside winery in Oakville after Dave's tenure as president of Oakville Ranch Vineyards. Michelle Shafrir leads the current winemaking team. First produced from the 2001 vintage, the Oracle is the estate's flagship Bordeaux-style blend. The 2023 combines 59% Cabernet Sauvignon, 24% Cabernet Franc, 12% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot, aged 22 months in French oak barrels. **JC** Ripe fruit imbued with savoury-spiced nuances of

sage, thyme and cumin, with compact, firm tannins resolving beautifully with tobacco and earthen accents, dark chocolate bringing phenolic grip.

JF Densely complex red with savoury spices backing up bold fruit. Wild herbs with dusty fruit tannins. Will age with grace.

CP An abundance of blackberry that hits a big tannin wall, but this structure will no doubt integrate over time. Turned earth and chocolate-cherry, with mint, juniper and resin.

Drink 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.2% ►



Miner Family Winery in Oakville, Napa Valley

Outstanding 95-97pts



97

● CourAvant, Blanc 2024

JC 96 JF 96 CP 98
US\$65 couravant.com
 Founded by Gary and Sharon Lessing, CourAvant is a small, family-owned estate located in St Helena that produced its debut vintage in 2019. Today, the wines are made by Sally Johnson Blum. The 2024 Blanc is a Bordeaux-inspired white that blends 54% Pope Valley Sauvignon Blanc and 46% Calistoga Semillon. The ageing for 14 months in neutral oak represents a restrained maturation choice intended to build texture without introducing the pronounced influence of new barrels.

JC Vivid, lifted, with pure lemon and yellow apple fruit notes, ripe apricot and underripe peach. A saline thread runs through, balanced by subtle phenolic grip and lovely lingering fruit.
JF A blend that's all about texture. Apple, peach, Meyer lemon and white florals glide into a gently waxy finish that keeps you coming back for more.
CP Reminiscent of a Graves blanc on the nose; white pear and mandarin orange pith, light sea spray and chervil, beeswax and magnolia. Very pleasurable.
Drink 2026-2046 **Alc** 13.6%



97

● Elusa, Interlace, Calistoga 2023

JC 98 JF 95 CP 98
US\$150 elusawinery.com
 Elusa is the organically farmed estate winery attached to the Four Seasons Resort and Residences Napa Valley in Calistoga. The project places vineyard farming and small-lot cellar work at its centre, with Thomas Rivers Brown and Jon Keyes making the wines. Interlace 2023 is an equal-parts blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc, matured for 20 months in oak barrels, 90% of which were new.
JC This is Napa Valley power and intensity in a hedonistic, delicious package, best enjoyed

in its youth and over the next six to eight years.
JF Candied red and black fruits with impressive power and concentration, framed by elegant toasty oak that adds depth and complexity. Plush, velvety tannins provide a luxurious texture.
CP Zippy acid, well structured with huge body. Very dark, with a frame of slightly bitter tannins. This needs time to sink into itself, but might not last forever.
Drink 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.8%



97

● Groth, Oakcross Proprietary Red, Oakville 2023

JC 98 JF 96 CP 96
US\$110 grothwines.com
 Dennis and Judy Groth founded Groth Vineyards & Winery in Oakville in 1982; today, second-generation proprietor Suzanne Groth leads the family estate. Winemaker Ted Henry oversees the vineyards and the cellar. Oakcross takes its name from the winery's setting along Oakville Cross Road; the vines there are rooted in gravelly, sandy loam soils deposited by an ancient river flowing from the Vaca mountains. The 2023 release is a blend of 62% Cabernet Sauvignon, 26%

Merlot and 12% Petit Verdot, aged for 21 months in French oak, 85% new.
JC One absolutely spectacular wine, with elegant cedar wood accents, compact fine-grained tannins, tension, black- fruited richness, savoury spices, and a long, mineral-accented finish.
JF Vivid and intense. Mulberry and blackcurrant prominent on the nose, continuing onto the palate. Notes of star anise, tobacco and graphite minerality.
CP Big fruit fun. Quite lovely blackberry and cedar, plus silky plum tannins. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.3%



97

● Patland, Proprietary Red 2023

JC 97 JF 96 CP 97
patlandvineyards.com
 Patland Estate Vineyards is a small, family-run Napa Valley producer founded by Henry and Olga Patland in 2007, with the next generation now involved in the business. The portfolio draws heavily on Bordeaux varieties, while this 2023 Proprietary Red also incorporates Syrah. Cabernet Sauvignon leads at 67%, supported by Malbec, Syrah, Petit Verdot and Merlot. The wine was aged for 20 months in 56% new French oak.
JC Expositively aromatic and

deeply flavourful, with a solid foundation of compact tannins. This is Napa teetering between hedonism and structure, done extremely well.
JF A rich blend of blue and black fruits. Concentrated, with clove and sweet cedar. Tannins are resinous and fine-grained, lingering with grace.
CP Well structured, with herbal black fruit, resinous and sticky, like a bong hit followed by a (complimentary) shot of Chambord. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.8%



97

● Tamber Bey, Rabicano, Yountville 2023

JC 97 JF 95 CP 98
US\$85 tamberbey.com
 Founded by Barry Waitte in 1999, Tamber Bey operates from Sundance Ranch, a working equestrian property in Calistoga; the winery was named after Waitte's first two Arabian endurance horses. Rabicano 2023 is Merlot-driven (67%), with Malbec, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Sauvignon making up the difference. Aged 19 months in French oak, 50% new.
JC A fleshy, juicy, dark-fruited, plummy-spiced character balanced by crisp tannins and laced with high-toned florality.

Harmonious, bold and complex.
JF Intense, ripe black fruit nose. A light floral component comes through, along with spiced cherry and black plum. The tannins are firm and forward but will develop and soften.
CP There's a light vanillin sweetness to the notes of summer cherry fruit, fiddlehead fern, fresh-turned earth and a mix of wild strawberry jam with budding violets. Really pretty, easy to drink and elegant style.
Drink 2026-2048 **Alc** 14.4%



97

● Tamber Bey, Vermejo, Yountville 2023

JC 98 JF 95 CP 97
US\$165 tamberbey.com
 In common with the Rabicano, Vermejo comes from the Deux Chevaux Vineyard, which is situated by the border between the Yountville and Oakville AVAs; however, here, Cabernet Sauvignon leads the blend (88%), with 7% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot. Maturation lasted 19 months in French oak barrels, 60% new.
JC Super-suave, impressive structural elegance and silken fruit. Gravelly minerality and pressed wild flowers on an impressively penetrating finish.
JF Just-overripe red fruits leap

out of the glass, followed by warm spices, sage and thyme herbs and cedar wood notes. Rich, complex and elegant, finishing long and velvety.
CP Okay, you've earned your ripeness with that chocolatey complexity and chewy tannin structure. Cedar, roasted nuts in holiday spices, cocoa powder. A long finish. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.3%



96

● Ackerman, Memoir Red 2023

JC 95 JF 96 CP 96
ackermanfamilyvineyards.com
 Lauren Ackerman established Ackerman Family Vineyards around her now certified-organic Stonehaven vineyard in Coombsville, one of Napa Valley's cooler appellations. The family project grew from a commitment to restoring the property and farming it as a long-term estate. Memoir 2023 is a Cabernet Sauvignon-led Bordeaux blend, with 16% Merlot and 14% Cabernet Franc. The wine is aged for 18 months in French oak.
JC Soft, satiny palate with

plump, generous tannins and ripe, juicy damson plum, nuanced by purple florals. Unsweetened cocoa powder on the expressive finish.
JF Perfectly ripe red and black fruits unfold alongside a vein of minerality that adds freshness and precision. Polished tannins through a long, composed finish.
CP Classic dark fruit and sweet oak, but restrained in all the right ways. Great, fine-grained tannin structure makes me want a second glass. All in balance.
Drink 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.5%



96

● Anomaly, Designation Red, St Helena 2023

JC 98 JF 96 CP 94
anomalyvineyards.com
 Anomaly Vineyards began in 1997 when Steve and Linda Goldfarb produced their first wine from a small vineyard beside their St Helena home. The estate sits near the base of the Mayacamas mountains and remains focused on Cabernet-based wines. Designation 2023 combines 92% Cabernet Sauvignon with 3% Merlot, 3% Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. It was matured for 20 months in French oak barrels.
JC Simply marvellous. Pure black fruits, graphite, cedar,

sagebrush. Chocolatey tannins. Compact, deeply flavourful and so enticing from the first whiff to the last sip.
JF Ripe black fruits, wild sage, tobacco, cocoa nibs and minerality follow the aromas onto the palate. Tannins are velvety and enticing.
CP Tight tannins but juicy fruit, big and warming, cassis liqueur. It's neither shy nor elegant.
Drink 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.6% ►



● Barlow, Barrouge, Calistoga 2023

JC 97 **JF** 96 **CP** 95
US\$65 [barlowvineyards.com](https://www.barlowvineyards.com)
 Barlow Vineyards is a family-owned estate in Calistoga, farming certified-organic vineyards near the northern end of Napa Valley. Barrouge 2023 is an 80% Cabernet Sauvignon blend, completed by equal 9% portions of Merlot and Cabernet Franc and 2% Petit Verdot. The wine spent 21 months in French oak barrels before bottling. **JC** A vibrant and energetic red, with lifted savoury notes of loamy earth, pressed violets and black liquorice. Full-bodied with ironstone minerals, dusty tannins, spearmint and

unsweetened cocoa powder on the long, earthy and mineral-accented finish. **JF** Serious concentration of fruit and savoury spices and herbs. Redcurrant, blackcurrant, raspberry and yellow plum, alongside star anise, fennel and purple flowers. **CP** This is big! Everything folks think of when they hear 'Napa Valley red blend' – sweet red and black fruit, and barrel, plus richness and opulence. **Drink** 2026-2038 **Alc** 14.8%



● Blackbird Vineyards, Paramour 2023

JC 96 **JF** 97 **CP** 95
[blackbirdvineyards.com](https://www.blackbirdvineyards.com)
 Blackbird Vineyards was founded in 2003 by Michael Polenske, initially around a small Oak Knoll District Merlot vineyard. Winemaker Aaron Pott has long shaped its portfolio of Right Bank Bordeaux-inspired Napa blends. Paramour places Cabernet Franc at the forefront: the 2023 comprises 64% Cabernet Franc, 23% Merlot and 13% Cabernet Sauvignon. Aged for 21 months in French oak barrels, half of which were new. **JC** A very beautiful wine, with just-picked, farmer's market-

ripe black and blue fruit with crunchy skins. Tobacco and sage intrigue, crème de cassis and stony minerals on a lengthy, full finish. **JF** Jumps out of the glass with pure red and black fruits. Fresh and vibrant, with wild sage and clean mountain air. The oak brings tobacco spice. Tannins are firm but supple. **CP** Cocoa and cherry fruits, with warm spices and dusty tannins. **Drink** 2026-2044 **Alc** 14.6%



● Ellman, Jemma 2023

JC 97 **JF** 96 **CP** 96
[ellmanwine.com](https://www.ellmanwine.com)
 Brothers Neil and Lance Ellman moved into wine following the sale of the family mattress business, starting out sourcing grapes from local vineyards. Ellman Family Vineyards now works with a small estate vineyard in Napa's Soda Canyon area. Winemaker Andy Erickson guides the winemaking program. The 2023 Jemma is a blend of 79% Cabernet Sauvignon and 21% Cabernet Franc, and it spent 20 months in French oak barrels, 60% new. **JC** A towering red with soaring tannins and penetrating concentration, but it's not

overbearing. Layered with blue-black fruits, toasty oak, hints of violet and sagebrush, and lifted blood orange. **JF** Rich and focused fruit leaning mostly black, but with a hint of dark red. Bold yet velvety palate leads into fine tannins, delivered with grace. **CP** Lush black fruit, fig and anise, with cool blue juniper and conifer notes. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.8%



● Keever, Inspirado Red 2023

JC 97 **JF** 96 **CP** 95
[keevervineyards.com](https://www.keevervineyards.com)
 Bill and Olga Keever established Keever Vineyards in 1999 on a steep, rocky hillside property to the southwest of Yountville, later on bringing their children into the family business. Celia Welch has made the estate's wines since its early vintages. The 2023 Inspirado Red combines 84% Cabernet Sauvignon with equal 8% portions of Malbec and Merlot. The wine was matured for 20 months in French oak barrels. **JC** Lovely dark-fruit purity, walnut liqueur, hints of sagebrush and smoked paprika. Silken, berry fruit and Indian

spices that linger through a fresh, mineral finish. **JF** Penetrating and aromatic, brimming with pure black fruits. Satiny palate, a touch of cigar box and both sweet and savoury spices. **CP** A lovely wine that has great balance and exudes opulence. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.6%



● Markham, Icon Collection The Character 2023

JC 97 **JF** 95 **CP** 95
[markhamvineyards.com](https://www.markhamvineyards.com)
 Markham's roots date to 1874, when Bordeaux immigrant Jean Laurent established a winery whose stone cellar remains part of the St Helena property. The Character sits within Markham's Icon Collection and represents a contemporary take on its more than 40 years of Merlot-making. The 2023, made by Kimberlee Nicholls, blends 51% Merlot and 38% Cabernet Sauvignon with Malbec, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc, spending 24 months in 100% new French oak barrels. **JC** Beautifully refined, with dark

fruit, earthy characters and oak spices nicely integrated, tannins polished and plump. Layers of dark chocolate and black truffle build on the finish. **JF** Ripe red and black fruits layered with soft spice, earthy notes and savoury complexity. **CP** Soft spices and savoury, dark mushroomy notes. Dark berry tannins and a long finish. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.8%



● Mayacamas Vineyards, Red, Mt Veeder 2023

JC 95 **JF** 96 **CP** 98
£100 [Roberson](https://www.roberson.com)
 With vineyards and cellars high on Mount Veeder, Mayacamas is one of Napa Valley's historic mountain estates, founded in 1889. The Schottenstein family has owned the property since 2013, investing in its vineyards while retaining its traditional cellar practices. The 2023 Red Wine blends 60% Cabernet Sauvignon with almost equal portions of Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Maturation primarily took place in used, large-format barrels rather than a program dominated by new oak. **JC** Great energy and tension.

Nice Cabernet character in its blackcurrant, black cherry and graphite nuances, notes of sagebrush and cola spices. **JF** Vibrant red fruit, fresh pomegranate and currants make this a pleasure right out of the bottle. Sarsaparilla and a little thyme add spicy herbs and savour. **CP** Unmistakably a Cabernet Sauvignon blend, without the usual Napa Valley château polish. Very pretty, primary and dark, with lovely fruit that needs some time to evolve and soften. **Drink** 2026-2048 **Alc** 14%



● Patel Napa Valley, Red, 2023

JC 96 **JF** 95 **CP** 98
[patelwinery.com](https://www.patelwinery.com)
 Raj Patel founded Patel Napa Valley in 2007 after developing a fascination with fine wine and Napa's vineyards. The small-production project leverages the talents of French-born winemaker Julien Fayard, who began in Napa working with Philippe Melka after filling winemaking positions at some of Bordeaux's most noble wineries, including Château Lafite Rothschild. The 2023 Red Wine is a blend of 65% Merlot and 35% Cabernet Sauvignon, matured for 18 months in 100% new French oak barrels. **JC** Fantastic palate expression

of silk and satin, oozing with pure dark berries, sweet spices, power and intensity. Good concentration and freshness, with wet slate nuances. **JF** Rich black and blue fruits spiced with Szechuan peppercorns and other warm spices. A subtle minty and violet quality, with graphite and toast notes on the finish. **CP** Round and pleasant, high quality, and most importantly drinkable. Bay leaf and sage herbals, raspberry, violet and fig. A wine that can bring Millennial/Gen Z back to Merlot. **Drink** 2026-2045 **Alc** 13.6%



● Reynolds, Persistence Red 2023

JC 96 **JF** 96 **CP** 96
[reynoldsfamilywinery.com](https://www.reynoldsfamilywinery.com)
 Steve and Suzie Reynolds established their family estate in Napa's Oak Knoll district in the mid-1990s, and released their first wine in 1999. Persistence is the winery's flagship red blend. The 2023 is led by 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, with Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Syrah and Petit Verdot adding in layers. Aged for 22 months in 30% new French oak barrels. **JC** An intriguing red, layering in a lovely gamey character and bright white pepper-infused herb nuances balancing out dark berry fruit, all underscored by bright, tangy blood orange

acidity. Velvety tannins on a smoky, paprika-spiced finish. **JF** Bold and intense black and red fruit, ripe and rich. There's a wildness to this wine, a savouriness that fills out the palate and supports the fruit in a beautiful way. **CP** Ooh, I like these pyrazines. This reminds me of the best pre-1990s Napa wines I've had: fresh and bright, relaxed, but great tannin. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.6% ►



96

● Rutherford Hill, Winemaker's Blend 2023

JC 97 **JF** 96 **CP** 96
US\$68 [rutherfordhill.com](https://www.rutherfordhill.com)
 Established in 1972, Rutherford Hill was among Napa Valley's early champions of Merlot, its founders recognising similarities between the local growing conditions and those of Pomerol. The Terlato family acquired the hillside winery in 1996 and subsequently invested in its vineyards and extensive cellars. The 2023 Winemaker's Blend maintains that Merlot emphasis, with fruit sourced from select sites throughout Napa, joining 18% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Petit Verdot.

JC Vivid, with pure fruit notes, graphite and spearmint, black cherry. Expressive and layered, full of Merlot-like qualities, not overshadowed by oak or overly ripe grapes. Great effort. **JF** Rich and ripe red and dark fruits, juicy and intense. The fruit holds the oak well, with mild spices, savoury sage and thyme. Tannins are plush and plump, and the finish lingers. **CP** Delicious and rounded, showing plenty of personality and bright, clean fruit flavours along with excellent structure.

Drink 2026-2046 **Alc** 14%



95

● Ashes & Diamonds, Blanc No10 2024 **£**

JC 94 **JF** 95 **CP** 96
£33 [Nekter Wines](https://www.nekterwines.com)
 Ashes & Diamonds takes its aesthetic and winemaking cues from the restrained Napa Valley wines of the 1960s and '70s. Blanc No10 continues the estate's Bordeaux-inspired white wine program, blending 58% Semillon with 42% Sauvignon Blanc. It was matured for 10 months in new oak from French cooperage Boutes, placing barrel fermentation and élevage at the centre of this deliberately old-school Napa white.

JC An energetic white with a refreshing backbone of acidity

framing a host of citrus and orchard fruit, candied minerality and a mix of subtle white floral notes, slivered almonds and baking spices. **JF** Crisp and energetic, bursting with candied citrus peel and underripe stone fruits. A thread of minerality keeps the focus, subtle oak adding just enough texture to soften.

CP Full of ripe citrus and ruby red grapefruit, with a light grassiness and loads of tarragon-laced lemonade. Lovely. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 12.9%



95

● Chimney Rock, Elevage Blanc 2024

JC 95 **JF** 95 **CP** 95
US\$48-\$65 [Rye Brook, Solano Cellars, Stew Leonard's, Total Wine & More, Wine On Sale](https://www.ryebrook.com)
 Established in 1981 and now owned by the Terlato family, Chimney Rock is centred on an estate in the Stags Leap District. Elizabeth Vianna is the general manager and winemaker. The 2024 Elevage Blanc combines 64% Sauvignon Gris with 36% Sauvignon Blanc. It was barrel-fermented and aged for six months, divided equally among new French oak, used French oak and stainless steel. **JC** Quite citrusy and zesty with a hint of slivered almond and baking spice throughout.

Wonderfully luscious mid-palate, orchard fruits and racy acid tension. Nice balance with a softer, exotic-fruit finish. **JF** Highly aromatic with bright citrus and fresh herbs. Vibrant and refreshing, elegantly oaked. Marcona almond, subtle baking spices and citrus on a layered, balanced finish. **CP** Light nutmeg and vanilla balanced with Buddha's hand citron and lily notes. Showy, warming fruit, soft texture with a crisp backbone. The barrel influence here acts only as a seasoning. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.2%



95

● Round Pond Estate, Proprietary White, Rutherford 2024 **£**

JC 95 **JF** 94 **CP** 95
US\$45 [roundpond.com](https://www.roundpond.com)
 Round Pond Estate is owned and operated by the MacDonnell family, whose Rutherford farming history began with the purchase of vineyard land in 1983. Today the 190ha estate encompasses vines, olive groves and a winery in the heart of the Rutherford appellation. Its 2024 Proprietary White blends 60% Viognier with 40% Semillon, barrel fermented in neutral oak, with an extended period on the lees. **JC** White-flower fragrance, crunchy orchard fruit, a hint of

honey and bright tarragon and thyme herbs. Lime-bright acid tension and wet stones on a balanced, chalky mineral finish. **JF** Peach, apricot, honeysuckle and wild flowers perfume the nose before unfolding into a lush, beautifully textured palate. Bright acidity sweeps in on the mouthwatering finish. **CP** Buttercup blossoms and mustard grass, fresh coastal air and river stones. Rounded palate with a moderate finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 13.9%



95

● Bell Wine Cellars, Sonnette Red 2023

JC 94 **JF** 95 **CP** 95
bellwine.com
 Bell Wine Cellars grew from Stellenbosch-raised Anthony Bell's research into Cabernet Sauvignon clones and more than three decades of Napa Valley winemaking, including 15 years at Beaulieu Vineyard. Today, winemaker John Hazak carries that work forward at the family-owned Yountville winery. Sonnette 2023 is led by 61% Merlot, joined by 19% Petit Verdot, 17% Cabernet Sauvignon and 3% Cabernet Franc; aged for 20 months in French oak, 60% new. **JC** Savoury style, with dark

loamy earth, graphite and pressed wild flowers, a subtle kiss of spearmint and firm tannins on a moderate finish. **JF** Pleasing black and red fruits mingle with graphite, gentle herbal notes and dried flowers. Silky tannins linger gracefully. **CP** Petit Verdot stands out in this mostly-Merlot blend: big tannin and dark black fruit with coffee and stewed plum.

Drink 2026-2038 **Alc** 14.9%



95

● Clif Family, The Climber Red 2023

JC 95 **JF** 95 **CP** 94
cliffamily.com
 Clif Family Winery was founded by Clif Bar energy bar creators Gary Erickson and Kit Crawford, with its first wines bottled from the 2003 vintage. The family farms vineyards and food crops in Napa Valley. Winemaker Laura Barrett oversees the wines. The Climber 2023 blends 68% Merlot with 32% Cabernet Sauvignon and spent 16 months in French oak, using 20% new barrels and 80% neutral oak. **JC** Spiced plum with nicely integrated cedar wood and elegant graphite minerality shining on nose and palate.

Densely packed, this has a dash of wild herbs and it's all framed by polished, ripe tannins. **JF** Robust blue and black fruits, purple flowers, a little tobacco, star anise and fennel fill the palate. Firm tannins linger along with the fruit and savoury notes. **CP** A classically styled blend, this has a juicy mid-palate of rounded red fruits. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.9%



95

● Black Stallion, Meritage Red 2023 **£**

JC 95 **JF** 95 **CP** 95
US\$38-\$50 **Widely available**
 The Indelicato family has owned the Black Stallion Estate Winery since 2010. The winery sits on the grounds of a former equestrian centre in Napa's Oak Knoll District. Winemaker Ralf Holdenried leads the cellar team. The 2023 Meritage draws on all five principal red Bordeaux varieties, led by 60% Cabernet Sauvignon with 17% Merlot, 13% Malbec and portions of Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. It was aged for 12 months in French oak barrels. **JC** Dark berry fruits balanced nicely by the Merlot element

here, giving a fleshy richness to a structured, dense red. Toasty oak and dark chocolate with building, chewy tannins. **JF** Red and black fruits, juicy and ripe on a plush palate. Asian baking spices, graphite and mint give a nice savoury backbone. **CP** An uncomplicated, but appealingly easy-drinking style. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.5%



95

● Crocker & Starr, Cabernet Franc Blend 2023

JC 96 **JF** 95 **CP** 95
crockerstarr.com
 Crocker & Starr began in 1997 as a partnership between vintner Charlie Crocker and winemaker Pam Starr, centred on Crocker's historic St Helena estate. Starr continues to direct both vineyard and cellar decisions, with Julie Robertson managing the cellar since 2022. The 2023 Cabernet Franc Blend combines 52% Cabernet Franc with 44% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Malbec. It was matured for 18 months in French oak. **JC** Bold, dark-fruited style with elegant cedar notes, crushed cocoa nibs, tobacco and loamy earth. A wonderfully lush,

savoury richness with a long, velvety and satisfying finish. **JF** Concentrated black cherry, dark chocolate and tobacco with savoury spice. The palate exudes earthy tones that give depth to a serious wine. **CP** Char siu pork marinade, sweet and tangy fruit, like raspberry, cherry and Chinese five spice. Long, silky finish. **Drink** 2026-2044 **Alc** 14.4% ►



● Earthshine, Super Tuscan 2023

JC 95 JF 94 CP 97
earthshinewines.com
 Earthshine Wines was created by winemaker and proprietor Shawna Miller after she led Luna Vineyards' winemaking program for a decade. Her small Napa label focuses particularly on Sangiovese and Italian-inspired blends. This 2023 Super Tuscan-style red combines 50% Sangiovese with equal 25% portions of Cabernet Sauvignon from Atlas Peak and Merlot from Howell Mountain. It spent 22 months in French and Hungarian oak, 70% new. **JC** A full-bodied, robust red offering black cherry and

blackberry fruit, espresso, graphite and subtle rose and red tobacco leaf spices. Supple soft tannins, finishing with loamy earth and wet slate. **JF** Juicy red and black fruits steal the spotlight, layered with cherry liqueur, strawberry candy, rose petals and a hint of tobacco. Generous and vibrant. **CP** Smoky blueberry compote with cassis and cacao nibs, hints of peppermint, light notes of black olive and conifer. Should evolve nicely as the tension of its youth falls away into something savoury and velvety. **Drink** 2026-2048 **Alc** 14.7%



● Grand Napa Vineyards, Master Red 2023

JC 94 JF 95 CP 95
grandnapavineyards.com
 Founded nearly two decades ago, Grand Napa Vineyards is a family wine business based in Rutherford, with estate holdings there and elsewhere in Napa Valley, and a second generation now involved in its development. Burgundy-born Stéphane Vivier leads the winemaking. Master Red 2023 blends 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Cabernet Franc, matured for 18 months in French oak, 40% new. **JC** Dusty mineral notes, black fruits and brown spices, cedar wood accents and fine-grained tannins with a fine dusting of

cocoa powder, finishing with sagebrush notes. **JF** Dusty black fruits meet dried tea leaves, mint and fresh thyme in this savoury expression. Broad tannins gently frame the wine's earthy complexity. **CP** Big structure, dark fruit, loads of vanilla and sweet oak. Very typical flavour profile and a good representation in its price range. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.6%



● Hill Family Estate, Like a Hawk 2023

JC 96 JF 95 CP 93
US\$68 hillfamilyestate.com
 Doug and Darci Hill founded their estate in 2001 after two decades growing grapes for leading Napa wineries. The family now farms about 49ha across multiple valley sites, with Kari Auringer leading the winemaking team. Like a Hawk 2023 is an unconventional blend of 46% Cabernet Sauvignon, 45% Syrah, 8% Malbec and 1% Viognier. It was matured for 16 months in French oak, 60% new. **JC** Vanilla-laced cherry and blue-black fruits with violet floral notes. Generous, sweetly

spiced palate, ironstone minerals and a long, fruit-driven finish. Downright delicious. **JF** An inky Cabernet-Syrah blend that shows depth and concentration, with notes of game, cracked pepper and savoury spice. Plump yet firm tannins give this wine impressive length. **CP** Forest-fruit yoghurt character in a wine that needs time in the bottle to come together. **Drink** 2026-2039 **Alc** 14.8%



● Krupp Brothers, Joshua Super Tuscan, Stagecoach Vineyard 2023

JC 96 JF 94 CP 96
US\$185 kruppbrothers.com
 Brothers Jan and Bart Krupp established their Napa wine project after developing Stagecoach Vineyard, the vast mountain site they planted on Atlas Peak in the 1990s, which Gallo bought in 2017. Joshua is the estate's Super Tuscan-inspired bottling. The 2023 blends 75% Sangiovese with 25% Cabernet Sauvignon, then spends 19 months in French oak barrels, 52% new. **JC** Plenty of ripe dark fruits, warm spices, a hint of graphite

and integrated cedar. Loamy earth and dark chocolate, powerful tannins and a solid mineral-scented finish. **JF** Powerful aromas of red and black fruits followed by cedar, five-spice and bitter dark chocolate. Broad, muscular tannins promise plenty ahead. **CP** Chocolate-covered blueberry, cooling eucalyptus and dark-roasted coffee. Soft hints of redcurrant and tomato leaf, with hints of freshly turned soil. Long, with dusty tannins. **Drink** 2026-2045 **Alc** 14.9%



● Heir Apparent, Proprietary Red 2023

JC 96 JF 96 CP 94
US\$110 heirapparentwinery.com
 Part of the Grand Napa Vineyards family, Heir Apparent is built around Cabernet Sauvignon and Bordeaux-style blends, drawing on grower relationships and estate holdings across the valley. The 2023 Proprietary Red comprises 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Cabernet Franc and 5% Merlot. It spent 18 months in French oak, 60% new barrels and 40% second-use. **JC** A rather coiled-up, compact and mineral-rich red that shows good tension and fine-boned acidity, keeping it lively and bright. Polished tannins lend an

air of nobility. Balanced, textural and elegant. **JF** Intense, ripe red and black fruits, joined by an earthy minerality on the palate. Tannins are polished and follow the long finish of the wine. **CP** Big black fruit, powerful with a touch of bitterness in its rough-and-tumble tannins. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.7%



● Hertelendy, Signature Mountain Blend 2023

JC 95 JF 95 CP 94
hertelendy.com
 Ralph Hertelendy's winemaking journey began with a small, home-produced wine in 2006. He founded Hertelendy Vineyards in 2013, working closely with consulting winemaker Phillip Corallo-Titus on mountain-grown Napa reds. Signature Mountain Blend 2023 is a Merlot-dominated wine (61%), supported by Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot. Aged 23 months in 90% new French and Hungarian oak. **JC** Dark-fruited, sweet-spiced, velvety and plump wine, its tannins balanced by juicy fruit

and integrated oak spices. Higher-toned notes of espresso and dark cocoa. Long, satisfying. **JF** Candied, black and blue fruits, mild spices warming the palate with silky and soft tannins to follow. **CP** Pretty fruit, but there's a lot of heat and prominent tannins. **Drink** 2026-2046 **Alc** 14.9%



● Larkmead, Keyline Estate Red Blend 2023

JC 94 JF 95 CP 95
larkmead.com
 Larkmead dates to 1895 and has been owned by the Solari family since 1948, making it one of Napa Valley's longest-established family estates. Winemaker Avery Heelan helms the cellar. Keyline forms part of Larkmead's Research Block Series, part of an experimental initiative exploring grape varieties suited to warmer growing conditions. The 2023 is a blend of Shiraz, Malbec, Petite Sirah, Charbono, Touriga Nacional and Zinfandel. It was matured for 20 months in neutral French oak. **JC** A glass-staining, inky black

wine, deeply concentrated with a full-bodied palate expression. Glycerol and polished wet-stone minerals on the finish. Certainly a crowdpleaser. **JF** An opaque red full of intense blackberry, plum and blueberry compote character. Subtle eucalyptus and graphite emerge on the finish, all framed by long, gripping tannins. **CP** A true blend, tasting how I think people believe Napa blends do taste. Blackberry syrup and intensely dark fruit, like a dry Port. I can see folks loving this. **Drink** 2026-2045 **Alc** 14.7%



● Oleandri, La Scala Red 2023

JC 96 JF 95 CP 95
US\$100 oleandriwines.com
 Oleandri's La Scala is conceived as a Napa Valley Bordeaux-style blend, with the 2023 comprising 67% Cabernet Sauvignon to set the framework, fleshed out by 20% Merlot and then smaller proportions of Cabernet Franc, Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot to add breadth. It's aged 22 months in 60% new French oak barrels. **JC** Such a robust, bold, muscular red wine, teeming with inky blackberry and black cherry, savoury black truffle and loamy earth. A bulwark of fine-grained tannins find mouthwatering resolution through a spine of

juicy blood orange acidity. **JF** A bold blend, opaque in colour and rich on the palate. Filled with black and red fruits, a hint of freshly tilled earth and refined tannins. **CP** Classic style with black fruit, sweet oak and violet florals. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.5% ►



● Pott, Red Blend, Mt Veeder 2023 £

JC 95 JF 95 CP 96
US\$40 B-21
 Winemaker Aaron Pott and his wife Claire founded Pott Wine around vineyards that reflect Napa Valley's varied mountain terrain, including their own Mount Veeder estate. This 2023 Red Blend brings together Syrah, Mourvèdre, Mondeuse, Zinfandel and other smaller components. Aged 20 months in two-year-old French oak. **JC** An intriguing blend, showing off red and black fruits, a musky oak character and high-toned floral notes. Full, with a viscous mid-palate and liquor-like berry fruit on the finish.



● Turnbull, Bonne Vivante, Oakville 2023

JC 95 JF 94 CP 95
US\$85 turnbullwines.com
 Founded in 1979 and owned by the O'Connell family since 1993, Turnbull Wine Cellars farms estate vineyards across Napa Valley, including sites in Oakville and Calistoga. Winemaker Peter Heitz leads the wine-growing program. Bonne Vivante 2023 combines 70% Syrah with 19% Lagrein and 11% Grenache – an unusual blend that highlights Turnbull's work with varieties beyond Napa's traditional Bordeaux repertoire. **JC** A whole host of flavours and textures resonate in the glass, from candied red berries and

JF Juicy candied red fruits mingle with lifted floral aromas and hints of garrigue herbs, evoking the character of the Rhône valley. **CP** Velvety and smooth, with black cherry and hints of soft leather. Black pepper and fennel salami, dried clay earthiness, ripe tannins and a juicy finish. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.5%



● Rewa, Khanda, Coombsville 2023

JC 96 JF 95 CP 94
rewavineyards.com
 Rewa is a small estate in Coombsville, where the vines occupy a rocky, undulating site shaped by the appellation's volcanic history and cooler southern Napa climate. Winemaker Celia Welch (of Scarecrow fame) works with the estate team on its limited-production wines. Khanda 2023 blends 58% Cabernet Sauvignon with 28% Malbec and 14% Cabernet Franc. It was matured for 22 months in 60% new French oak barrels. **JC** A powerful red that shows off pure, silky black fruit,

espresso and toasty oak, perfumed violets with emerging blue fruit compote notes. Dark chocolate and velvety textures on the full-bodied finish. **JF** Intensely aromatic, with overripe red and black fruits. Satiny and lively, with warm baking spices, fresh espresso beans and sweet vanilla. **CP** Intensely flavoured with creamy, jammy black fruit. Very warming with a heated finish. **Drink** 2026-2035 **Alc** 15%



● Volker Eisele, Terzetto 2023

JC 95 JF 96 CP 95
volkereiselefamilestate.com
 The Eisele family established its Chiles Valley estate in 1974 and has farmed it organically for decades, making Volker Eisele Family Estate one of Napa Valley's longstanding advocates of environmentally attentive viticulture. Terzetto takes its name from its three-part composition. The 2023 brings together equal portions of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Merlot, which are then aged 22 months in French oak, 40% new. **JC** A generous mix of savoury spices, anise, leather, tobacco and violets, balanced by juicy,

crunchy dark-fruits on a full-bodied finish marked by cigar box, red liquorice and saline minerality. **JF** Dark, dusty fruits, savoury Provence herbs and Asian spices. A long and complex wine with a ton of aromatics. **CP** A little black dress of a wine. Balanced expression of dark dried fig and prune with higher tones of blackberry and a touch of tartness. Elegant structure, long finish. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.3%

Highly recommended 90-94pts



● Alpha Omega, Proprietary Red 2023
JC 93 JF 94 CP 94
aowinery.com
 Plum and blackberry compote aromas layered with cigar box and Christmas spice. Gentle tannins, sweet and tangy fruit, earthy depth and a satisfying liqueur-like finish. **Drink** 2026-2035 **Alc** 14.3%



● CourAvant, Proprietary Red Wine, St Helena 2023
JC 94 JF 93 CP 94
US\$105 couravant.com
 Opulent blackberry and mulberry, layered with cassis, espresso and dark chocolate. Toasty oak and forest floor bring savoury depth, while chewy tannins support a lush finish. **Drink** 2026-2035 **Alc** 14.4%



● Hunter Glenn, HG Red Blend 2023 £
JC 94 JF 94 CP 94
US\$55 hunterglenn.com
 Fragrant, expressive, ripe plum and blackcurrant lifted by blood orange and potpourri. Cola spice warmth. Ultra-fine tannins and freshness keep this light-footed and generous. **Drink** 2026-2038 **Alc** 14.8%



● Relic Wine Cellars, Ritual 2023
JC 94 JF 94 CP 93
relicwinecellars.com
 Red fruit and dark bramble surge through an inky, powerful palate, joined by cherry leather and purple flowers. Black pepper, graphite and anise add lift. Great ageing potential. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.5%



● Ashes & Diamonds, Rouge No7 2023 £
JC 94 JF 94 CP 95
£40 Nekter Wines
 Red berry and raspberry rise with tobacco, cola nut and sweet spice. Cabernet Franc brings aromatic lift to Merlot's succulent fruit and supple texture. A fresh, refined blend. **Drink** 2026-2037 **Alc** 13.5%

'I found many wines that truly impressed me and upended my expectations'

Jenica Flippo



● Jax Vineyards, Y3 Taureau Red Blend 2023 £
JC 94 JF 93 CP 94
US\$23-\$30 Widely available
 Mulberry, raspberry and strawberry lead, with currant, cherry liqueur and fruit pastille. Vanilla panna cotta and sweet spice on the lively palate. A fruit-forward, appealing finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.7%



● Salvestrin, Retaggio, St Helena 2023
JC 92 JF 95 CP 94
salvestrinwinery.com
 Red and blue berries flood the palate, joined by smoky blackberry and dried rose petal. Cedar, graphite, savoury undertones. Velvety tannins build into a long finish that softens with air. **Drink** 2026-2038 **Alc** 14.2%



● Chimney Rock, Elevage Red, Stags Leap District 2023
JC 93 JF 94 CP 96
US\$115-\$130 Chimney Rock, Total Wine & More, Winedos
 Plum, pomegranate and blackberry, joined by red cherry and blackcurrant. Allspice, graphite, dark chocolate and pine add depth. **Drink** 2026-2046 **Alc** 14.8%



● Frias Family Vineyard, Lady of the Dead 2023 £
JC 94 JF 94 CP 95
US\$55 friasfamilyvineyard.com
 Bursting with blueberry, blackberry and jammy dark fruit, with rose petal and blood orange notes. Sweet spice and fine cedar add polish. Impressive pleasure and value. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.5%



● Peju, Fifty/Fifty Red 2023
JC 95 JF 95 CP 92
US\$135 peju.com
 Cherry liqueur, inky dark fruit, grilled sage and dill. Toasty oak, espresso and graham cracker spice enrich the juicy palate. Firm yet velvety tannins support a long, sweet-savoury finish. **Drink** 2026-2038 **Alc** 14.8%



● Arietta, H Block Hudson Vineyards 2023
JC 93 JF 93 CP 94
ariettawine.com
 Blue-black and bright red fruit merge with plum and violet, tamarind and herb. Cedar, mint chocolate and cocoa deepen the coiled palate. Powerful tannins and Cabernet Franc lift. **Drink** 2026-2044 **Alc** 14.9% ►



● **Castello di Amorosa, La Castellana 2023**
JC 94 JF 94 CP 90
castellodiamorosa.com
 Cassis, blackberry and dark berry show liqueur-like concentration, lifted by pressed wild flowers. Asian spice and gravelly tannins frame a full-bodied palate. Classic, powerful. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.6%



● **Dearden Wines, One Iron Meritage 2023**
JC 94 JF 93 CP 93
US\$58 sleepinggiant.wine
 Red berry and dark red fruit meet spearmint, sage and thyme. Smoked sea salt and sweet oak add savoury polish, while blood orange acidity and defined tannins bring energy. **Drink** 2026-2044 **Alc** 14.3%



● **Eleven Eleven, X-1 Proprietary Red, Oak Knoll District 2023**
JC 93 JF 94 CP 92
US\$95 elevenelevewines.com
 Candied red berry and ripe red fruit drive a powerful, tightly coiled palate, layered with brown spice and formidable tannins. Rich, warming, intense. Will reward time and hearty food. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 15.1%



● **Gibbs, Dusty Red 2023**
JC 93 JF 93 CP 93
gibbsnapavalley.com
 Strawberry, blueberry and candied dark red fruits mingle with fennel, star anise and vanilla. Graphite and sweet baking spice add depth. An approachable crowdpleaser. **Drink** 2026-2035 **Alc** 14.5%

'While the results were remarkably consistent, the blends were consistently variable'

Jonathan Cristaldi



● **Larkmead, Contour Estate Red Blend 2023**
JC 94 JF 94 CP 90
larkmead.com
 Dark and dusty red fruits show power and aromatic intensity, joined by fennel, cedar and cigar. Fresh energy drives this intriguing, characterful blend towards a lively finish. **Drink** 2026-2034 **Alc** 14.7%



● **Malk, Staffordshire Reserve 2023**
JC 94 JF 94 CP 92
malkfamilyvineyards.com
 Black and vibrant red fruit surges through the full-bodied palate, layered with warming oak spice and electric fruit intensity. Gravelly minerality. A concentrated, high-octane style. **Drink** 2026-2037 **Alc** 14.5%



● **Matterna, Cunat Family Vineyards Vine 1, Oak Knoll District 2023**
JC 93 JF 93 CP 92
matternawines.com
 Concentrated blackcurrant, red berry and dark fruit, joined by roasted fennel, cedar and tobacco. Warm spice, a muscular palate. A bold, full-bodied red with an assertive finish. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 15.2%



● **Tribe & Arrow, Proprietary Red Blend Fifty-Fifty 2023**
JC 92 JF 93 CP 93
olettewines.com
 Mulberry, blackberry and huckleberry mingle with vibrant red fruit, dried fig and currant. Leather, sweet tobacco and baking spice add evolved depth. A velvety texture and a long finish. **Drink** 2026-2040 **Alc** 14.2%



● **V Sattui Winery, Paradiso 2023**
JC 93 JF 95 CP 90
vsattui.com
 Plum, blackberry and cassis lead the fleshy mid-palate, joined by walnut liqueur, baking spice and graphite. Sinewy, dusty tannins. A pleasing red with a firm texture and a savoury finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.8%



● **Hagafen, Family Vineyard White Blend 2024**
JC 94 JF 92 CP 90
hagafen.com
 Stone fruit, pear and grapefruit meet vivid citrus, orchard fruit and lemon meringue. Beeswax and popcorn richness. Saline minerality and zesty acidity keep the palate bright. **Drink** 2026-2038 **Alc** 13.8%



● **Bravante Vineyards, Estate Reserve, Howell Mountain 2023**
JC 93 JF 92 CP 92
bravantevineyards.com
 Blue-black fruit and Morello cherry rise with violet, cocoa nib and Asian spice. Hoisin and tobacco smoke lend savoury intrigue. Remarkable concentration. A boldly hedonistic red. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 14.9%



● **Hill Family Estate, Red Door 2023**
JC 93 JF 92 CP 92
US\$110 hillfamilyestate.com
 Mulberry, cassis and blackberry fill an aromatic, full-bodied palate, layered with sweet paprika and mulling spice. A generous, warm style with a fruit-driven finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.8%



● **Ink Grade, Andosol Red 2023**
JC 91 JF 92 CP 94
US\$75 inkgrade.com
 Red berry, peach and apricot, honeysuckle and bergamot. Fig jam adds ripeness, while tangerine acidity and gossamer tannins keep this light, lively and refreshing. Serve chilled. **Drink** 2026-2050 **Alc** 13.5%



● **Lewis Cellars, The Big Blend 2023**
JC 93 JF 94 CP 90
lewiscellars.com
 Blue and black fruit, and baked cherry burst from the glass, layered with vanilla and graham cracker spice. Black olive, anise and salted dark chocolate add savoury depth. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 15.5%



● **Matterna, Cunat Family Vineyards Midnight, Oak Knoll District, 2023** £
JC 94 JF 93 CP 90
US\$44 matternawines.com
 Blue and black fruits show candied ripeness and lush concentration, joined by Asian spice, graphite and anise. Bitter baking chocolate adds depth. A long, nicely spiced finish. **Drink** 2026-2033 **Alc** 14.9%



● **Maxville Winery, Forever Wild Proprietary Red, Chiles Valley 2023**
JC 93 JF 91 CP 93
maxvillelakewines.com
 Red berry and candied fruit lead a silky, medium-bodied palate, warmed by sweet spice. Cola nut, spearmint and sage bring aromatic lift. A classic Napa blend with a polished finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.25%



● **Napa Glen, Red Blend 2023**
JC 93 JF 92 CP 92
vntgimports.com
 Dark berry and black fruits show liqueur-like richness on the silky, generous palate. Plump, satiny tannins. A fresh, luscious, polished red best served at cellar temperature. **Drink** 2026-2038 **Alc** 14.8%



● **Red Thread, Red Blend, Howell Mountain 2023**
JC 93 JF 93 CP 89
US\$72 redthreadwines.com
 Ripe, concentrated cherry and blackberry lifted by rose petals and tangerine zest. Sweet tobacco, cocoa nib and toast add richness. A long, generous, full-bodied finish. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 15.2%



● **Viader, Black Label, Howell Mountain 2023**
JC 92 JF 92 CP 93
viader.com
 Blackberry, mulberry and blackcurrant deliver full-throttle fruit intensity, layered with sweet baking spice. A ripe red with a long, powerful finish. Unmistakable Napa exuberance. **Drink** 2026-2037 **Alc** 15.4%



● **Darioush, Sage Vineyard Red, Mt Veeder 2023**
JC 90 JF 90 CP 92
darioush.com
 Silky dark fruit meets espresso bean and baking spice in this full-on Merlot. Firm, drying tannins create serious palate structure. The powerful finish will settle with time. **Drink** 2026-2038 **Alc** 15.7%



● **Hagafen, Wieruszowski Vineyard Red Blend 2023**
JC 89 JF 90 CP 93
hagafen.com
 Ripe, expressive blackberry, redcurrant and mulberry fruit, joined by white pepper, star anise and fennel. Finishes with a blackberry pie character that invites you back for more. **Drink** 2026-2036 **Alc** 14.5%



● **Oakville Ranch, Field Blend, Oakville 2023**
JC 90 JF 89 CP 93
US\$80 oakvillerranch.com
 Dark berry and mixed fruit jam pack the soft, supple palate, layered with fruit, leather and sweet baking spice. Tartness gives lift to the concentrated fruit. An exuberant, full-bodied finish. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 16.2%



● **Bulldog Vineyards, Brindle, Oak Knoll District 2023**
JC 93 JF 90 CP 86
bulldogvineyards.com
 Blackberry, blueberry and black olive fill the concentrated palate, joined by warming baking spice and dark chocolate. Saline freshness. Fine, grippy tannins support the rich fruit. **Drink** 2026-2032 **Alc** 14.7%