



Napa Cabernet 2022: Top wines from St Helena

Jonathan Cristaldi

St Helena sits nearly smack dab in the middle of the Napa Valley, home to some of the valley's founding names and modern day icons. Jonathan Cristaldi digs into the top Cabernets from St Helena in 2022.

The 2022 vintage in St Helena delivered wines with a signature polish, depth and elegance despite the challenges of the heat dome.

Due to its location in the warmest part of the valley floor, St Helena tends to produce rich, fruit-forward wines.

However, this vintage saw remarkable balance, freshness and vibrant energy across many bottlings.

Winemakers who harvested strategically before the extreme heat preserved bright acidity and structure, leading to wines that retain both immediate appeal and ageing potential.

The fruit profile of St Helena wines in 2022 is defined by a mix of ripe black cherry, blackberry, cassis and spiced plum, often accented by red-fruited lift – raspberry, pomegranate, and cherry pit – bringing vibrancy and freshness.

Some wines showcase blue fruit character, a notable trait for this AVA.

A mineral streak of graphite, crushed rock and saline elements runs through several wines, highlighting the diverse soils of the AVA, from alluvial fans to deep gravel beds.

Notes of sagebrush, bay laurel, and tobacco reflect the influence of nearby mountain slopes and forested areas, contributing to a savoury and structured edge in contrast to the lush fruit core.

St Helena wines in 2022 exhibit well-integrated tannins, ranging from silky, plush and velvety in more approachable bottlings to firm, pixelated and tension-driven in the most structured examples.

While some wines show classic Napa richness and density, others surprise with a taut, refined structure reminiscent of Bordeaux.

Acidity remains impressively fresh, particularly in wines sourced from Beckstoffer Dr. Crane, Beckstoffer Las Piedras, and high-elevation parcels near Spring Mountain, ensuring balance in this warm vintage.

Wines from Dr. Crane, Las Piedras and sites near Spring Mountain will benefit from five–20+ years of ageing, thanks to structured tannins, deep fruit complexity and firm acidity.

These include Beckstoffer Dr. Crane (Sam Kaplan, B Cellars), Las Piedras (Vice Versa, Annulus) and select estate Cabernets from Tychson Hill and Bure Family.

St Helena 2022: The top-performing producers

Colgin Cellars

AXR

Vida Valiente

Bure Family Wines

Corison

Morlet Family Vineyards

Memento Mori

Patria

Annulus Cellars

Napa Valley Cabernet 2022: Full vintage report and top-scoring wines



Memento Mori, Beckstoffer Dr Crane Vineyard, Napa Valley, California, USA 2022

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The Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Cabernet Sauvignon, crafted from Clone 6, showcases the precision and expertise of winemaker Sam Kaplan. Harvested on 3 September and aged 22 months in 100% new French oa...

Points 97

Memento Mori, Beckstoffer Dr Crane Vineyard, Napa Valley, California, USA 2022

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SINGLE TASTING

97

Tasted by: Jonathan Cristaldi
(at Angwin, California, 11 Dec 2024)
Part of Napa Cabernet 2022: Top wines from St Helena
Drinking Window: 2025 - 2040

The Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Cabernet Sauvignon, crafted from Clone 6, showcases the precision and expertise of winemaker Sam Kaplan. Harvested on 3 September and aged 22 months in 100% new French oak with toasts ranging from Medium to Medium Plus, this wine is a stellar representation of one of Napa's most iconic vineyard sites. The wine opens with the hallmark bright graphite minerality that defines Dr. Crane, beautifully laced with violet, lilac, and rose petal florals. Incredibly perfumed, it invites you to linger over the aromas for minutes on end. Medium- to full-bodied, the palate exhibits Kaplan's hallmark balance and tension, even in a challenging vintage. His wise and precise picking decisions have resulted in a wine of elegance and purity. Saturated with dark berry fruit that is clean and refined, the wine is bolstered by a wealth of superfine tannins that are expressive, long, and seamlessly integrated. A spine of crunchy acidity adds freshness and energy, layering the wine with depth and complexity.



Producer	Memento Mori
Brand	Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon
Vintage	2022
Wine Type	Still
Colour	Red
Country	USA
Region	California
Appellation	Napa Valley
Sweetness	Dry
Closure	Natural Cork
Alcohol	15.20%
Body	Full
Oak	Oaked
Grapes	100% Cabernet Sauvignon