

# Robb Report

## 11 Superb New Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignons to Drink This Fall

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Looking on from the outside—especially from Old World wine regions—Napa Valley appears to enjoy such consistent warm, dry weather during the growing season that making wines with generous, ripe fruit and approachable tannins is a veritable walk in the park, year after year. Telescope the lens, though, and it's not that easy. Winemakers describe the year the skies let loose with a long, drenching rain just before most vintners pulled the trigger to pick (2010), the year it was so cold and soaked in “it was like being in London all summer” (2011), the vintage affected by epic fires and a vicious heat spike over Labor Day weekend that upended all picking decisions (2017). The dance of leaf pulling, crop thinning, hang times and berry sorting in response to the weather, is no easier here than in other parts of the world.

Occasionally, though, a year comes along when temperatures are so mild and even-keeled that winemakers' decisions are not so much in response to the weather as much as to their vision for the outcome of the wine. They can play offense more than defense. The summer of 2018 was just such a growing season. Mild temperatures held from spring, late into harvest, with no severe heat spikes. Winemakers had a long window of time in September and October to let their fruit hang until sugar levels, acidity and tannin maturity reached just the balance they were looking for between ripeness and freshness, lushness and structure.

Many of the 2018s have just been released and they're a spectacularly beautiful lot. We've collected 11 of our favorites here (including a couple of bottles just released from other vintages that deserve the company). The view here is of the winemakers' style and skill, not the effects of Mother Nature.

## **Vida Valiente 2019 The Movement Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley**



From the team of Sam and Nancy Kaplan and Hayes and Susana Drumwright (Sam—notable winemaker for Arkenstone, among others, and Memento Mori, which Hayes also co-founded), Vida Valiente was created with a purpose: to support first-generation American, low-income students on their path through college into the professional world. (Susana Cueva Drumwright lived that struggle.) A full \$100 from the sale of every bottle will be donated to the cause. The 2019 opens with deep layers of loam and spiced blackberry under high-toned florals, cedar and mocha followed by a beautiful lush palate full of black raspberry and black cherry backed by plush tannins.