

GREAT WINE SEMINAR 1999

« THE ULTIMATE CULT EXPERIENCE »
California Cabernets

Presented by Serena Sutcliffe MW

Dominus 1994, Napanook Vineyard **(+)**

Moderately dense red with a touch of brick. Clean, healthy ripe red fruits in the youthful aroma. Ripe and polished from attack to finish. Medium plus weight. Carefully judged, well-integrated oak (40% new). Harmonious, subtly nuanced and showing good development potential. It is easy to see a Bordeaux (Médoc) connection and the benefit of a multi-variety blend. 72% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Cabernet Franc, 12% Merlot, 5% Petit Verdot.

Vineyard 29 Cabernet Sauvignon 1994 *(*)**

Moderately dense red. Ripe, generous red fruits and notable overlay of new oak. Ripe, focused and textured. Rather reserved flavors. Undeveloped finish with note of raw wood. Needs time to come together and shows very good potential.

Dalla Valle Cabernet Sauvignon 1994 *(*)**

Dense dark red. Overtly ripe nose of black fruits. Dense, thick palate backed by prominent ripe tannin. Youthful note of bitterness in finish. Powerful, somewhat extracted wine. 91% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Cabernet Franc.

Dalla Valle Maya 1994 **(+)**

Dense dark red. Subdued youthful aroma, concentrated and ripe. Largely muted, concentrated, well-balanced palate with firm tannins that linger. Slightly dusty aftertaste. Serena describes this wine as the “Cheval Blanc” of California owing to its high proportion of Cabernet Franc (45%, blended with Cabernet Sauvignon, not Merlot).

Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon 1994 **(*)**

Dense dark red. Rich, somewhat fragrant red plum and cherry fruit in the aroma. Ripe, rich and lasting. Avoids any exaggeration. Proof that a wine based exclusively on Cabernet Sauvignon can reach very high levels.

Colgin Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon 1994, Herb Lamb Vineyard *?**

Moderately dense bright red. The nose is somewhat odd with a vegetal tone concealing the fruit. The palate follows and is distinctly herbaceous, ending with strong oak. 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. This is difficult to assess. An awkward phase?

Harlan Estate 1994 ****

Opaque dark red. Very ripe dark fruits and spice in the aroma. Ripe, thick and quite warm. Almost sweet from the alcohol. Plenty of volume and fruit. Surprisingly approachable. 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 18% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc. Rated "100" by Robert Parker, who described it as "coming close to immortality in the glass."

Bryant Family Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1994 ***

Moderately dense dark red. New oak dominates the nose, hiding the red and black fruits beneath. Ripe and very generous and also one-dimensional. Herbaceous overtone along pronounced new oak in the aftertaste. Too much oak, or too little fruit to support the oak? Crafted by Helen Turley from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. 900 cases produced. (A Parker "98", predicting a life to 2026.)

Screaming Eagle Cabernet Sauvignon 1993 **+**

Dense dark red. Well-judged fruit maturity. Understated and indicates good reserve and potential for development. The palate is ripe, ample and well-constructed, but in no way excessive. Screaming Eagle stands out in this tasting for its equilibrium and streamlined quality.

Colgin Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon 1993, Herb Lamb Vineyard ***

Opaque blackish red. The nose shows a mixture of dense dark fruit and an herbaceous tone. In the mouth, the wine is thick and viscous as well as highly extracted and rather clumsy. Certainly not lacking in sheer volume and weight. Less would have translated to more.

Bryant Family Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 1992, Pritchard Hill *(?)**

Moderately dense red. The nose shows a bit of evolution, ripe red fruit and a note of tar. The taste is marked by muted dark fruit and a dusty Cabernet accent. This seems rather simple in its flavors and does not indicate growing complexity. What will develop with further bottle age?

Dominus 1991, Napanook Vineyard **+**

Dark red, very slight brick edge. The nose reveals modest development and a dusty note. In the mouth, the wine is open and soft. There is plenty of flesh and textural appeal. Less massive than many other wines in the tasting. Delicious now, may develop in the near term.

Dalla Valle Cabernet Sauvignon 1990 *+**

Dense blackish red. Curiously non-expressive, dull nose with a broad solidity. Thick, dense and mouth-filling. This is a full, chewy wine. Straightforward rather than nuanced.

Dalla Valle Maya 1990 **+**

Opaque dark red. Incredibly full, ripe nose. Fat, rich and very young in the mouth. There is amazing density and raw material. Enormous presence and warmth. Unctuous for a Cabernet. The scale and relative youth of this wine augur for considerably more aging potential.