



FEATURE STORY

Cabernet Touchstones

Ten California Cabernets to Excite your Favorite Sommelier

by Karen Moneymaker

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Sommeliers in New York and Los Angeles tend to talk about most anything but cabernet. Get them on the subject, however, and you'll find they all have favorite bottles, touchstones that inform their perception of what great California cabernet should be. Recently, I interviewed sommeliers and wine directors in these two major markets for wine, asking them about how California cabernet finds a place on their lists, what wines their guests were requesting, and what wines they were excited to open for their guests. Some mentioned older bottles, describing shifts in style since the 1970s, and considering how climate change and fashion may have played a part in those shifts. Many mentioned contemporary bottles, wines that reference a specific person and place—the definition of great wine anywhere in the world. Here are the ten wines mentioned most often by the sommeliers I interviewed, sometimes cited just in passing, but all receiving some extended and enthusiastic commentary from people whose tastes are often focused on Old World classics.

Matthiasson

Steve Matthiasson consults on viticulture at any number of legendary sites in Napa Valley. He and his wife, Jill, also grow wines at their home vineyard in Oak Knoll, including cabernet sauvignon. It's the coolest of the sites he works with for his cabernet—sourced from five other growers, from Coombsville north to Rutherford—a red-fruited wine that clocked in at 13.1 percent alcohol in 2015.



Jenny Lakin

cabernet into the landscape of a meal that spans as many styles of food as our menu does.”

Jenny Lakin, at NYC's *Ferris*, where the menu is eclectic and seasonal, keeps Matthiasson on her list because she finds it works well with chef Greg Proechel's food. "I love sticking my nose in the glass of Matthiasson cab," she says. "There're all of these luscious fruit qualities, and you can smell the sun in these wines, but at the same time there is an herbaceous element, a twiggy, woody tannin. It's lovely, and none of that is overwhelming to the palate, which is really important when you're trying to weave

