

Wine Spectator



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TASTING REPORT
CALIFORNIA
CABERNET'S
CLASSIC 2021
VINTAGE

88 WINES
RATE 95+

PLUS
12 Napa
Cabernet
Wineries
Shaping
the Future

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
CHRISTIAN
MOUEIX

The Famously Private Vintner
Shares His Life From
Pétrus to Dominus

JAMES MOLESWORTH'S RECOMMENDED CALIFORNIA CABERNET SAUVIGNONS

Nearly 725 wines were reviewed for this report. A free alphabetical list is available at [WineSpectator.com/CabernetAlpha111524](https://www.winespectator.com/CabernetAlpha111524).
WineSpectator.com members can access complete reviews for all wines tasted using the online Wine Ratings search.

Top-Scoring 2021s

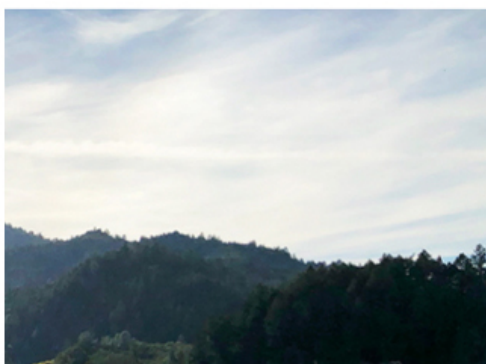
| WINE | SCORE | PRICE | WINE | SCORE | PRICE |
|---|-------|-----------------|---|-------|-----------------|
| MACDONALD Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville 2021 | 99 | \$225 | GRACE FAMILY Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Cornelius Grove 2021 | 96 | \$350 |
| KINSMAN EADES Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Käännös 2021 | 98 | \$295 | KEPLINGER Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Vine Hill Ranch Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$225 |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley RBS Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2021 | 98 | \$525 | KINSMAN EADES Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Kodó 2021 | 96 | \$295 |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Heritage Clone To Kalon Vineyard 2021 | 98 | \$525 | KINSMAN EADES Cabernet Sauvignon Yountville Anjea 2021 | 96 | \$295 |
| VHR Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville 2021 | 98 | \$275 | LOKOYA Cabernet Sauvignon Diamond Mountain District 2021 | 96 | \$550 |
| ACCENDO Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2021 | 97 | \$395 | LOKOYA Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain 2021 | 96 | \$550 |
| DALLA VALLE Maya Napa Valley 2021 | 97 | \$500 | LOKOYA Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder 2021 | 96 | \$550 |
| KINSMAN EADES Cabernet Sauvignon Diamond Mountain District Rhadamanthus 2021 | 97 | \$295 | MEMENTO MORI Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$350 |
| LOKOYA Cabernet Sauvignon Spring Mountain District 2021 | 97 | \$550 | OUTPOST Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain True Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$200 |
| MEMENTO MORI Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$395 | PAUL HOBBS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$500 |
| MEMENTO MORI Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Vine Hill Ranch Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$350 | PHILIP TOGNI Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2021 | 96 | \$195 |
| SCARECROW Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford 2021 | 97 | \$600 | RIVERS-MARIE Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville M-Bar Ranch 2021 | 96 | \$165 |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$525 | RIVERS-MARIE Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Panek Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$135 |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard MMXXI 2021 | 97 | \$1,295 1.5L | SALVESTRIN Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Dr. Crane Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$95 |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley CCS Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$525 | SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Colesworthy Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$1,295 1.5L |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley LPV Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$525 | SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Rutherford Gill Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$525 |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Monastery Block To Kalon Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$525 | STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Stags Leap District S.L.V. 2021 | 96 | \$250 |
| SCHRADER CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Stags Leap District WH Wappo Hill Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$525 | STEWART Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Nomad Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$240 |
| SPOTTSWOOD Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena 2021 | 97 | \$285 | TO KALON VINEYARD COMPANY Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville H.W.C 2021 | 96 | \$250 |
| STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS Cabernet Sauvignon Stags Leap District Cask 23 2021 | 97 | \$375 | TO KALON VINEYARD COMPANY Elizas's Oakville 2021 | 96 | \$225 |
| STEWART Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Nomad Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$240 | BEAULIEU VINEYARD Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Georges de Latour Private Reserve 2021 | 95 | \$170 |
| STEWART Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Nomad Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2021 | 97 | \$240 | CARDINALE Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2021 | 95 | \$400 |
| ANNULUS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Vine Hill Ranch Vineyard 2021 | 96 | \$250 | CONTINUUM Sage Mountain Vineyard Napa Valley 2021 | 95 | \$340 |
| COLGIN Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Tychson Hill 2021 | 96 | \$750 | CORISON Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena 2021 | 95 | \$125 |
| COLGIN Cariad Napa Valley 2021 | 96 | \$750 | DAKOTA SHY Cabernet Franc Oakville Oakville Ranch Vineyard 2021 | 95 | \$195 |
| COLGIN IX Estate Napa Valley 2021 | 96 | \$750 | DAKOTA SHY Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Melanson Vineyard 2021 | 95 | \$185 |
| DALLA VALLE Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville 2021 | 96 | \$275 | DAKOTA SHY Cabernet Sauvignon Stags Leap District Steltzner Vineyard 2021 | 95 | \$185 |
| DIAMOND CREEK Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Volcanic Hill 2021 | 96 | \$500 | DIAMOND CREEK Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Red Rock Terrace 2021 | 95 | \$500 |
| DOMINUS ESTATE Napa Valley 2021 | 96 | \$329 | EVIDENCE Cabernet Sauvignon Coombsville Of Divine Intervention Immaculate Vineyard 2021 | 95 | \$125 |
| DVO Napa Valley 2021 | 96 | \$275 | FAR NIENTE Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Benson Vale 2021 | 95 | \$500 |
| FAVIA Cabernet Sauvignon Coombsville 2021 | 96 | \$250 | FAVIA Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville 2021 | 95 | \$250 |
| FUTO Oakville 2021 | 96 | \$550 | | | |

NEW DIRECTIONS IN NAPA CABERNET

A ROUNDUP OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

BY JAMES MOLESWORTH
AND MARYANN WOROBIEC

The Napa Valley winemaking scene remains dynamic and forward-looking, with new projects emerging each year while established estates make notable shifts in their operations. Here are some of the most exciting investments, advances and revivals in the world of Napa Cabernet.



Annulus Cellars

Annulus is the ultimate limited-production, family-run Napa label. Founders Luke Evnin and Deann Wright first met as students at the University of California, San Francisco, in the 1980s, then got married in Napa in 1990 and purchased a home in Rutherford in 2000.

"We always had a special place in our heart for Napa," Evnin says. "I originally trained as a scientist and spent my professional career investing in startup biotech companies." Wright, who was an attorney for biotech startups, likewise has a background in science. But the couple were always enamored with their Napa neighbors and dreamed of launching a wine brand for their family to work on together.

They looked for a vineyard to purchase, but most of what they found on the market required replanting, which meant years of delay before their first wines could be released. Instead, they turned their focus to finding the right winemaker, who had access to the sort of grapes they would be excited to make wine from. That led them to Nigel Kinsman—winemaker for his own Kinsman Eades, along with Accendo and Bella Oaks, among others—who has quickly risen among the ranks of Napa's most sought-after winemakers.

The couple were new to the wine industry, but they weren't coming into this project blind. "We had been in Napa Valley for 20 years," Evnin says. "We collected Napa Valley Cabernet for most of that time, and we got to know a decent number of the vintners and sat at their tables and heard their stories and what they were trying to do."

The couple's background in startups was handy as well—they knew how to get talented people to work together to execute a vision and they weren't afraid to jump into a new business. There are currently two vineyard-designated wines from grower Andy Beckstoffer's Las Piedras and

Las Piedras vineyard in St. Helena is one of the top sites sourced by newcomer Annulus Cellars for its inaugural Cabernets, which are already achieving excellent scores.

Bruce and Heather Phillips' Vine Hill Ranch. A Napa Valley blend from those two sites and an additional vineyard on Diamond Mountain round out the portfolio. While the couple still hopes to find an estate vineyard that works for their project, they are gathering valuable experience by making wine with purchased grapes, which is sharpening their focus in terms of what they hope to accomplish with their own piece of land.

According to Wright, Annulus is derived from the Latin word for "ring": "The symbolism of the ring, the cycles of seasons and links to winemaking—particularly the circle of gathering people—is what really resonated with all of us." Daughters Alexandra and Elena are included in the family business.

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|---|--------------|
| 96 ANNULUS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Vine Hill Ranch 2021 | \$250 |
| 94 ANNULUS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer Las Piedras Vineyard 2021 | \$250 |
| 92 ANNULUS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2021 | \$175 |

96

2021 ANNULUS VINE HILL RANCH VINEYARD CABERNET SAUVIGNON

"This is rich and dense, offering steeped plum, black currant and boysenberry reduction notes welded together with graphite, licorice root and walnut husk accents. There's a broad feel and a deep tug of warm loam through the finish, with ample engery in reserve..." – J. Molesworth

Annulus Cellars

Annulus is the ultimate limited-production, family-run Napa label. Founders Luke Evnin and Deann Wright established Annulus in 2000, sourcing fruit from California, San Francisco, in the 1980s, then got married in Napa in 1990 and purchased a home in Rutherford in 2000.

"We always had a special place in our heart for Napa," Evnin says. "I originally trained as a scientist and spent my professional career investing in startup biotech companies." Wright, who was an attorney for biotech startups, likewise has a background in science. But the couple were always enamored with the Napa Valley, and they wanted to create a brand for their family to work on together.

They looked for a vineyard to purchase, but most of what they found on the market required replanting, which meant years of delay before their first wines could be released. Instead, they turned their focus to finding the right winemaker. That led them to Nigel Kinsman—winemaker for his own Kinsman Eades, along with Kennedy and Bella Oaks, among others—who has quickly become a close friend and collaborator.

The couple were new to the wine industry, but they weren't coming into this project blind. "We had been in the Valley for 20 years," Evnin says. "We collected Napa Valley Cabernet for most of that time, and we got to know a decent number of the vintners and sat at their tables and heard their stories and what they were trying to do."

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Las Piedras vineyard in St. Helena is one of the top sites sourced by newcomer Annulus Cellars for its inaugural vintage.

94

2021 ANNULUS BECKSTOFFER LAS PIEDRAS VINEYARD CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Bruce and Heather Phillips' Vine Hill Ranch. A Napa Valley blend from those two sites and an additional vineyard on Diamond Mountain round out the portfolio. While the couple still hopes to find an estate vineyard that works for their project, they are gathering valuable experience by making wine from the best sites in the valley, including their own piece of land.

According to Wright, Annulus is derived from the Latin word for "ring": "The symbolism of the ring, the cycles of seasons and links to winemaking—particularly the circle of gathering people—is what really resonated with all of us." Daughters Alexandra and Elena are included in the family business.

96 ANNULUS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley \$250

94 ANNULUS Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley \$250

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