

2010 New World Wine Experience: 2007 California Cabernet

Eight classic wines provide a taste of the benchmark vintage

MaryAnn Worobiec Posted: November 2, 2010

California Cabernet Sauvignon has been an important part of the Wine Experience for its 30-year history. So much so, said senior editor James Laube, that these wines might be considered the “Old World” compared to some of the newer wines and regions featured over the weekend.

Nonetheless, the Cabernet tasting was one of the most exciting, as the eight wines chosen were demonstrative of the exceptional 2007 vintage—which Laube has given a classic 99-point rating on *Wine Spectator*’s 100-point scale. With near-perfect growing conditions and a small crop, the grapes reached ideal ripeness, and the wines show uncommon richness and complexity, a lush texture and impeccable balance.

All eight Cabernets poured have scored at least 95 points, while the [Schrader Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard CCS 2007](#) is one of only two wines from California to ever score 100 points upon release. (The other is also from Schrader.)

Seven of the wines were from Napa Valley. Laube said that he thinks of Napa Cabernet as an “iron fist in a velvet glove,” in reference to the strength and texture of the wines. He added that over time, “If anything, the fist has gotten bigger and so has the glove.”

The Napa bottlings came from different areas of the valley, including Wooden Valley (Altamura), Oakville (Ramey and Schrader), St. Helena (Spottswoode) and Pritchard Hill (Colgin). The Corra and Caymus bottlings blended grapes from different districts. The lone Sonoma wine was the Peter Michael Les Pavots, from Knights Valley.

The eight panelists were introspective as they shared their wines and their thoughts about the evolution of California Cabernet, noting that many factors have contributed to the rising quality of the wines, from picking grapes based on flavor rather than data measurements to the widespread replanting of vineyards in the 1990s. Chuck Wagner of Caymus attributed it in part to some healthy competition among the vintners, and as a result, he said, “We’re starting to hit our stride in California.”

“I think 20 or 25 years ago, winemakers were concerned with trying to emulate Bordeaux, but I think we moved past that,” said winemaker David Ramey. “Now we’re trying to make the best possible wine we can.”

The Panelists and Their Wines

Altamura co-owner and winemaker **Frank Altamura**
Altamura Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2007 (96 points, \$85)

Caymus Vineyards owner and winemaker **Chuck Wagner**
Caymus Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Special Selection 2007 (96, \$130)

Colgin Cellars owner **Ann Colgin** Colgin IX Estate Napa Valley 2007 (97, \$290)

Corra Wines owner and winemaker **Celia Welch**
Corra Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2007 (96, \$125)

Peter Michael winemaker **Nicolas Morlet** Peter Michael Les Pavots Knights Valley 2007 (95, \$175)

Ramey Wine Cellars co-owner and winemaker **David Ramey**
Ramey Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville Pedregal Vineyard 2007 (96, \$150)

Schrader Cellars owner **Fred Schrader**
Schrader Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard CCS 2007 (100, \$150)

Spottswoode president **Beth Novak Milliken**
Spottswoode Cabernet Sauvignon St. Helena Family Estate Grown 2007 (95, \$130)