

Retrospective

RESERVE CABERNET SAUVIGNON



VINTAGES 1985 – 2009

RESERVE CABERNET SAUVIGNON RETROSPECTIVE TASTING NOTES

1985 – You Always Love Your First Born

1985 was among the finest growing seasons we've had at Trefethen, with a warm spring and long, temperate summer yielding grapes with excellent acidity and bold flavors. Appealing dusty cherry, cranberry and black fruit aromas are complemented by mint, green peppercorn and pine scents. Boasting vibrant, spicy, red and black berry fruit flavors, it's a delight to drink now.

1986 – Nix the 86?

The city of Napa flooded in February, but spring was warm. Temperatures throughout the balance of the growing season were cooler than normal, with no excessively hot days. Harvest provided good yields and fine fruit, but, in truth, our 1986 Reserve Cabernet has seen better days. Volatile, earthy aromas lead to a rather thin palate with watery, earthy, red fruit flavors.

1987 – Bordeaux in Napa?

Above-normal spring temperatures hastened the growing cycle in 1987. Harvest was early and yields were below normal, but quality proved excellent. Reminiscent of an older Bordeaux, this is an elegant wine with classic dried cherry, dark berry, cassis, mint and bell pepper aromas; bright, well-balanced, cherry, herb and spice flavors; and a lingering finish. It should be consumed in the near term.

1988 – In the Forest

Due to erratic weather during bloom, crop size was relatively small, but an early harvest produced excellent fruit with concentrated flavors. The 1988 is an aromatically complex wine with earthy forest-floor, bay leaf, pepper, tobacco and cocoa aromas. The flavors are similarly earthy, spicy and savory, with a bit of evident tartness. It's probably best consumed soon.

1989 – What a Fruitcake!

Rain disrupted the Chardonnay harvest, but didn't affect our thicker-skinned Cabernet Sauvignon grapes, which achieved a delicious ripeness after the rains gave way to warm, sunny days. An elegantly styled Cabernet with enticing fruitcake (plum, raisin and vanilla), tobacco and coffee aromas, this wine offers soft blackberry, dried cherry and herbal spice flavors that linger long on the finish. Enjoy it now.

1990 – Well, Butter My Cab!

1990 marked the 4th consecutive year of drought in Napa Valley, but late storms in May rescued the vintage. The weather was cool during the growing season, but warmed up in time for harvest. Displaying cherry, blackberry, bell pepper, vanilla and buttered brioche aromas with pleasing cherry, black fruit and dried herb flavors, it's ready to drink now.

1991 – C-O-L-A COLA

The cool summer of 1991 delayed harvest by nearly a month. Were it not for a fine Indian summer, our winemaking crew might have spent Thanksgiving at the winery crushing grapes! This Reserve displays toasty oak, vanilla and cherry cola aromas with juicy, medium-bodied, red fruit flavors that are framed by moderate tannins. It is drinking very nicely now.

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1992 – No Reserve Cabernet Produced

1993 – Lots o' Fruit

A wet first quarter brought over 46 inches of rainfall, and a cool summer delayed grape maturation. Warm temperatures in August accelerated ripening and a hot September brought a hectic harvest. The Reserve boasts loads of still-fresh cherry, blackberry and black currant fruit, along with smoky, meaty, floral and bramble spice notes. Bright, rich and mouthfilling, it's delicious now but can handle a few more years' aging.

1994 – '94 Gives You So Much More

Late spring storms brought rainfall levels up to normal without adversely affecting the vines. A cool August and mild September ushered in a relaxed harvest of clean, mature grapes with ideal sugar-acid balance. A beautiful ruby color and classic Napa Cabernet aromas of cherry, blackberry, cola and cigar box lay claim to a rich and full palate. With ripe fruit and smoky, caramel oak tones, it's ready to drink now.

1995 – No Jive; Great Cab in '95

Heavy winter and spring rains led to late flowering of the vines, and a hot summer reduced yields, berry sizes and acidity. Harvest was late so the grapes enjoyed plenty of hang time on the vine, concentrating flavors. Bright cherry, raspberry and blackberry aromas are coupled with clove, forest floor and toasted oak tones. Rich and balanced on the palate, with slightly drying tannins, it's ready to go but should hold in bottle for another few years.

1996 – Talented, but a Little Crazy

A warm winter, 40 inches of rainfall and an early spring led to an early harvest. A cooling trend in late August slowed ripening, which intensified fruit flavors and yielded grapes with beautifully balanced sugars and acids. The 1996 possesses perfumed berry and cherry fruit in the nose with earth, cedar, green pepper and sage notes. Rich, fruity and balanced on the palate, it's drinking beautifully now.

1997 – Lucky 7s

The earliest harvest in Trefethen's 30-year history, reflecting near-perfect growing conditions. A little rain fell at the outset of harvest, but warm, dry weather followed. A classic Cabernet that displays fresh, dense, dark berry fruit aromas with enticing cinnamon/clove and smoky oak scents. Luscious, complex and beautifully structured on the palate, with great balance and a long finish, it should age well for another 2-3 years.

1998 – Blame it on El Niño

The El Niño year of 1998 will long be remembered for its extreme and challenging weather. Endless spring rains and cool temperatures reduced yields and caused poor cluster development. As a result, our 1998 Reserve Cabernet is not among our finest. Its black cherry and raspberry fruit is dominated in the nose by mint/eucalyptus, green pepper, tobacco and smoky oak scents, and its rather thin mid-palate flavor tones are long on oak but short on fruit. Drink now.

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1999 – It's So Fine in '99

A mild growing season with plentiful morning fog segued into warm, sunny days by late September, allowing our Cabernet grapes to develop rich, beautifully balanced flavors. Offering big dark fruit aromas with smoky oak, white pepper and leather scents, the rich, ample palate delivers complex, concentrated black fruit flavors with excellent structure and a long, savory finish. Impressive now, it should age well for several more years.

2000 – Once in a Millennium

A warm spring in 2000 set the stage for a perfect budbreak and grape-set. A relatively cool summer prefaced a leisurely harvest yielding a plentiful, high-quality crop. The wine offers bright ripe cherry and raspberry fruit aromas with clove and rosemary spice tones and smoky oak scents. Its medium-bodied, spicy black currant flavors are dense and vibrant and framed by supple tannins. Capable of a bit more aging, it's delicious now.

2001 – It's the 1!

An early, warm spring set the stage for a remarkably quick flowering and fruit-set. Summer was beautiful, with warm days and cool mornings fostering optimal flavor development. Offering earthy, smoky, dark fruit aromas with mint, violet and forest-floor spice tones, the wine is full-bodied, with sturdy tannins. Its rich red and black fruit flavors culminate in a long, savory finish. Drink now or hold a few more years.

2002 – Crowd Pleaser

The 2002 growing season was a wild ride of heat spikes followed by cool weather. Grape sugars increased dramatically as harvest neared, but temperatures leveled off, leaving fruit with well-balanced sugars and acids. Boasting ripe, slightly port-like, raspberry jam and black fruit aromas with pepper spice, menthol and toasted oak tones, the wine's dark fruit flavors are big, rich and jammy on the palate with soft tannins and good complexity. Enjoy it now.

2003 – All's Well That Ends Well

The topsy-turvy 2003 vintage featured a warm winter; cool, wet spring; temperate summer with several late-September heat spikes; and classic autumn weather, yielding Cabernet Sauvignon grapes with rich fruit and healthy acidity. The Reserve reveals fresh blackberry, candied cherry, vanilla, violet, pipe tobacco and toasty oak aromas with juicy, well-structured black fruit and herbal spice flavors. Complex, mouthfilling and long on the palate, it merits further aging.

2004 – Warm and Ripe

A warm, dry spring and summer set the stage for an early harvest. Memorable heat in early September, prefaced a harvest of small berries with intense, concentrated flavors. The 2004 Reserve displays super-ripe blackberry and red plum aromas with hints of mint, green pepper, prune, soy sauce and acetic acid. On the palate, it offers rich, ripe flavors structured by nicely textured tannins. Due to the wine's touch of volatility, it's probably best consumed now.

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2005 – Fresh and Elegant

Early budbreak was instigated by a warm, late winter but persistent spring rains set back vine development. Mild summer temperatures resulted in slow, even ripening of the grapes, and a classic Indian summer brought harvest to fruition. Chocolate-covered-cherry, cassis, vanilla and nutmeg aromas with fresh, juicy, cherry and blackberry flavors and a soft, chocolate-y finish are seductive to the senses. Truly elegant, it will profit from further aging.

2006 – A Keeper

Among the longest growing season in our history, a cool, wet spring was followed by a mild summer with few heat waves. The cool weather prolonged harvest which increased hang time and flavors. Intense, earthy black fruit aromas with mint and licorice tones along with elevated levels of alcohol, tannin and acidity combine to display a slightly rustic, old-world character reminiscent of Bordeaux, suggesting it should age extremely well in bottle.

2007 – Wine Heaven in '07

After a relatively dry winter, budbreak and bloom came earlier than usual. The lower soil moisture curtailed foliage growth, so the grapes enjoyed ample sunshine during a beautiful summer. The 2007 Reserve Cabernet boasts big, forward, ripe raspberry and cherry pie aromas with hints of mint, coffee and smoky oak. On the palate, its dense, rich, red and black fruit flavors are well-balanced by supple tannins. Delicious now, it should age well in bottle for several years.

2008 – A Stunner

The 2008 growing season began with the worst spring frost damage in decades, but summer was splendid, as was a beautiful autumn that provided a perfect finale to the vintage. Boasting fresh, cherry and red berry aromas with floral, sage, clove and roast coffee notes, the palate features rich candied cherry and dark berry flavors with excellent length and tannin structure. This is a stunningly good Cabernet that should age beautifully in bottle.

2009 – One for the Cellar

An excellent, even-keeled vintage in Napa Valley with consistently mild weather throughout the growing and harvest seasons resulted in fruit with finely developed flavors at modest sugar levels. The 2009 Reserve showcases earthy red and black currant fruit aromas with a hint of mint, vanilla and tea-leaf spice. Youthfully tannic, with big, rich, chewy, dark fruit flavors, it's a wine to bury in your cellar for awhile.