

Retrospective

RESERVE

CABERNET SAUVIGNON



VINTAGES 1985 - 2004

RESERVE CABERNET RETROSPECTIVE TASTING NOTES

1985 - Open and Enjoy

The wine that inspired us to produce our Reserve Cabernet, the 1985 “Hillside Select” Cabernet grew up during one of the most pleasant vintages in memory, with a cold winter giving way to a warm, frost-free spring and serene, mild summer. The long growing season developed grapes of bold flavors that have mellowed over time into what is now a very nice older wine. Brick red in color, it still has a delightful nose of dried cranberries and sage, orange peel and cigar tobacco. Soft and slightly tart on the palate, it is beginning to thin and fade but would nonetheless be a very special treat with some braised meat.

1986 - Better and Better

After a February that brought heavy rains and flooded downtown Napa, we were overjoyed when September delivered not only our second Reserve Cabernet but also our second child, Hailey Trefethen. We are pleased to say that both have matured gracefully into the beauties that they are today. The wine, deep garnet in color, is a true classic California cabernet with warm plum and blackberry fruit, superb tannin structure and lovely mouthfeel. Cheers, Hailey - you girls just keep dancing!

1987 - Drink or Hold?

Though always a blend of our two vineyards - Hillspring on the hillside and the Main Ranch on the valley floor - the 1987 Reserve is almost entirely Hillspring Cabernet. Full tannins are present in the vibrant palate, while notes of cherry, spice and a hint of violets tantalize the nose. A few of us feel it will only improve as the tannins soften, others, detecting some oxidation, feel its peak may be behind us. Whatever the case may be, it's pretty lovely right now.

1988 - Not Reviewed

1989 - Time to Drink

Lacking the depth of other vintages of Reserve Cabernet, the 1989 is still a nice wine, but on its way out. Strawberry rhubarb, figs and damp earth, the palate is a bit tough, medium bodied, and slightly bitter. Treat it like an old Amarone, pair it with some nice game, and you will get along just fine!

1990 - Time to Drink

Good balance between the oak and fruit in the wine with lavender and cherries playing off of one another, the tannins are soft and the acids surprisingly, but pleasantly tart. A bit thin however, this wine has likely peaked.

1991 - Still Lovely

A richer wine than previous vintages, this wine still displays luscious fruit and great texture, complete with the balancing acidity and tannin structure that are trademarks of the Trefethen style. Blackberries, raspberries, cherries, and plums with vanilla, spearmint and black pepper, this wine has good bones. Lovely now, it will continue to improve.

1992 - No Reserve Cabernet Produced

1993 - Almost There

After a relatively cool summer, a warm August and hot September lent the 1993 Reserve a full body bursting with dark, intense fruit. The addition of a little Cabernet Franc to the blend this year provided some additional structure and spice. After 15 years, it has softened into a delicious, mouth-filling wine that will continue to improve for a few years.

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1994 - Open and Enjoy

Clean and bright, this cooler vintage wine is in perfect balance right now. Blackberries, raspberries, cherries, and plums sit right alongside green and red peppers, rhubarb and sweet smoke. Meaty, supple tannins pave the way to a lengthy, enjoyable finish. Only a thinning tartness prevents it from getting even better.

1995 - A Jammy Treat

A warm vintage, reduced yields, and a predominance of Cabernet Sauvignon in the blend this year (99.5%) have left this wine with an abundance of juicy, jammy fruit that belies the wine's age. Chocolate, plum, blackberry, cassis, tobacco, and fresh herbs all grace the rich, full mouth. This wine is still fantastically youthful and should be enjoyed at any time from today to ten years from now. Yum!

1996 - A Saucy Lass

Svelte and feminine, this wine rewards patience, persistence, and a gentle touch. Directly upon pour, she repels any hasty advances with a closed nose, but after proper decanting and a little time in the glass, she opens, exposing the teasing, sweet demeanor beneath. Luscious red fruit - raspberries, blueberries, and strawberry jam - combine with a tantalizing perfume of dried flowers, leaves, and forest anise. Fine structure and fruit intensity lead on into a medium finish, and if you're like us, you can't help but smile, knowing this wine will only become more interesting as time passes.

1997 - Soft and Luscious

A deep ruby in color, this wine was bathed in opulence from the get-go, and though it has softened, it is certainly not delicate. Earth and smoke combine with ripe, lip-smacking tannins and serve as a base for the mouth-filling flavors of blackberries, lemon zest, violets and rhubarb. Delicious for years to come!

1998 - Standout

In a year of disappointing Napa Cabernets, this wine has always stood apart. The year of El Niño, 1998 was a year of extraordinary weather fluctuation and viticultural challenges. Only because of our diligence in the vineyard, and our commitment to the estate concept were we able to succeed where so many others faltered. Today, this wine continues to astonish with its incredible fruit intensity and fantastic balance. Dark fruit juicy fruit - black cherries, black plums, and blackberries - dance with mint, baking spices and toasted oak. Balanced tannins and acidity round out the almost creamy texture, leading into a long, long finish. Stupendous now, this wine is still in the hunt and will be for quite some time.

1999 - Hold On

Inky black, this wine exhibits great concentration of flavor: exotic dark fruit, bittersweet chocolate and toasted oak. Concentrated without being jammy, this wine is very well balanced and structured, with tight tannins that need a few more years to develop fully.

2000 - All Dressed Up

More feminine, this wine unfolds in complex layers, delighting the sipper with exquisite, intriguing aromas of tea leaves, eucalyptus, vanilla, and a redwood forest, in addition to slightly jammy fruit. Nice intensity with balancing acidity and ripe tannins, it ready to drink now, or prepared to stay for a while.

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2001 - Just Getting Dressed

Similar to the 2000, this pretty, elegant wine has great balance of red and dark fruit, with additional components of cedar, sage, and forest floor. Bright and young with great body and giant tannins, it could use a few more years.

2002 - Already a Winner

Decanter Magazine selected this wine out from among 300 other American wines last year at their World Wine Awards in London to become "the single finest example of a red Bordeaux varietal from North America." Also a favorite of our panel taster, Master Sommelier Bob Bath, this jammy wine is truly a winner.

2003 - Early Complexity

Bright red fruit wrapped in spice, excellent balance, and aggressive young tannins have already built wonderful complexity in this wine that give it superb aging potential. The first Reserve Cabernet with Malbec and Petit Verdot present in the blend, this a wine for the cellar.

2004 - Exuberant in its Youth

A bit of a preview, this wine will not be released for at least another 6 months. Already, it shows fantastic promise, striking a superb balance between bright fruit and toasty wood smoke. A silky mouthfeel with good structure and tannin give it great presence, and we can't wait until it's ready for its debut.