

Action! Cabernet Season getting into swing

Issue 70 | September 22, 2006 | St. Helena, CA

It is fall in Napa Valley which is every bit as lovely as springtime. The difference being there is a lot more action now. Picking is happening in vineyards under light booms at 3 AM, grape gondolas clog Highway 29. I can pretty much forget about dinner plans with my winemaking friends for the next six weeks. The business of making wine will be going into overdrive soon and the perfume of fermentation hangs like a robe in the morning mists as a reminder to anyone driving through exactly what it is we do here.

In a small way, it has already started, with grapes beginning to trickle in. Last weekend I visited my friend **Colin MacPhail**, Estate Manager at **Larkmead Winery**, and Winemaker **Andy Smith** who was bringing in Merlot. The weather has been cooperating beautifully with highs in the low 90's. Also **Andy Erickson** was crushing a ton of Viognier for Arietta.

Leading the charge is **Emilio's Terrace** from Oakville. First released in 1996, they offer consistently excellent estate grown wines for the price. Last year, the 2002 received 92 points from Vinfolio. The vineyard, owned by **Phil Schlein**, is tucked into the eastern hillsides of Oakville next to the famous **To Kalon** vineyard, the source for one of a trio of 2004 releases from **Carter Cellars**. **Mark Carter's** small production assures they won't be around long. **Anomaly** is situated in the tiny village of St. Helena, (the site of Vinfolio's Napa Valley office). Owners **Steve and Linda Goldfarb** fill the niche of a high quality, small production winery that hasn't been picked up by the critics yet. **Beau Vigne**, owned by **Ed Snider**, is a new producer that has appeared earlier in the Wilder Side of California. Their **Juliet** is a delicious new addition. Next we take a brief holiday from Napa. A recent day of tasting reminded me of the excellent qualities found in wines from Washington State. In this instance, **Seven Hills Winery** and winemaker **Casey McClellan** is the best value in the offer and has received a 91 rating from The Wine Spectator.

Before getting into the reviews this week, I think it is appropriate for me to mention some information I have added to the reviews below. Recently I started to highlight more of the people behind the wines I write about (you may have noticed the highlighting in the weekly introduction). The Wilder Side of California is now in Issue 70 and has been a weekly publication for over a year now. The quality of the wines I write about is my commitment to our readers. However there would be a lot fewer wines appearing here if it wasn't for the relationships I have developed with a coterie of outstanding wine brokers and salespeople who see me regularly with the excellent products they offer. When you read a stellar review here it is because one of these individuals saw to it that I had the wine on my desk on the first day they were showing them. Their names and companies are no doubt unfamiliar to our readers yet they make my job a lot easier and I appreciate them more than they know.

Vinfolio Reviews

[Expand all](#)



2003 Emilio's Terrace - Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve

VF 93

\$50.00
750ml

[+ Add](#)

USA - California - Napa - Oakville

Prearrival

Due to the steepness of the site, harvest happens in several passes as fruit ripens. These selective picks ensure only the optima... | [Cont'd »](#)

Mark Carter is the owner of the esteemed Carter House in Eureka California, an award winning restaurant and inn. Several years ago he embarked on a wine project with Nils Venge making the wines. He sources fruit from top vineyards in Napa Valley and keeps the production low. It is not widely distributed and usually winds up in the hands of a few key shops known to the Spencer Dubuque at S2 Wine Brokers who make sure I see all of the hottest wines on the first day. Revilo Vineyard is named for Reg Oliver, the recently deceased owner of El Molino Winery who despite his fine reputation in Pinot Noir and

Chardonnay kept this excellent Cabernet Sauvignon source in the wings. I was always tantalized by his Cabs...



2004 Carter - Cabernet Sauvignon Revilo Vineyard

VF 93

\$88.00 **+ Add**
750ml

USA - California - Napa - Napa Valley

Prearrival

The color is a darkly saturated purple with aromas of dusty black cherry, sea salt and smooth black fruit (fig, cassis) essences.... | [Cont'd »](#)



2004 Carter - Cabernet Sauvignon Beckstoffer To-Kalon Vineyard

VF 92

\$88.00 **+ Add**
750ml

USA - California - Napa - Napa Valley

Prearrival

One of the top regarded sites in the world for Cabernet Sauvignon is the To Kalon Vineyard in Oakville. It has been responsible f... | [Cont'd »](#)



2004 Carter - Cabernet Sauvignon Coliseum Block

VF 92

\$108.00 **+ Add**
750ml

USA - California - Napa - Napa Valley

Prearrival

Coliseum Block is situated up the windy and rocky Soda Canyon in southern Napa Valley. The low yields have much to do with making... | [Cont'd »](#)

Owners Steve and Linda Goldfarb have a new winemaker in Mark Porembski, succeeding Amy Aiken who he had worked under here in previous vintage. I lost track of the wine after the first vintage in 2000 that I scored 93 points. I'm excited to be able to offer them once again.



2003 Anomaly - Cabernet Sauvignon

VF 92

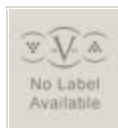
\$75.00 **+ Add**
750ml

USA - California - Napa - Napa Valley

Prearrival

A lush aromatic entry showing lavender and sweet black fruits in the nose with tar and black cherry on the palate. The finish is ... | [Cont'd »](#)

Ed Snider's family has a long winemaking tradition in Italy stretching back several hundred years. It was only a matter of time until this second generation, life-long Napa resident put his passion into wine. 2003 marks the second vintage made by David Phinney (Orin Swift). The vineyard comprises 9 acres in Stags Leap District. Brigit Favia of Swirl introduced me to this new label in the spring.



2004 Beau Vigne - Cabernet Sauvignon Juliet

VF 93

\$48.00 **+ Add**
750ml

USA - California - Napa - Napa Valley

Prearrival

A very well put together wine with the aromatics and flavors merged into an amalgam of seamlessness; tar and black figs, sea salt... | [Cont'd »](#)

Here is another of the discoveries brought to my attention by Tom Elliot of Northwest Wines in a recent meeting. After tasting I was surprised to hear the price. There are dozens of California wines selling for much more that don't come close to providing the pleasure found here. Casey McClellan has been farming here since 1980 and sells fruit to some of the most renowned producers in the region; Andrew Will, Leonetti and L'Ecole No. 41. The oldest blocks from this vineyard go into this bottling exclusively. Blended with 10% Merlot.



2002 Seven Hills - Cabernet Sauvignon Seven Hills Vineyard

VF 93

\$30.00 **+ Add**
750ml

USA - Washington - Columbia Valley - Walla Walla

Prearrival

A nose offering up lavender and spicy violet, The palate offers an evolved flavor profile featuring violet smooth and polished bl... | [Cont'd »](#)