

Flight 1: SYRAH

Wine #1:

Bunnell 2004 Syrah

Yakima Valley, Boushey-McPherson Vineyard

Alcohol 14.1% 274 cases produced \$35

Claim to Fame: Many kudos (& the name somehow seemed familiar...)

Wine Press Northwest says: "OUTSTANDING"

Former Chateau Ste. Michelle winemaker Ron Bunnell has struck out on his own. If his Syrah is any indication, there is a new star in the Yakima Valley. This big red opens with aromas of black fruit, ripe raspberries, dark chocolate and oak, followed by flavors of black cherries, and blackberries and bittersweet chocolate. This is a balanced wine with a lot of continuity.

Wine Spectator, however, says:

"Dense and distinctive, with gamy, slightly bitter elements to the roasted berry and dark spice flavors. Not everyone will like this. Best from 2009 through 2013.

Wine #2:

Twin Beaks 2003 Shiraz

SouthEastern Australia

Alcohol 13.9 lotsa cases produced \$7.80

Claim to Fame: Val found this as a christmas special 4 years ago. It was such a great value that we bought 2 cases for our "winter vin ordinaire" dinner wine.

"Emu's are usually seen in pairs and are free to roam the vast expanse of this great country. Australian winemakers too are free to roam and select high quality parcels of fruit from any part of Australia and bring them together to craft a truly national blend. Twin Beaks is a reflection of that freedom they enjoy with the ultimate blending skills of the winemakers at Andrew Harris Vineyards"

Wine #3:

Carlisle 2007 Syrah

Russian River Valley, Papa's Block of Atoosa's Vineyard

Alcohol 15.0 315 cases produced \$43

Claim to Fame: 98 points, Wine Spectator "This gorgeous Syrah has amazing complexity, depth and concentration, gushing with pure, rich wild berry, blackberry and boysenberry fruit that's simply delicious right now"

Mike Officer is quickly rising to the top of the qualitative pyramid when it comes to Zinfandel, and, more recently, Petite Sirah and Syrah. He is giving some of Napa's top-notch Zinfandel producers, such as Biale and Turley, a run for their money. Starting as a home winemaker in 1998, Officer is now making wines that are poster children for hedonism and exuberant joy. Carlisle's 2007s reveal that vintage's luscious fruit. Syrah should be selling better than it does. Perhaps consumers are confused by the ocean of cheap Shiraz from Australia, and fail to recognize the quality California Syrah offers.

Wine #4

K Vintners 2006 Syrah

Walla Walla Valley, Morrison Lane

Alcohol 14.5 257 Cases produced \$48

So why did "The Creator", Charles Smith, name it "K" vintners? He wanted to make Syrah, and call it.....

Claim to Fame: Wine Spectator: "Top ten Syrah in America." Rated 91

Wine and Spirits: It's BLACK! Black fruit, black earth. A super deep Syrah. The best Morrison Lane ever. Dark earth, game, undergrowth saturating flavor and Wild Syrah character. This is a killer Syrah.

Flight 2: CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Wine #5

Neal 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon (100%)

Napa Valley

Alcohol 14.8 \$45

Claim to Fame: The name starts out nicely.

Typical Review: "This wine is perfect precision in balance in all the flavors you look for in a Cabernet... the oak, the flavor, the fruit, the structure, the midpalette, the finish is so precise, it's really quite beautiful... This is the third or fourth time I've had it and I'm completely blown away by that pin-point accuracy... This is a really great bottle of California Cabernet and I could see people scoring this 93 or 90, anywhere in that range... but for me, let's go 92+... really well made and for \$45 it is a buy because many, many Napa Valley Cabs do not score this high.

And: "In a word, it's a doozy. In more words, an absolute powerhouse of a Cabernet displaying the classic steel-fist-in-velvet-glove quality of the greatest Napa Valley wines. Blackcurrant/cassis and sweet, cigarbox spices in the nose; full, round, luscious layers upon layers of flavor on the palate. If you're into Caymus, you're going to love this one, too!"

Wine #6

Bell Wine Cellars 2004 Claret

Napa Valley 89% cab, 5% Merlot, & with some Franc, Verdot & Syrah 18 months in French Oak
Alcohol 13.5 942 cases \$30

Claim to Fame: Nice name. Crisper to pronounce than "Bunnell"

Claret was first used in popular English literature sometime before 1350. By the reign of Edward III (1327-1377) the trade in French wine had reached amazing proportions. Ships of that time were rated at the number of tonnes (252 gallon casks of wine) they could carry. The wine fleet would sail for France in late autumn, returning before Christmas with "new wine". They would sail again after Easter in the spring, and return with "rack wine" of the same vintage. In 1372, the wine fleet consisted of some 200 ships, with average tonnage well over 50 tonnes per ship, for a total cargo of over 3 million gallons of wine that year. The French used the term claret to refer to the light red wine of Bordeaux, before it was blended with heavier, darker red wine from elsewhere in France. It was this that the English came to call Claret.

Wine #7

Caymus Vineyards 1995 Cabernet Sauvignon Special Selection

Napa Valley

Alcohol 14.0 \$68 then, \$154 now

New label, caps, blending – Chuck's wine, not Charlie's

Claim to Fame: Wine Spectator 93

Wine Advocate (90) says: While it is fashionable to criticize this wine because of its price, and the secrecy surrounding the amount produced (who really cares?), the wine is unquestionably outstanding. The 1995 boasts a dark ruby/purple color as well as an attractive bouquet with lavish quantities of toasty new oak and black currants. There is moderate tannin, good purity, and an open-knit, sexy style. If the wine had not fallen a bit short on the mid-palate, it would have merited an even higher score. It should drink well for 10-15 years. Based on the fame of this winery and the price of the wine, one would expect this Cabernet to compete with Colgin, Bryant Family Vineyards, Screaming Eagle, Araujo, and Harlan Estate. It does not. Nevertheless, it is an outstanding Cabernet Sauvignon.

Wine #8

Mayacamas Vineyards 1971 Cabernet Sauvignon

Napa Mountain ("Gawd DANG the road to *Mayacamas* is long and arduous. I thought we were going to DIE on the way up the hill")

Alcohol 13.0 \$86 then (\$86 per case, not per bottle – before the classic French taste off)

Claim to Fame:

This is for people who like old-school, cellar-aged Cab with all the fixings.

Bob Travers, owner (nearing 70) said: We've got work to do around here, and I've got to get back into the vineyard. We're in this for the drinking, anyway, not for excessive words. As Julius Caesar said to Cleopatra upon entering her bedchamber "I didn't come here to talk".

From an Appellation America 2006 interview entitled "wines from another era":

Are you maturing well?

Travers: Probably not as well as some of my wines.

Do you think you're a Neanderthal?

Travers: Probably. I feel there's a family resemblance. Aging doesn't guarantee quality, but if you have a good vineyard, it's best to take it slow.

Is Bob Travers an anachronism? Are the wines he makes of another era? The short answers are yes and yes. But the longer, more analytical rejoinder would be: Only if you think that just because a man has been making wine for nearly 40 years, he is automatically a relic. And, while his wines have been eschewed in recent years because they are not out-of-balance, alcohol-laden jelly giants, it seems that his kind of wine is just beginning to peer through the scrim.

Which means that Bob Travers wines, which were all the rage in the 1970s and '80s, just may be back in fashion again soon