



Written by
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Napa Valley sub-appellations - heartening?



Elaine's review last week of Cabernets with the general Napa Valley appellation stirred up some strong reactions, including on our members' forum. She addresses some of the issues raised by the first of her two articles on Napa Cabernets in this introduction to the second one, a report on a total of 90 Cabernets with one of the many Napa Valley sub-appellations described below. A report on Napa Merlots will follow. Elaine's picture was taken on Howell Mountain.

The over-arching region and AVA of Napa Valley includes 16 sub-appellations ranging in their combination of growing conditions - elevation, soil types, drainage, mesoclimate - to create unique subzones that offer their own stylistic range and expression.

Producers within Napa Valley can chose to label their wines with the Napa Valley appellation as

long as 85% or more of the fruit going into their wine is from the region. Labelling requirements for the sub-AVAs of Napa Valley are similar. For a wine to be labelled with one of the 16 sub-appellations the wine must be made predominantly from fruit grown in that subzone. Additionally, any of the sub-AVAs fully within Napa County must include reference to Napa on the label. For example, a wine from the Rutherford AVA has to be labelled with both Rutherford and Napa Valley. The two exceptions are Carneros, which stretches across both Napa and Sonoma Counties, and Wild Horse Valley, which includes land in Solano as well as Napa County. (See the online *World Atlas of Wine* map of [Napa Valley](#) for many of the sub-AVAs.)

Many of the most delicious wines of the region come from producers focused intently on specific subzones who label their wine with their relevant sub-appellation. In many cases, the growing conditions of a specific sub-AVA are expressed in the bottle. For example, the southern half of Napa Valley tends to be rather cooler than the northern half. As a result, it is often easier to find bright flavours and acidity in wines from the southern half of the valley, although this of course varies with farming practices and producer style.

The cooler temperatures can limit production options as well. In the southernmost part of the valley, **Carneros** is generally too cold to ripen Bordeaux varieties, although some plantings do exist in warmer spots on the northern side of the sub-AVA. (One such example appears in the following tasting notes – the Truchard which tastes so clearly from cool Carneros.)

Also in the south, though slightly warmer than Carneros, **Coombsville** has garnered a rush of recent attention for its unique characteristics. At its best, the cooling climate of Coombsville offers a more refreshing and approachable style for Bordeaux varieties, wines with a more open weave. At the same time, many of the Bordeaux varieties from the sub-AVA offer an intrinsically different structure than those from elsewhere in the valley. The volcanic ash soils create tactile tannins very different from those of benchland soils. It's a mouthfeel more like the lightly rough weave of raw silk whereas tannins in representative wines from an alluvial fan are more reminiscent of a finely spun fabric. Even so, Coombsville wines can offer both refreshment and value.

Half way up the valley, **Oakville** offers some of the highest concentration of standout wines, as explained by Napa Valley geography. The sub-AVA receives enough warmth to ripen Cabernet Sauvignon but not so much as to tip into the overripe flavours associated with hotter parts of the valley. It includes a preponderance of benchland soils with their excellent drainage and fine tannins. Most valley-floor appellations of Napa stretch across the width of the valley from the foot of the Mayacamas in the west to the foot of the eastern Vaca Range. (Stag's Leap AVA is one exception, sitting only on the eastern side while including both some valley floor as well as some slopes.) While Oakville does stretch across the width of the valley, the pinch of the mountains in the middle section means there is more of the well-drained benchland soil that suits Cabernet so well. From Oakville, several of the standout wines mentioned below – MacDonald, Gallica and Ulysses – originate in Oakville, along with a wealth of other well-known names such as Mondavi, Harlan and Bond.

Just north of Oakville, the **Rutherford** appellation has successfully promoted its wines. Some of the most celebrated wines of Napa – Scarecrow and Inglenook included – hail from the Rutherford sub-AVA, their vineyards tucked near the Mayacamas. A plethora of other well-known producers such as Beaulieu Vineyards, Frog's Leap, Quintessa and Staglin to name only a few, hail from the subregion as well. At the same time, Rutherford's wine quality is heterogeneous. The geography of the subzone can offer at least some explanation. Rutherford sits in what is essentially the widest part of the valley. Stretching across its full width, Rutherford includes a

higher proportion of fertile soils from the centre of the valley floor as well as soils with less effective drainage. Wines from such sites seem to offer less distinctive power than those along the outer benchlands of the area. The fruit in such wines seems more readily dominated by oak.

Moving north in the valley, temperatures rise, peaking in Calistoga. **St Helena** has the longest sustained warmth through the day though not the highest peak temperatures. Bordeaux varieties, as a result, are able to ripen evenly over the course of the day. While a good portion of St Helena's benchland has been commandeered by the town of St Helena itself, there are still nice examples of benchland vineyards, Spottswoode being one of the best-known examples, and Corison's Kronos another.

Cabernet flavours here are dominated more by juicy dark fruit than Italian herbs or peppercorns, transitioning into notes of anise and fennel moving northwards. **Calistoga** hosts the highest peak temperatures of the valley. Producers wishing to celebrate that ripe California character can do so easily here. But numerous wineries of Calistoga are also practising restraint while enjoying the unique flavour development of the subzone. Araujo, recently renamed with its historic name Eisele, is one such example. Diamond Creek is another (although neither, unfortunately, submitted wines for my report). The wines of Larkmead from the 2013 vintage forward also showcase this combination of distinctive Calistoga character with pleasing restraint. Their new block-focused approach has benefited the wines greatly. For a fuller-flavoured wine, Venge, with a touch more power than these others, yields to ripeness without going over the top.

While Napa Valley's reputation was originally founded on successful sites in the valley itself, by the 1970s and 1980s vineyards were being established in the mountains on either side. In many ways, these mountain vineyards with their hearty tannin are distinctly California. It's a geography unseen in Bordeaux, and a structure that likely would have been fined to a smoother polish in France. California's famed mountain wines celebrate their own structural intensity.

That said, mountain appellations on the western side vary significantly from those in the eastern range. Subzones in the Mayacamas tend to retain greater freshness than those in the Vaca on the eastern side. Slopes of the Mayacamas generally greet the morning sun, while those in the Vaca, facing west, are ripened by warmer afternoon heat. The eastern mountain appellations, then, tend to produce bigger wines and with greater tannin intensity as well.

In the Mayacamas, the **Spring Mountain District** has several producers that have owned their sites since its inception, meaning it can be easier to find examples of good quality wines coming in at around \$100 or less. Directly across the valley in the Vaca Range sits **Howell Mountain**. Producers such as Dunn (not represented in the following tasting notes, unfortunately) helped make the subzone famous for its impressive ageability. With its afternoon exposure, Howell Mountain has a high concentration not only of flavour but also of tannin. At the same time, vineyards from the subregion tend to have a relatively high pH. This combination means that when a producer chooses, high tannin levels can still couple with a softer mouthfeel, keeping the wines manageable across the palate.

The range of wines tasted

The wines included in the following tasting of Cabernets from the Napa Valley sub-AVAs, as well as those previously reviewed from the all-encompassing Napa Valley appellation, were gathered in response to an all-call invitation sent to members of the Napa Valley Vintners on my behalf. A few non-member wines were also included as a result of such wineries hearing about the tasting

from member wineries and then asking to be included. The NVV invitation asked specifically for current release, single-vineyard or estate wines, with only one wine submitted per producer to keep the number of wines tasted manageable.

I deliberately chose to undertake this tasting via an open invitation to give me a chance to taste unfamiliar wines, but my approach has unfortunately meant that some well-known producers are not included in these reviews. This was understood going into the tastings. Many of the most obvious examples of producers not included in these reviews will be written about in future articles instead.

It may be too obvious to point out that of the wines included in the following collection, the standout wines tended to offer a combination of distinct regional character with a deft balance of flavour, structure, acidity and a well-executed use of oak. Wines that showed less well tended to rely on sweet fruit with unbalanced oak characters. When I mention sweet fruit here, this is not a reference to a wine that is simply fruit forward - this can be a well-executed stylistic choice - but instead to wines that rely on a sense of sweetness and even residual sugar to round out the palate. Such an approach tends to obscure both site character and cellar choices and has a negative impact on a wine's ability to age. Unbalanced oak here can indicate a wine with oak that overpowers its fundamental fruit character or oak that is simply disjointed from the rest of the wine.

In the sub-appellation Cabernets from Napa Valley there were a number of standouts for either, or even both, quality and value. Some of the wines not mentioned in the following summary nevertheless showed well, as indicated in the tasting notes.

Standout wines

These sub-appellation wines tended to be more distinctive and to display a greater variation of styles than those with the broader Napa Valley appellation that I reviewed in the [first half of this report](#). In the following tasting of 90 wines from Napa Valley sub-appellations there were more standout wines, as well as more good-value wines.

Standout wines tended to be from the well-drained benchland soils André Tchelistcheff taught winemakers in the region to appreciate. The following examples of standout wines are all from benchland soils on the western side of the valley along the foot of the Mayacamas.

MacDonald is a newer Cabernet producer from one of the hallmark sites of the valley along the Oakville bench. Brothers Graeme and Alex MacDonald farm and make wine from the site founded by their great-grandparents in the 1950s on a portion of the historic [To Kalon Vineyard](#). [Robert Mondavi](#) began buying fruit from the MacDonald family for his family winery Charles Krug, eventually using it to make his own Cabernet Reserve. The MacDonalds continue to sell fruit to the Mondavi winery but also reserve the portion planted by their grandparents in the 1960s for their own Cabernet. It offers a delicious balance of classic benchland character with the flavours of Oakville and the structure to age. Below are ancient vines in the MacDonald Vineyard.



Spottswoode has shown itself to have one of the great sites of Napa Valley for Cabernet, along the St Helena bench, offering remarkable consistency and quality since its inception across multiple winemakers. Current winemaker Aron Weinkauff shows clear respect for the history of the estate and its wines with a nice balance of ageability and just a bit more approachability on the younger wines.

Rosemary Cakebread's **Gallica** brings together incredible precision of style with the flavours and character of the Oakville bench. She manages a fine-tuned delicacy, as if every detail has been attended to, while still allowing the character of the fruit to shine on a structure to age.

A new project from Christian Moueix, the just-released **Ulysses**, carries the craftsmanship of his **Dominus** project into a distinctly different site along the Oakville bench. His new Cabernet brings together exuberant fruit aromatics with a restrained and focused palate that deftly retains just enough green character to make the wine refreshing and ageworthy.

Good-value wines

As mentioned in my **previous report** on Napa Valley appellation wines, it is quite difficult to produce wines affordably in the Napa Valley due to both land costs and labour challenges. However, several wines priced at \$55 or below per bottle showed well.

Smith-Madrone from the Spring Mountain District is the absolute standout for producing both high-quality wine vintage-to-vintage at an incredible price. For only \$48, the Smith brothers consistently deliver wines that express the vintage, the character of their mountain site and the variety. The wine stands out in a line-up for its own sake and then really impresses when the price is revealed.

The **Frog's Leap** wine offers classic valley-floor expression with a nice balance of Napa Valley Cabernet varietal character - its fruit, its structure, and its herbal accents - as well as judicious oak framing which will continue to integrate with time in the bottle.

From the southernmost part of the valley in Carneros, **Truchard** offers a mouth-wateringly fresh example of Cabernet Sauvignon for only \$40. They are among the very few that grow the variety in the Carneros sub-appellation and their wine offers a delicious and affordable option that does well at the table.

One final bargain is the **Napa Cellars** Cabernet at only \$24. This is a bulk wine that is made more to be quaffable than impressive, but it accomplishes that easily at an unbelievable price. This would be best thought of as an easygoing picnic wine.

The wines

The following tasting notes represent Cabernet Sauvignon wines from the 16 Napa Valley sub-appellations. In most cases the wines are labelled with that sub-appellation. In fewer than a handful of examples, wines that are known to be entirely from a particular locale but labelled simply Napa Valley were tasted alongside the wines of the appropriate sub-appellations. Of the 16 sub-appellations, 15 are represented in the tasting. The cooler, high-elevation subzone of Wild Horse Valley is not represented. All these 90 wines are grouped by sub-appellation - valley floor first from south to north and then mountain AVAs western then eastern. Within sub-appellation, they are listed alphabetically by producer. They were all tasted 13-15 June 2016.

CARNEROS

- **Truchard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Carneros** 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Cabernet Franc, 1% Petit Verdot, 1% Malbec. A rare Cabernet for its sub-AVA of Carneros, which is predominately planted to burgundian varieties.

Approachable with a good balance of varietal expression alongside deft winemaking. Offers a mix of fresh herbs, rocky minerality and well-integrated spice. Focus on freshness. This is a good-value Cabernet, both mouth-watering and structural. Lightly tactile tannins and an abundant wash of acidity. A bit short through the finish. Will go well alongside food as it is palate cleansing. **GV (ECB)** 14.2% Drink 2016-2025
\$40 RRP 16.5

COOMBSVILLE

- **Ackerman Cabernet Sauvignon 2011 Coombsville** Fragrant, floral and blackcurrant aromatics faintly dusted by cedar and oak spice. A juicy, mouth-watering palate carrying dusty gunpowder accents and notes of tobacco with a hint of black liquorice. Persistent, fine tannins and abundant acidity carry into a long finish. (ECB) 13.5% Drink 2017-2028
\$75 RRP 17
- **Di Costanzo, Farella Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Coombsville** Almost creamy, perfumed aromatics with a pop of fresh blackcurrant and blackberries. Taut palate that opens to reveal more with air. Spun through with graphite, black bark, and black-rock minerality. Persistent, fine tannins with balancing acidity carrying through to a long finish. Has the fruit to be approachable now. Opens and integrates nicely with air over several days - will likely integrate and focus further with age. (ECB) 14.2% Drink 2017-2025
\$85 RRP 17
- **Farella Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Coombsville** Fresh pop of blackcurrant with raspberry and a lightly musky perfume accented by hints of toast lift from the glass. On the palate dark chocolate, graphite, and lavender wrap a core of mixed fruit. Rustic. Give it some air upon opening. (ECB) 14.8% Drink 2017-2028
\$65 RRP 16.5
- **Meteor, Perseid Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Napa Valley** From Coombsville sub-AVA of Napa Valley though it is labelled with the larger region instead.
Rich, oak-friendly aromatics and palate. Flavours of ripe, dark fruit and spice with accents of gunpowder and a finish of hot pepper. This is a generous, full-bodied example of Napa Valley Cabernet that avoids any sense of heaviness and celebrates its fruit with a velvety layer of oak

spice and bourbon notes. The two are well wed throughout and carried across the palate by mouth-watering acidity. Fine, persistent tannins. (ECB)14.6% Drink 2017-2025
\$135 RRP 16.5

- **Porter Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Coombsville**Dusty spice and toast on the nose carry forward to the palate alongside gunpowder, dark chocolate and a kiss of dark caramel. This Cabernet is more about dark flavours given by barrel than fruit but it is a well-executed example of the style. A long mouth-watering finish carries ample acidity and a persistent backbone of tannins. (ECB)14.6% Drink 2017-2025
\$91 RRP 16
- **Sodaro Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Coombsville**Persistent dark-toast aromatics through a long finish accented at points by musky forest notes, gunpowder and hints of caramel. There is a lot of focus on barrel expression here. This is a palate-filling wine that avoids overripeness and brings the flavour through oak instead. The ample acidity keeps it from becoming heavy but this is admittedly a very dark, more oak-focused wine than I prefer. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2024
\$150 RRP 15.5
- **Tournesol Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Napa Valley**A very taut nose and palate currently offer notes of barrel primarily though there is an underlying sense of dark fruit along with toast and resinous forest accents. A long finish is lifted by eucalyptus, and dustings of oak spice then closes with a kiss of caramel. Time in bottle will likely have more to reveal. There is more of a focus here on barrel than fruit. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2018-2025
\$125 RRP 15+

OAK KNOLL DISTRICT

- **Black Stallion, Gaspare Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley**A nose of both ripe red berries and dark fruit quickly spins into layers of oak spice and dark toast with caramel through the palate. Dusty, persistent tannins balanced by acidity carry into a long finish. Lightly hot on the finish. This is an ample wine that brings a lot of weight to the palate with a focus on dark barrel flavours. The acidity does keep it moving into a long finish. (ECB)15% Drink 2017-2024
\$90 RRP 16
- **Ideology, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Napa Valley***From the Oak Knoll District but labelled as Napa Valley.*
Perfumed, ripe red and purple-fruit aromatics. The palate offers flavours of toast, chocolate and just a bit of sweet caramel. A bit light through the finish, the wine loses density in the close. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2017-2024
\$125 RRP 15.5
- **O'Connell, OCFV Cabernet Sauvignon 2007 Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley**Aged notes of cedar, dried tobacco and baking spice carry the flavours almost of a dessert wine without the sweetness. Not a lot of density on the palate though plenty of powdery fine tannins and just enough acidity to balance. A bit light through an otherwise long finish. Not clear how much more this wine will develop though it is likely on an ageing plateau to last for a few more years. (ECB)14.2% Drink 2012-2019
\$165 RRP 15.5
- **Silenus, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Napa Valley***From the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley though labelled as Napa Valley.*
Aromatics of coffee grounds and cedar carry into a drying palate showing notes of bourbon barrel. Rich and generous with a focus more on oak notes than fruit. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2017-

2023

\$100 RRP 15

- **Steele Canyon, J McClelland Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley** 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Malbec, 7% Petit Verdot.
Ripe, generous, dark fruit aromatics accented by chocolate liqueur move into a taut, structurally focused palate with notes of dark chocolate, coffee grounds and rocky minerality. Ample, textural (though not rough) tannins and just enough acidity to balance it and carry it into a persistent finish. There is plenty of oak presence here but nevertheless the palate offers a restraint that is surprising after the abundant fruit aromatics. The oak will likely integrate more with some time in bottle. **GV** (ECB)14.9% Drink 2018-2025
\$45 RRP 16+
- **Trefethen Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley** Notes of toast and dried molasses aromatics through the palate. Coffee and accents of purple fruit. The wine loses density as it crosses the palate even though it does carry through to a lingering finish primarily of toast flavours. (ECB)14.3% Drink 2017-2023
\$60 RRP 15

YOUNTVILLE

- **Hopper Creek Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Yountville** Dusty baking spice with cedar and hints of dried caramel on the nose fall into a very light palate. Not a lot of density here. (ECB)14.4% Drink 2017-2022
\$100 RRP 14.5
- **Rocca Family Vineyards, Grigsby Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Yountville** Dusty baking-spice nose through to the palate. Tactile drying tannins and just enough acidity. Would be served well by food. Reticent. Unclear what else will open up with time. (ECB)15.4% Drink 2017-2023
\$85 RRP 15

STAG'S LEAP

- **Baldacci, Black Label Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Stags Leap District** Aromatics of caramel and baking spice carry forward onto the palate. Fine tannins and just enough acidity. The wine loses density through the second half. Not a lot of concentration here. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2016-2022
\$75 RRP 14.5
- **Chimney Rock Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Stags Leap District** Dusty oak spice, resinous herbs and forest nose through the palate. Red fruit pops from the palate along with dusty cocoa and accents of caramel. Persistent fine tannins and balanced acidity. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2017-2023
\$75 RRP 16
- **Malk Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Stags Leap District** Resinous forest and forest floor with notes of musk and mixed fruit. Accents of violet. Spiced pepper finish. Plenty of acidity outpaces the fine tannins. Not a lot of concentration though approachable. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2023
\$80 RRP 15
- **Mira Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Stags Leap District** Plum skin and cedar aromatics followed by dark fruit and baking spice with notes of dried caramel on the palate. Fine tannins and balancing acidity carry into a long finish. There is plenty of oak presence here with the mouth-watering acidity to wash the palate. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2025

\$95 RRP 16

- **Pine Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Stags Leap District** 77% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 20% *Cabernet Franc*, 3% *Malbec*.
Dense, heavy, dark caramel and toast focused wine. Abundantly ripe fruit underlies the oak presence. A bit sour with notes of smoke ash through the finish. (ECB)14.7% Drink 2018-2025
\$100 RRP 15.5
- **Quixote Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Stags Leap District** Muted cedar and baking-spice aromatics currently. Palate focus on cedar, baking spice, and dried molasses carrying into a long coffee finish. Lots of oak sweetness and spice here. (ECB)15.2% Drink 2017-2023
\$110 RRP 15.5
- **Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, SLV Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Stags Leap District** Espresso and dark toast cloak any sense of fruit here and dominate the tannins as well - there are fruit tannins here but the oak tannins show up first and foremost. Long dried caramel and sweet oak spice fills the palate into a long finish. The wine will no doubt integrate more with age. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2018-2025
\$125 RRP 16

OAKVILLE

- **B Cellars, Ehrlich Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville** Notes of dusty cocoa powdered with nutmeg and cinnamon fill the nose followed by light notes of eucalyptus. The palate is spicy with fine tannins and a mix of dusty iron and gravelly minerality followed by toast, molasses and a fresh crack of pepper on the finish. Finishes a bit heavy. (ECB)14.9% Drink 2017-2025
\$115 RRP 16
- **Bond, St Eden 2012 Oakville** Musky, nuanced aromatics. A sophisticated palate of fine-grained tannins and balancing acidity. The aromatics are expressive, carrying notes of wild cherry, rosemary, and camphor, which carry into the palate alongside bitter dark chocolate, fresh-pop blackcurrant and accents of tobacco through the finish. The palate is chewy, mouth-watering, with a sense of deftly carried, and well-honed brawn. There is a real focus on nuanced, precise craftsmanship and palate density here - this is as much a wine about style as it is about place - though it does show the lighter structure with less concentration of its vintage. Let this age before opening. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2020-2028
\$525 RRP 17.5+
- **Detert Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville** Fresh berries and bramble with more pure red than black fruit carry into a chocolatey herbal finish. Powdery, persistent tannins and a lifting, long, mouth-watering finish. (ECB)14.7% Drink 2018-2028
\$80 RRP 17+
- **Far Niente Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville** 97% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 3% *Petit Verdot*.
Aromatics of dusty cocoa move into a palate of gunmetal, fresh tobacco, and fresh blackcurrant. Bitter chocolate and espresso carry through a long finish into notes of sweet spice with caramel. Wants a bit more time in bottle to integrate and develop. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2019-2028
\$155 RRP 17
- **Gallica Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville** Nuanced aromatics and palate. Seamless with an impressive attention to detailed craftsmanship. Notes of wild cherry, plum, and dusty cocoa accented by gunmetal and tobacco. Lovely, fine tannins and balancing acidity. Lots of concentration and density across the full length of the palate all the way into a long mouth-watering finish. This is a lovely, energetic wine that will no doubt develop further in bottle.

(ECB)14.5% Drink 2018-2030

\$160 RRP 18.5+

- Harlan Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Oakville There is impressive density and strength to this wine coupled with an absolute focus on precision of execution – this is very much a wine of style but it nevertheless carries the hallmark characteristics and flavours of its portion of Oakville. Lightly tactile, fine while persistent tannins and moderate acidity. The flavours here are dense though not heavy; dark and opaque though not brooding. Notes of wild cherry and blackcurrant, lavender, mint, and utterly dark, bitter cocoa. A genuinely intriguing wine. Its weakness rests in the weak vintage rather than the winemaking. Needs time in bottle.

(ECB)14.5% Drink 2020-2028

\$1,050 RRP 18

- Kelleher, Brix Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Oakville Aromatics of gunmetal and blackcurrant. Lightly meaty. Notes of blackcurrant, dark cocoa sprinkled with baking spice on the palate. Fine tannins and balancing acidity carry through a light while persistent finish.

(ECB)15.2% Drink 2019-2027

\$88 RRP 16.5

- Cliff Lede, Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Napa Valley *Napa Valley on the label, Oakville vineyard.*

Nuanced dusty cocoa and blackcurrant aromatics carry into a palate of gunmetal, wild cherry and lavender with an ultra-long tobacco finish. Fine tannins and mouth-watering acidity. This wine wants some more time in bottle to open up and show what it has to offer. A bit reticent currently with nice promise. (ECB)14.9% Drink 2019-2028

\$165 RRP 17+

- MacDonald Cabernet Sauvignon 2011 Oakville Beautiful balance of aromatics to flavour, flavour to structure, structure to length, tannins to acidity, rocky minerality to gracefulness. This is an impressive wine that simultaneously gives a sense of meticulousness and abundant life. Just a beautifully grown and crafted wine. Layers of aroma and flavour - notes of tobacco and earth, a hint of liquorice, black olive and just enough mixed peppers to lift everything. Shows cherry and blossom aromatics through palate but isn't about the fruit. Fine balance and mouthfeel. Ultra-fine tannins and a persistent long finish. Lovely purity here. (ECB)14.1% Drink 2018-2030

\$150 RRP 19

- Robert Mondavi, Reserve To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville *88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot.*

Toasty dark aromatics. Dense palate with all dark notes – blackcurrant, dried herbs, black olive, and a dark rocky minerality accented by iron and dry cocoa all clothed in a body of crushed dark velvet – would prefer a bit more freshness. Incredibly dense and taut palate currently. Allow time in the bottle to open and reveal more. (ECB)15% Drink 2020-2035

\$155 RRP 17.5

- Nickel & Nickel, John C Sullenger Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville Aromatics of toast and tobacco spun through black fruit carry into the palate alongside chocolate liqueur and light iron accents. Fine tannins, balancing acidity and a peppery long finish. Loses concentration towards the close of the palate. (ECB)14.9% Drink 2018-2025

\$110 RRP 16.5

- Oakville Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville Notes of purple fruit, eucalyptus and cocoa with rocky minerality and an iron patina. Palate-cleansing tannins and balancing acidity carry into a long finish. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2018-2028

\$85 RRP 16

- Spoto, Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Oakville *77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc, 14% Merlot, 1% Malbec.*

This is a lot of wine with generous dark fruit and plenty of new oak influence on the palate –

dark oak flavours of toast and baking spice cloak ripe plum and dripping-ripe blackberry. Mouth-watering and lengthy. Oak wins here. (ECB)14.4% Drink 2018-2025
\$120 RRP 16.5

- **Turnbull, Leopoldina Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Oakville**Lots of oak here throughout though there are notes of cedar, wild cherry and even rose in the background. Persistent tannins and just enough acidity to balance it. (ECB)14.7% Drink 2018-2024
\$125 RRP 16
- **Ulysses Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Napa Valley Oakville** *fruit but Napa Valley on the label.* Fresh-picked berries and bramble on the nose become focused and spiced on the palate. Nice herbal and earth notes with rocky minerality across the full length of the palate. The open fruit expression of the nose creates the expectation of a bigger wine to follow but it is classical with good restraint and an impressive sense of precision in the mouth. Beautifully done. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2018-2030
\$180 RRP 18

RUTHERFORD

- **Amici, Morisoli Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Rutherford**A focus on baking spice, toast and light touches of caramel persist nose to palate here. Will likely benefit from time in bottle but oak-focused and muted currently. (ECB)14.7% Drink 2018-2023
\$125 RRP 16
- **Artesa, Morisoli-Borges Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Rutherford***86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 14% Petit Verdot.* Purple fruit rests inside a cloak of toasted caramel and baking spice with a light dusting of cocoa. The nose and palate are both muted currently. Decant upon opening and give it time in bottle. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2019-2028
\$85 RRP 16
- **Frog's Leap Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford***89% Cabernet Sauvignon, 8% Cabernet Franc, 3% Merlot.* Notes of cassis and dried herbs housed in lightly tactile tannins with balancing acidity and a persistent finish. An affordable expression of Napa Valley character with an even balance of oak use and regional, varietal character. Serve with food and consider decanting. **GV** (ECB)13.8% Drink 2017-2025
\$55 RRP 16.5
- **Wm Harrison Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Rutherford***93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Petit Verdot, 2% Merlot.* Dusty spice and cedar aromatics. Notes of wild cherry, vanilla, tobacco and graphite on the palate. The palate is quite taut right now and will no doubt uncurl further with time in bottle and air in the glass. Focused, fine tannins and balancing acidity carry into a long finish. (ECB)14.4% Drink 2018-2028
\$55 RRP 16
- **Jon Nathaniel, Windfall Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford**Muted aromatics of dusty baking spice. Sweet oak shown through baking spice, caramel and molasses dominate the palate into a long dry finish. (ECB)14.2% Drink 2018-2025
\$200 RRP 15.5
- **Patel Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford**Oak spice here plays the primary role for the wine. Also shows notes of cedar and dried herbs with back notes of dripping ripe purple and black fruit. A hot pepper finish. Persistent, dry tannins and mouth-washing acidity. (ECB)14.9% Drink 2018-2025

\$165 RRP 15

- **Round Pond Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford** 77% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 19% *Petit Verdot*, 4% *Malbec*.
Incense and perfume, cedar and dried flowers mixed with crushed rock. Powdery fine while persistent tannins and just enough acidity for a long finish. Give it another couple years in bottle and some air upon opening. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2018-2025
\$60 RRP 15.5+
- **SR Tonella Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford** Fresh currant and cedar aromatics. Toasted spice and cocoa on the palate. The second half of the wine loses concentration for a light finish. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2018-2023
\$74 RRP 15
- **St Supéry, Rutherford Estate Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford** 96% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 3% *Merlot*, 1% *Cabernet Franc*.
Light aromatics. Ripe, generous palate. Supple but light tannins and moderate acidity. Peppery and soft through the finish. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2018-2023
\$100 RRP 15
- **Tres Sabores, Perspective Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford** Perfumed and fragrant. Fresh and concentrated at the same time. Notes of fresh mixed fruit, bitter chocolate and cocoa. Dry, dusty tannins and balancing acidity carry into a long, though light, finish. Pleasant. (ECB)13.9% Drink 2018-2028
\$84 RRP 16
- **Tres Sabores, Perspective Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Rutherford** Perfumed and fragrant. Fresh and concentrated at the same time. Notes of fresh mixed fruit, bitter chocolate and cocoa. Dry, dusty tannins and balancing acidity carry into a long, though light, finish. Pleasant. (ECB)13.9% Drink 2018-2028
\$84 RRP 16
- **Crosby Roamann Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Rutherford** 97% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 2% *Merlot*, 1% *Petit Verdot*.
Notes of incense, caramel, cocoa and black fruit. Baking-spice accents throughout. Fine, dusty tannins. Moderate acidity. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2018-2025
\$75 RRP 15.5

ST HELENA

- **Honig, Bartolucci Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 St Helena** Needs some air to open. Light aromatics. Tactile tannins and balancing acidity. Flavours of blackcurrant with dusty cocoa and subtle notes of tobacco and herbs. Lots of mid-palate concentration though a bit light on the finish. Carries its alcohol deftly. (ECB)15.1% Drink 2018-2028
\$90 RRP 16
- **Napa Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 St Helena** 94% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 3% *Cabernet Franc*, 2% *Merlot*, 1% *Petit Verdot*.
Perfumed aromatics. Fruit-forward cassis and blackberry palate with accents of cocoa and gunmetal. Gets more chocolatey with air. The palate quickly drops off. Light on structure but even so, screamingly good value. **VGV** (ECB) 14.4% Drink 2016-2022
\$24 RRP 16
- **Pellet Estate, Pellet Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 St Helena** 91% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 6% *Merlot*, 3% *Petit Verdot*.
Perfumed aromatics. Otherwise the wine is primarily cocoa powder on the nose and palate with some fresh cracked pepper and heat through the finish. Persistent tannins and moderate

acidity. Concentration falls off through the finish. (ECB)14.7% Drink 2016-2022
\$95 RRP 15

- **Revana Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 St Helena** Perfumed aromatics with hints of blueberry. Notes of cocoa, tobacco, and black fruit through the palate. Persistent tactile tannins and moderate acidity still carry into a long finish. Needs air upon opening. Quite taut still. (ECB)14.7% Drink 2018-2025
\$150 RRP 16
- **Rombauer, Stice Lane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 St Helena** Blueberry and violet aromatics. Taut, focused, structural palate. Hints of cocoa and tobacco but the wine needs time in bottle to reveal more. Good structural focus and length will likely improve in bottle. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2018-2025
\$90 RRP 16+
- **Saint Helena Winery, Sympa Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 St Helena** 97% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 3% *Petit Verdot*.
Perfumed, floral aromatics. Structural focused palate with persistence. Rather tannins driven currently. Needs time in bottle to open and reveal more. Moderate, acidity. Notes of cocoa. Hints of purple fruit peeking through. Though there are plenty of tannins the finish drops off in a way that makes the actual ageing potential unclear. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2018-2023
\$110 RRP 15.5+
- **Spottswoode Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 St Helena** 88% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 8% *Cabernet Franc*, 4% *Petit Verdot*.
Notes of blackcurrant with blossom and a stony freshness. Pretty and succulent while still firm and nuanced, and taut currently. The structure promises good ageing potential and nice development with time in bottle. Persistent, fine tannins and balancing acidity. Fine balance and mouthfeel. (ECB)13.9% Drink 2020-2035
\$185 RRP 18+
- **Young Inglewood Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 St Helena** Floral aromatics of violet and hothouse blossoms - large, exuberant blooms. Generous dark fruit with herbal accents and a long chocolate-liqueur finish. Tactile tannins. Moderate acidity. Will open with air and likely improve with a couple years in bottle. (ECB)14.6% Drink 2018-2024
\$90 RRP 15.5+

CALISTOGA

- **Coup de Foudre Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Calistoga** 92% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 8% *Petit Verdot*.
Aromatics of violet blossoms, dark fruit and cocoa. Taut oak-driven palate. Notes of baking spice. Soft through the finish. Moderate acidity. (ECB)14.6% Drink 2017-2022
\$95 RRP 15
- **Kelly Fleming Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Calistoga** Subtle aromatics of plum skin and a refreshing olive accent. Nice inclusion of herbal notes through the palate alongside fresh purple and black fruit and hints of floral notes. Rocky minerality throughout. Lightly textural mouthfeel. Good balance of oak to fruit to regional expression. Pleasant and pretty but a little light on concentration and density. Decant upon opening. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2018-2028
\$125 RRP 16.5+
- **Kenefick Ranch, Chris's Cuvée Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Calistoga** 90% *Cabernet Sauvignon*, 8% *Petit Verdot*, 2% *Malbec*.
Black plum with a focus on plum skin and pit blended through with baking spice and a sprinkle of cocoa. Cocoa and chocolate liqueur become more apparent through the finish. Tactile tannins, moderate acidity. Decant upon opening. (ECB)15.1% Drink 2017-2025

\$65 RRP 16

- **Venge, Bone Ash Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Calistoga** Dark-note, introspective aromatics and palate. Layers of flavour here, all darker – dark-rock minerality, black plum skin, integrated spice, violet perfume. Ultra-fine, persistent tannins and balancing acidity into a persistent finish. Needs time in bottle and air upon opening. Intriguing. (ECB) 14.8% Drink 2019-2028
\$105 RRP 17.5+

MOUNT VEEDER

- **Bell, Long Table Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Mount Veeder** Rich but not overdone aromatics of cooked dark fruits integrated with light spice and bramble. Notes of dusty earth appear on the palate. Taut palate currently with moderate while persistent acidity. Will likely evolve and show more with a bit of time in bottle. (ECB) 14.4% Drink 2017-2025
\$150 RRP 15.5+
- **The Hess Collection, The Lion Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Mount Veeder** 94% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Malbec.
Aromatics of violet and plum blossom with plum carry onto a palate of tobacco and dusty crushed rock. Tactile, persistent tannins with moderate acidity carry into an extended, lightly peppery finish. (ECB) 14.5% Drink 2018-2025
\$175 RRP 15.5
- **Mount Veeder Winery, Rosenquist Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Mount Veeder** Generous aromatics of mixed cooked fruits shift to earthy, herbal and oak notes on the palate. The palate is more restrained than the aromatics would seem to imply. Notes of cocoa, gunmetal and dusty crushed rocks. Tactile tannins and balancing acidity. A bit peppery through the finish. Needs air upon opening. (ECB) 15% Drink 2018-2025
\$100 RRP 15
- **Mt Brave Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Mount Veeder** 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 3% Malbec.
Subtle, dusty sweet spice and earth aromatics roll into a big, juicy, dark-fruit palate. Lots of juicy, ripe berries – blueberry, blackberry, boysenberry – show up front at the start of the wine, which then tightens into a focused structural finish. Persistent tannins and balancing acidity. Curious how this wine will evolve as it has the structure but opens with such a punch of fruit that I am unsure how the two will marry over time. (ECB) 14.5% Drink 2017-2025
\$85 RRP 16.5
- **Y Rousseau, Le Roi Soleil Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Mount Veeder** Aromatics of exuberant blossoms and fresh fruit. The palate brings out more crushed rock and earth notes on a body of dark fruit and earth dust. Dusty tactile tannins and moderate acidity. Oak has not yet fully integrated and shows as cocoa and spice with hints of caramel. A bit short through the finish in terms of flavour though persistent in terms of palate stimulation. (ECB) 14.5% Drink 2017-2025
\$90 RRP 15.5

SPRING MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

- **Bougetz, Amaryllis Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Spring Mountain District** 92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot, 1% Malbec.
Generous cassis aromatics. Blackcurrant and tobacco with baking spice and cracked pepper accents on the palate. Fine while tactile tannins and balancing acidity into a long finish.

(ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2025

\$59 RRP 16

- Juslyn Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Spring Mountain District 87% Cabernet Sauvignon, 11% Cabernet Franc, 2% Merlot.

Potpourri, blossoms, fresh fruit and forest on the nose with accents of cedar, tobacco and cocoa on the palate. Persistent tactile tannins and moderate acidity. Give air upon opening.

(ECB)14.9% Drink 2018-2025

\$150 RRP 15.5

- Keenan, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Spring Mountain District 93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Cabernet Franc.

Tobacco, herbs and earth on the nose and palate with baking spice and black fruit on the palate. Mountain minerality with tactile, persistent, fine tannins and balancing acidity. There is abundant strength and tenacity to this wine that is placed alongside enough acidity to keep it nimble. A good wine for someone that wants the dark notes and sinewy cut of a mountain Cab with a bit more poise and no heaviness. My mom would love this wine. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2025

\$104 RRP 16.5+

- Smith-Madrone Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Spring Mountain District Notes of dry cocoa, mixed mountain berries and bramble, with an accent of pine and a hint of mint. Ample, persistent tannins are washed through with mouth-watering acidity into a long, fresh finish. There is a sense of rich flavour from the chocolatey notes but acidity and tannins continue to wash and cleanse the palate making this a flexible wine for the table. Really good value here. **GV**

(ECB)14.2% Drink 2017-2025

\$48 RRP 17.5

- Terra Valentine, Wurtele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Spring Mountain District Cassis, tobacco and cocoa nose. Dense and dusty cocoa and earth palate. Abundant drying tannins overwhelm the palate. (ECB)14.9% Drink 2018-2025

\$80 RRP 15

DIAMOND MOUNTAIN DISTRICT

- Coho, Summit Vine Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Diamond Mountain District 93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot.

Earthy and herbal, dark-note aromatics. Juicy, succulent fruit on the palate cut through with gunmetal and iron. Notes of cassis and plum skin with tobacco and mixed earth. Ultra-fine, persistent tannins and mouth-watering length. A bit blunt in the finish. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2017-2025

\$62 RRP 16

- J Davies, Jamie Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Diamond Mountain District Black fruit with ferric notes on the nose. Succulent black fruit and gunmetal on the palate mixed through with baking spice and chocolate. Ultra-fine tannins and balancing acidity. Plenty of sweetness through the finish. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2017-2020

\$150 RRP 15.5

- Frisson Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Diamond Mountain District Aromatics of dried tobacco and herbs roll into notes of cassis and toast on the palate. Ultra-fine while persistent tannins and moderate acidity. A bit light through the finish. (ECB)14.1% Drink 2017-2023

\$70 RRP 15

- Vineyard 511 Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Diamond Mountain District Tobacco and toast with cocoa and plum. Full palate of flavour and a lighter structure. Drink soon. Doesn't seem to

have the structure to age. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2016-2022

\$150 RRP 14.5

- Wallis, Seaphim Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Diamond Mountain District Subtle, earthy, cocoa and cassis aromatics and palate. Intense oak-toast presence on the palate with the tannins feeling primarily from the oak rather than the fruit. A persistent drying finish. (ECB)14.7% Drink 2018-2025
\$175 RRP 15

HOWELL MOUNTAIN

- Ladera, Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Howell Mountain Dusty earth and chocolate on a body of cassis on the nose. Spiced and chocolatey on the palate. Round and approachable in the mouth with soft edges. Moderate tannins and balancing acidity with a lingering, peppery finish. A bit hot on the close. (ECB)14.2% Drink 2017-2023
\$85 RRP 16
- Levendi Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Howell Mountain 96% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Malbec. Dark notes throughout - coffee, chocolate liqueur, tree bark and sap, tobacco. Persistent palate more about how the wine is made than where it is from. A bit soft through the finish. (ECB)14.8% Drink 2017-2023
\$90 RRP 14.5
- O'Shaughnessy Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Howell Mountain 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Malbec, 5% Merlot, 4% St-Macaire, 4% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Franc, 3% Carmenère. Toasty, coffee nose and palate. Tactile tannins, light on the acidity. Lightly rough mouthfeel. (ECB)15.2% Drink 2017-2023
\$90 RRP 14.5
- Tate, Jack's Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Howell Mountain Dusty, spiced, and taut. Reticent currently - fills the palate but doesn't show a lot of flavour variation or character. Drying palate. Light on the acidity. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2025
\$95 RRP 14.5

CHILES VALLEY DISTRICT

- Conn Creek, Volker Eisele Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Chiles Valley District Earthy cocoa on the nose becomes dusty, chocolate liqueur with cracked-pepper accents on the palate. Rich upfront flavour with dry, persistent tannins. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2023
\$65 RRP 15.5
- Nichelini Cabernet Sauvignon 2011 Chiles Valley District Mixed red and purple berries, dark earth, chocolate, and cassis. Fruit-forward palate. Persistent tannins and mouth-watering acidity. (ECB)13.7% Drink 2015-2022
\$48 RRP 15.5

ATLAS PEAK

- Amuse Bouche, Au Sommet Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Atlas Peak 98% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Petit Verdot. Concentrated, ripe, dark-fruit aromatics and palate. More generous on the nose and taut on the palate. Focused, lean tannins and length. Moderate acidity. Long dry finish. (ECB)14.8%

Drink 2018-2025

\$250 RRP 15

- Antica Antinori, Townsend Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Atlas Peak Herbal, almost amaro nose and palate with notes of black birch bark and a dusty spiced palate. Tannins a bit soft on the finish. Moderate acidity. Dry finish. (ECB)14.5% Drink 2017-2023
\$110 RRP 15.5
- Hesperian Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Atlas Peak Dusty, earthy, pine-forest nose and palate. Plum and spice on the palate with a dusty-rock minerality. Tannins are persistent though the finish is a bit soft and light. The flavour concentration is mostly on the front of the palate, then fades through the finish. (ECB)14.6% Drink 2017-2023
\$80 RRP 15
- Jamieson Ranch, Stagecoach Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Atlas Peak Concentrated dark fruit and amaro-herb aromatics. Dark fruit and dry earth on the palate. Dry persistent tannins. Moderate acidity. (ECB)14.3% Drink 2017-2025
\$95 RRP 15
- Lagniappe Peak, Pere Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Atlas Peak 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Merlot.
Subdued aromatics. Dark fruit and black birch with hints of amaro through the finish. Dry, persistent tannins, moderate acidity. Tannins win. (ECB)14.6% Drink 2017-2023
\$75 RRP 15
- Lobo, Wulff Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon 2013 Atlas Peak Fresh purple berries and plum aromatics. Plum and spice on the palate with a bitter close. Concentration wanes through the finish. Persistent tannins and a wash of acidity. (ECB)13.7% Drink 2017-2023
\$80 RRP 15
- Michael Mondavi, M Cabernet Sauvignon 2012 Atlas Peak 94% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Cabernet Franc.
Aromatics of dark fruit sprinkled with earth and cocoa. Flavours of black plum, integrated baking spice with accents of tobacco and cocoa and a crack of pepper on the finish. Good concentration at the front of the palate gets a bit light in the finish. Dusty tannins and balancing acidity. (ECB)14.3% Drink 2017-2025
\$195 RRP 16.5