

TASTING NOTES
FEBRUARY 2020 HOWELL MOUNTAIN CABERNET SAUVIGNON TASTING

St. Clement Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon 1996

This small winery was purchased in 2016 by Huneus Vintners, the owners of Quintessa and Faust. Although relatively obscure, St. Clement is one of the oldest wineries in Napa, producing high quality red wines on prime Napa growing land.

Rated 90 points by Wine Enthusiast, this affordable Howell Mountain cabernet from St. Clement has aromas of black currents, with a herbaceous streak. Initially young and tight, the tannins are softened with considerable oak. When released it was anticipated to age well, with elegance and an established pedigree.

\$50

Robert Craig Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon 2000

Situated at 2,300' of elevation along the summit of Howell Mountain, the estate vineyard enjoys temperatures in the summertime that are on average more than 10 degrees cooler than on the valley floor below. This temperature difference helps provide a longer, more even ripening time for these high elevation grapes which maintain their acidity and structure without intervention. Planted in 1998 on 110R rootstock which fares well in stony soils, the vineyard is showing the vine maturity in the finished wines. The red volcanic and tufa soils give this Cabernet a wild, bramble berry character, coupled with touches of warm stones.

Considered their flagship release, Howell Mountain is the defining wine of the Robert Craig portfolio. Consistently top rated since 2006 at 94+ by Parker, Suckling and Dunnuck, the early vintages were less lauded when released. Initially rated only 87 by Wine Spectator, which states "the wine drinks significantly older than it is. Aromas of cedar, autumn leaves, raisin and sweaty socks. Casis and pomegranate on the palate. Balanced and pleasant to drink but not particularly charming as a wine."

Hence the price of only \$40 for a 20 year old Napa cabernet.

Cimarossa Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon 2004

At 2100 feet in elevation on the Vaca range in Napa Valley, the Cimarossa "red hilltop" Vineyard flourishes in its native and natural setting. The vineyard build-out adhered to one driving force principle—to leave the property's natural surroundings in their most native state. Olive trees commingle with grape vines, as do century old trees that hover in the unlikeliest of places—in some instances, in the middle of rows of grape vines and olive orchards.

Grapes are sourced from a 1.4 acre vineyard block with full western exposure. This is one of our warmest blocks due to the afternoon sun. The berries are hand-picked and this single vineyard wine is aged for 22 months in French Oak, 50% of which is new. With an aggregate rating of 90 points and community tasting notes of 92.5, the 2004 is deep in color with a solid core of black fruit, including blackberry, raspberry, blueberry and cherry compote, with sweet berry flavors coupled with powerful tannins for an elegant, structured wine.

\$50

Club
Rank

8

Bottle #

#1

7

2

3

3

12/21

Cliff Lede Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon 2013

4

Cliff Lede Vineyards was established in 2002 by Canadian born Bordeaux enthusiast Cliff Lede, following the acquisition of a sixty acre estate in the Stags Leap District of Napa Valley. With a focus on producing wines from estate vineyards, Lede tapped David Abreu, considered the best viticulturist in Napa Valley, to replant the vineyards. In 2005, a state of the art, 25,000 square foot winery and cave system was etched into a hillside overlooking the estate vineyards. Today, Winemaker Christopher Tynan crafts Cabernet Sauvignon and Sauvignon Blanc, with the flagship, Poetry Cabernet Sauvignon, sourced from the steep eastern hillside portion of the estate. In 2015, Cliff Lede Vineyards achieved both Napa Green Land and Napa Green Winery certification. 7

The 2013 Howell Mountain cabernet is community rated at 93 points. Opaque ruby in color, this gloriously saturated and impeccably balanced mountain Cabernet is loaded with aromas of crème de cassis, seductive black cherry, and warm black fig. There is a veritable cornucopia of cooking spices simmering beneath the surface of this wine. Notes of smoked paprika, ancho chile, cumin, clove, and cacao all intertwine and soar out of the glass. The dash of Merlot adds a touch of grace by fleshing out the mid palate and lending a seamless, polished finish. Tantalizing notes of sage, rosemary, dry aged steak, and smoked cardamom linger and beg one for another taste. This is a wine of contemplation, as well as a wine of visceral pleasure. -Christopher Tynan, Winemaker.

\$70

Summit Lake Howell Mountain (Emily Kestrel) Cabernet Sauvignon 2014

4

Summit Lakes Vineyard and Winery is a small, family owned and operated winery located high above the Napa Valley on Howell Mountain, established in 1971 by Bob and Sue Brakesman. The distinctive red soils and micro-climate produce distinctive and outstanding red varietals such as Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and of course Cabernet Sauvignon. 6

The 2014 Emily Kestrel Cabernet Sauvignon is 100% estate Grown, produced and bottled at Summit Lake Vineyards. Nearly opaque indigo color. Aromas of black cassis, charred pine cone, sandalwood, star anise, fine cigarettes, and smoked sausages with a satiny, vibrant, dry full body and a warming, elegant, medium-long tar, Chinese 5 spice, and pink peppercorns finish with firm, well-integrated tannins and heavy oak flavor. A silky, mysterious Howell Mountain that will come alive with cellar time. With a modest 88 point Wine Spectator rating, this hidden gem will age well for 3-5 years.

\$85

Pina Howell Mountain (Buckeye Vineyard) Cabernet Sauvignon 2014

5

The Buckeye Vineyard is located on a majestic site high on Howell Mountain at an elevation of 1,900 feet. The cooler temperatures in this area prolong the growing season leading it to be picked last of all our vineyards. The well-drained soils are formed by young basic volcanic rock. The cooler site and volcanic soil base work to make a site that is extremely reflective of the vintage. 4

The Howell Mountain Cabernet exhibits dark currant fruits, forest floor aromas, savory herb components and fine-grained tannins. In warmer vintages, our Buckeye Cabernet dark fruits dominate the flavor profile. In cooler vintages the wine reveals more earthy savory characteristics. Full bodied and rich, this wine is structured and classically aromatic in cedar, pencil and sage brush. The herbal, earthy elements are well developed and seasoned further in toasted oak, black pepper and clove..." With a 91 point rating from Wine Enthusiast, this wine can be cellared for 15 years.

\$100

O'Shaughnessy Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon 2015

2 O'Shaughnessy Estate Winery sits at 1,800 feet on the heralded Howell Mountain appellation in the beautiful Napa Valley. Founded in 1996, the estate encompasses one hundred and twenty acres. Winemaker Sean Capioux has overseen the planting of the vineyard and selected numerous clones of Cabernet Sauvignon and all seven of the historic Bordeaux varietals for this unique property. O'Shaughnessy Estate Winery uses modern equipment to produce non-interventionist wines that are naturally fermented and bottled unrefined and unfiltered. These techniques allow the varietal character and terroir of O'Shaughnessy Estate vineyards to be the stars of the show. 5

The 2015 Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon is dark ruby red with an opaque center. The wine opens immediately with fragrant aromas of violets, lavender, dark raspberry, pencil lead and vanilla. Cassis cocoa, new leather, smoked meat and plum come together with a building mouthfeel full of soft silky tannins combined with focused flavors of dried cranberry, cherry jubilee and wild blackberries. One of the premier Howell Mountain cabernets, the 2015 Howell Mountain is rated 95 points by Robert Parker, with stellar 93 point ratings from Vinous and James Suckling.

\$100

Cade Howell Mountain Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2016

With a shared vision, Gavin Newsom, Gordon Getty and John Conover imagined the addition of a complementary estate vineyard to the valley floor terroir of their Oakville estate at Plump Jack Estate Winery. In 2005, that dream came to fruition in the form of a 54-acre estate, elevated high above the fog line, on the dramatic slopes of Howell Mountain – it would become CADE Estate Winery. Cade is the first CCOF (California Certified Organic Farmers) organically farmed, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold Certified Estate Winery in the Napa Valley. 8

1 The CADE Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon is sourced from four estate vineyards on Howell Mountain, including the CADE Estate Vineyard, Ink Grade Vineyard, Cold Springs, and Eagle Summit. Aromas of boysenberry jam, blueberry compote, wild lavender, chocolate covered cherries, roasted coffee, rose petals ripple through your senses with a kiss of graham crackers and toast marshmallow. Velvety on the palate with a satin mouthfeel with bold skyscraper tannins. The finishing flavors are echoes of the initial aromas, with warm cherry pie, cran-raspberry jam, coco nibs, toasted cinnamon, fresh strawberry and raspberry coulis. This wine is full-bodied displaying archetypal Howell Mountain tannin balanced by an elegant structure, earning a 96 point rating from Robert Parker, 97 from Dunnuck, 94 by Vinous and 93 by James Suckling.

\$110