i-winereview.com

The International Wine Review

January/February 2016

Report #54: The Wines of Mount Veeder

Introduction

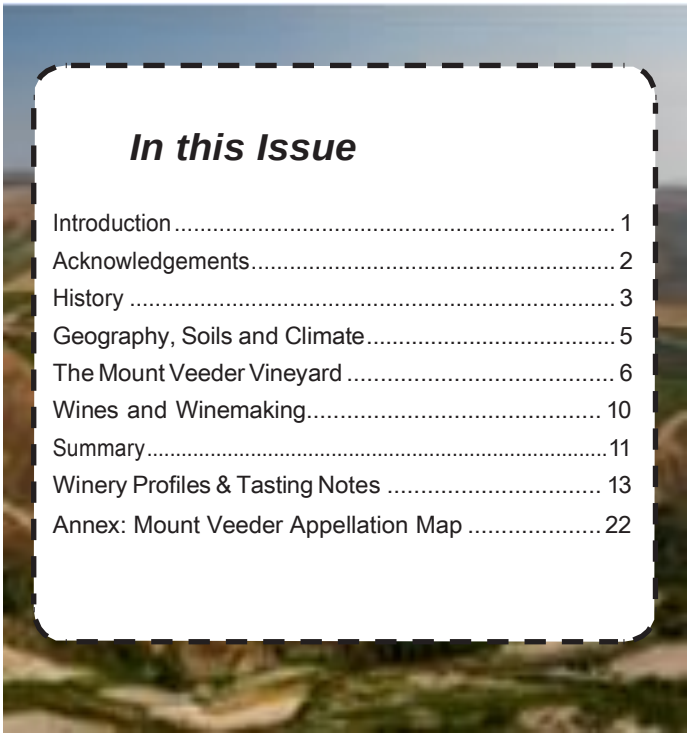
View from the Lagier Meredith Vineyard

The largest of five mountain AVAs in Napa Valley, Mount Veeder is located along the cool southern ridges of the Mayacamas Mountains that run between Napa Valley and Sonoma County. Its 25 square miles of rare natural beauty and diversity have attracted a small contingent of independent spirits, rugged individualist farmers with true passion to produce outstanding wines. Indeed, over the past 175 years, winegrowers of this majestic region have demonstrated unique determination to farm this mountain landscape where many had thought growing conditions were too difficult. Today, Mount Veeder is the source of some of Napa Valley's finest wines, and they are getting better and better as producers learn the secrets of crafting wine in this unique region.

In this, our 54th report, we focus on Mount Veeder and its wines. We begin with a brief history of the region examining the role played by early German settlers and the many talented growers and winemakers who followed. In the sections that follow we examine the geography, soils and climatic conditions that contribute to the unique character of the wines. In particular we identify the steep hillside slopes, exposures and microclimates that characterize the vineyard parcels of Mount Veeder.

The pioneers of Mount Veeder experimented with a wide variety of grapes such as Riesling, Zinfandel, Chardonnay, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. However, it was Cabernet Sauvignon that became king, and today 65 percent of all plantings on Mount Veeder are of Cabernet Sauvignon. As we will point out later in the report, the hillside Cabernet Sauvignon of Mount Veeder is different from that of the Napa valley floor in terms of flavor, density, and over all richness.

Despite being the largest AVA in Napa Valley, Mount Veeder produces less than 2 percent of all its wines. However, Mount Veeder's terroir and wines are unique. Fruit ripens slower than on the valley floor. Yields are usually well below three tons per acre on average, and the berries are small and intensely flavored. The wines often reveal a minerality and earthiness different from deeper alluvial soils. Flavors are generally quite ripe, spicy and concen-



In this Issue

Introduction 1
Acknowledgements 2
History 3
Geography, Soils and Climate 5
The Mount Veeder Vineyard 6
Wines and Winemaking 10
Summary 11
Winery Profiles & Tasting Notes 13
Annex: Mount Veeder Appellation Map 22

Introduction

Continued from page 1

trated with well-defined fruit character. Mount Veeder wines have a firm tannic structure and are age-worthy, often showing their best with a few years' cellaring. Over the years producers have developed ways of balancing acidity and softening the tannins while retaining the unique structure of Mount Veeder wines.

In the final section of the report we provide profiles of the major producers and tasting notes of their wines. Looking to the future, there is little doubt that the wines of Mount Veeder will grow in popularity among informed wine consumers. The Mount Veeder Appellation Council will also continue to attract both new consumers and investors along with new and improved methods of production that will contribute to the quality of these magnificent wines.

Acknowledgements. This report could not have been written without the full collaboration and support of the Mount Veeder Appellation Council. In particular we would like to acknowledge the work of Directors Paul Woolls and Karen Crouse and that of Samuel J. Peters, Executive Director. We also wish to thank the growers who helped facilitate our travels and meetings and so generously received and educated us; we are greatly indebted to you. We express our heartfelt gratitude to Carole Meredith, Samuel J. Peters, and Sean Capiaux for their insightful comments and recommendations on a draft of the report.

Mike Potashnik and Don Winkler

The i-WineReview is published by the International Wine Review, LLC. Our office is located at 6625 Old Chesterbrook Road, McLean, VA 22101. Our email is: info@iwinereview.com Rates for one-year subscriptions are $69 for the online edition and $99 for 1 year combined online and print subscriptions. Commercial subscriptions are also available for $149/year. Subscriptions include exclusive access to all online resources of i-winereview.com. Special group rates are available to wine clubs and wine schools. Contact us about eligibility and rates. Subscriptions may be purchased online at www.i-winereview.com Individual reports are also available for $20. Reproduction of the material contained herein, including copying, without written permission is prohibited by law. Media, wine importers, distributors and retailers may use brief portions of this material in its original form if attributed to the International Wine Review.

History

In The Beginning

SHIPPING.

REGULAR PACKET

Between Napa and San Francisco.

ON and after date the Freigh and Passenger Steamer "ZINFANDEL,"

Wine has been crafted on Mount Veeder since at least the 1860s, with barrels transported by ferry to the Embarcadero in San Francisco. The early settlers were German families that planted orchards and vineyards among the redwoods.[1] Among the wine pioneers were Captain Stelham Wing, who presented the first Mount Veeder bottling in the 1864 Napa County Fair; John Hein of Prussia who planted 18 acres to Zinfandel in the early 1870s; H. Hudeman, a native of Holstein, Germany, who built a small stone winery named Sprout Farm (now part of the Hess Collection Winery); Nicholas Streich, from Baden, who in the 1880s established Castle Rocks vineyard (the stone winery still exists with its original Roman press on the Yates Family Vineyard); and Rudolph Jordan, of Huegenot descent, who established his own estate named Lotus Farm (later part of the Christian Brothers' Mont La Salle) and planted Zinfandel and Riesling. His son, Rudolph Jr, made wine for the Streich's son Ernest beginning in 1900. Jordan, one of the great early Napa Valley winemakers, made vital contributions to California winemaking, including cold fermentation of white wines.[2] Another German, J. Fisher, planted vines and built a stone winery in 1889, which today is part of the Mayacamas Vineyard.

The early 20th century saw continued vineyard development in Mount Veeder. Theodore Gier of Hanover purchased a number of vineyards. He planted over 150 acres of vitis vinifera on phylloxera-resistant St. George rootstock and in 1903 erected a winery named Sequoia with capacity to produce 20 thousand gallons of wine. His son Henry Gier managed the winery until it disappeared with Prohibition. After Prohibition the Christian Brothers purchased the estate and renamed it Mont La Salle.[3]

[1] According to Randle Johnson, "The Germans came up from the South Bay, heralded by Agoston Haraszthy of Buena Vista, who wanted them to come to Sonoma. What he didn't count on was, the Germans were used to slopes. So they got to Sonoma and went over the hill to Redwood Creek in Napa for steeper terrain. They also learned over time that mountain vineyards produce more intense wines and, thus, were worth the extra effort."

[2] According to Mount Veeder winemaker Robert Craig, Jordan in 1911 published a manual, "Quality in Dry Wines Through Adequate Fermentations" that still exists in the UC Davis archives. In it he describes the use of sulfur and bisulfite for settling and protecting fermenting wines; temperature control—the cooling of white wine fermentations and heating of red wine fermentations; and the addition of pure yeast that he had cultured to start fermentation. Jordan concluded that by use of these techniques, "a product can be obtained that is superior to that made in the old 'et alone' way." Source: Robert Craig's blog Uncorked ,July 22, 2009

[3] For more on Mount Veeder wine history, see Ernest Peninou (1965) *A History of the Napa Viticultural District* (unpublished) and The Hess Collection Winery (1989) *Mount Veeder: A Concise History of Viticulture and Enology.*

Mayacamas Winery With a 126 year history, the Mayacamas Winery is the most famous winery on Mount Veeder. This iconic winery was originally built near the summit of Mount Veeder in 1889 by John Henry Fisher, a German immigrant who made Zinfandel and transported barrels by ferry from Napa's river dock to San Francisco. Fisher constructed his winery and barrel room in a rustic stone building that exists to this day. The estate was later sold at auction to cover business debts incurred by Fisher as a result of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, and it then fell into a state of demise until after Prohibition. In 1941 Jack and Mary Taylor bought the estate, named it Mayacamas and planted Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon. In 1968 Bob Travers, who worked at Heitz cellars, and his wife Elinor bought the winery. Their 1971 Cabernet Sauvignon was selected for Stephen Spurrier's 1976 Judgement of Paris, which firmly established Napa as a worthy competitor to Bordeaux. In 2013 Charles Banks and partners purchased Mayacamas with plans to do a major replanting and renovation of this historic property while maintaining the Mayacamas traditional style of winemaking.

Prohibition and its Aftermath

Prohibition dealt a devastating blow to Mount Veeder's incipient wine industry, which at the time consisted of some 20 vineyards and 6 wineries. As a consequence of Prohibition prominent producers had to abandon their wineries and in the ensuing years a new group of owners slowly began the recovery and revitalization of the industry.

Brother Timothy, Christian Brothers Winemaker

The De La Salle Christian Brothers, a Catholic religious order dedicated to education, purchased the Theodore Gier Winery and 330 acres of land in 1930 and set about restoring the winery and building their novitiate under the

leadership of Brother Timothy Diener and Brother John Hoffman. Brother Timothy was winemaker for over 50 years. Of him, Robert Mondavi said, "He was a legend. He was the heart of the industry."

A new generation of producers took over on Mount Veeder after Prohibition. It included the Taylors, who in 1941 purchased Fisher's former estate, renamed it Mayacamas, and replanted 40 acres to Chardonnay [see box]. Under the Taylors and later Bob Travers, it became the first Mount Veeder winery to establish a national reputation for premium wines. In 1950, the Yates family purchased the Castle Rock Vineyard winery and surrounding vineyards formally owned by Robert Striech. Michael and Arlene Bernstein established Bernstein Vineyards in 1964 and Mount Veeder Winery in 1973 and were the first to use the Mount Veeder designation, which they put on their 1973 Mount Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon. They also introduced Petit Verdot to Mount Veeder and were the first to grow all five Bordeaux varieties.

Also, about this time, Donald Hess of Bern, Switzerland, made his first purchase of Mount Veeder property [see box]; Bill and Susan Hawley planted their first vines at Random Ridge [in 1982]; Steve Lagier and Carole Meredith began their small vineyard; and George Rubissow and partner Tony Sargent established their 45 acre estate [in 1986].

Donald Hess. Donald Hess first purchased vineyards on Mount Veeder in 1978 and for more than five decades served at the helm of the Hess Collection and other family businesses around the world. Hess became enchanted with the quality and potential for mountain vineyards in the Napa Valley during a business trip in the mid-1970s. He released his first wines in 1987. By 1989 he found a home for The Hess Collection at the former Christian Brothers Mont La Salle winery on Mount Veeder and added the Hess Art Museum to house a portion of his notable contemporary art collection. Hess retired from day to day management of Hess Family Estates and other family ventures in 2001, having built wine estates in other parts of California, Argentina, South Africa and Australia. Hess produces about 25 thousand cases annually on Mount Veeder.

1990's to the Present

The 1990's began momentously with the creation of the Mount Veeder AVA in 1993, thanks to the leadership of Robert Craig, then with the Hess Collection. As the demand for hand-farmed, intensely flavored hillside grapes grew in importance in the 1990s, several new and larger scale winemaking ventures were established on Mount Veeder. Before then many growers sold grapes to anyone that would buy them. As Mary Yates has noted, "Some of these beautiful grapes added a lot of depth to jug wines!" Recent decades have seen new investors and talented winemakers focused on making the best possible wine from Mount Veeder fruit. Among the new wineries established over the past quarter century are Anthem, Brandlin, Fontanella, Foyt, Godspeed, Hall, Lampyridae, Marketta, Robert Craig, Sbragia, Scaggs, Vinoce, and Y. Rousseau. We pay special attention to five new ventures: Mount Brave/Lokoya, Progeny, Mayacamas, Paratus, and Mithra estate.

Jackson Family Wines has two significant Mount Veeder ventures. The first, established in 1995, is Lokoya, a collection of Cabernet Sauvignons from four mountain appellations, including Mount Veeder. The second is Mount Brave, a vineyard purchased in 2007, that sits above the fog in the northern part of the Mount Veeder AVA at high elevations (1400-1800') in especially rugged terrain. The winemaker for both ventures is veteran Chris Carpenter, who is widely recognized for crafting some of the region's most distinctive cuvées from a variety of microclimates. Progeny is a new (2006) winery launched by the husband and wife team of Paul Woolls and Betty O'Shaughnessy that includes the 17 acre Betty's Vineyard and a 32 acre vineyard on the newly developed Woolls Ranch, one of Mount Veeder's most attractive and accessible properties. The winemaker for both Progeny (and its sister winery, O'Shaughnessy Estate) is Sean Capiaux.

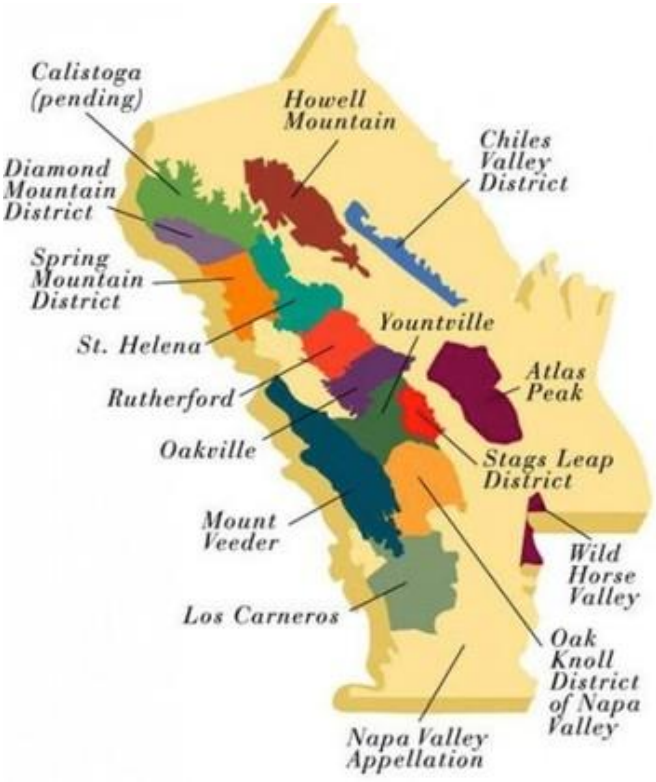
The 465-acre Mayacamas Vineyards is one of Mount Veeder's most historic wineries [see box above]. In 2013 former Screaming Eagles co-owner Charles Banks and partners purchased Mayacamas and its 52 acre vineyard from Bob Travers with plans to replant, expand, and modernize operations.

Paratus and Mithra are much smaller operations. Owned by Rob and Christina Jennings, Paratus has a 12 acre vineyard dedicated to Cabernet Sauvignon. Winemaker Massimo Monticelli makes some of Mount Veeder's most sought-after Cabs. Mithra is a 19-acre vineyard created by Aria Mehrabi. Winemaker Hope Goldie crafts small quantities of very high quality Cabernet Sauvignon. These projects are among the most exciting winemaking ventures in Napa Valley today. They combine some of California's finest terroir for growing Cabernet Sauvignon with the outstanding winemaking talent found in and around Mount Veeder.

Geography, Soils, and Climate

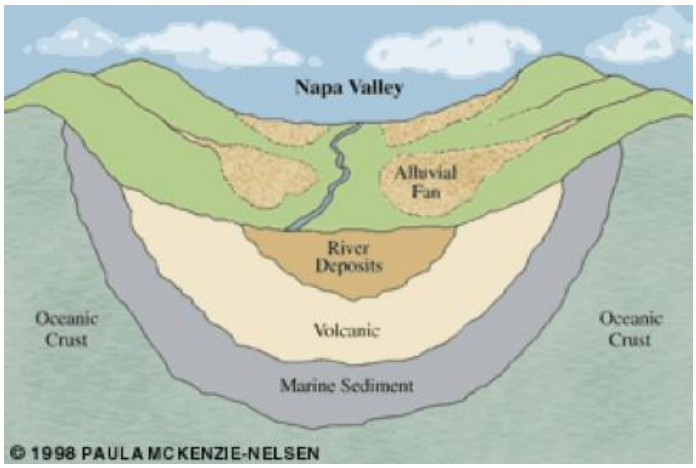
Geography

The Mount Veeder AVA is 16 thousand acres located at the southern end of the Mayacamas Mountains. It extends 13 miles from the border with the Los Carneros AVA at the south end to the Spring Mountain and Saint Helena AVAs at the north. To the east it's bordered by the Oakville and Yountville AVAs, and its western boundary is the Sonoma County line and Moon Mountain AVA.



Mount Veeder is Napa County's highest AVA, with elevations ranging from 400-2500 feet, including the 2677' high Mount Veeder, named after the 19th century pastor of the Napa Presbyterian Church. Elevations are somewhat lower to the south, close to the Carneros AVA. Most of the AVA is dense, natural forest of redwoods, Douglas fir, bay laurel, big leaf maple and several types of oak. The terrain is rugged, consisting of numerous ridges, and much of the land is steeply sloped, approaching 30° in many places. As a result, the land offers many different exposures, soils and microclimates.

Soils



Mount Veeder, like the rest of Napa, lay under the primordial sea for over a hundred million years. That ancient seabed formed the sedimentary rock that underlies Napa Valley and reveals itself on the steep mountain slopes of the northern part of Mount Veeder as what is called the Franciscan formation, a mélange of ancient ocean floor sediment and crust. Further south, it is the sandstones and shale of the Great Valley sequence that are more prominent[4]. Subsequently, an intense period of volcanic activity called the Sonoma Volcanics laid a thick veneer of lava and ash over most of the region, especially the northern Mayacamas where the Spring Mountain and Diamond Mountain AVAs are located today. The volcanic rocks eroded over time, although basaltic outcroppings can be seen at higher elevations in the Mayacamas, and they were covered by alluvial deposits and bay muds on the valley floor.

As a result of millions of years of geologic activity, the topography and soils of Mount Veeder are unusually complex. The soils are derived from sandstone, fractured shale and volcanic dust. The terrain is steep with multiple exposures and extremely well-drained, retaining very little precipitation. The top soils are varied and shallow, 12"-24" in depth, with low nutrient content. As a result of these factors, yields are low, and berries tend to be small with concentrated juice. There's more clay on the lower slopes, and there are pockets of flint and gravel loam in some of the valleys.

[4] The Great Valley sequence is the sand, gravel, clay and detritis from the Sierra that flowed to the ocean and became transformed into solid rock.

Climate

Fog Below the Vinoce Vineyard

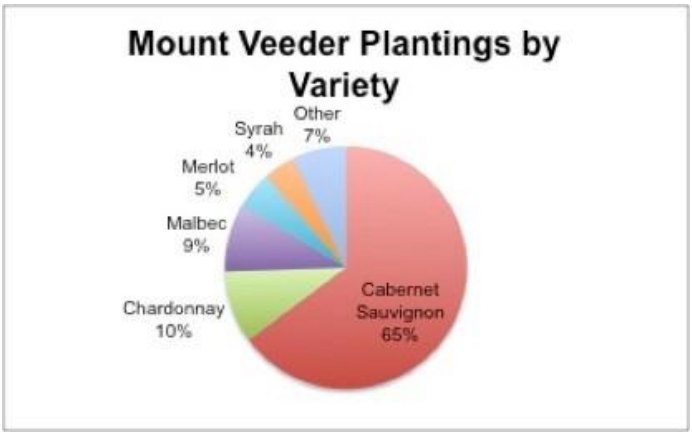
Mount Veeder experiences 2500-3000 degree days during the growing season, roughly equivalent to Bordeaux. In general, Mount Veeder's climate is characterized by cool, moist winters and warm, dry summers. Temperatures, diurnal temperature variations, and rainfall vary greatly depending on elevation and latitude. Rainfall decreases and temperatures increase as one moves from the south to the north of the appellation. During the growing season mid-day temperatures can be 10-20° cooler than the valley floor, although when the valley is shrouded in early morning fog the hills can be sunny and warm.

The San Pablo Bay contributes cool afternoon breezes, especially at the southern end of the appellation. Although summer daytime temperatures are typically lower, occasional temperature inversions can keep nighttime temperatures higher on Mount Veeder than on the valley floor. During the spring, when young shoots are particularly vulnerable to frost, natural cold air drainage keeps most Mount Veeder vineyards free of frost. Late season heat spikes are also less common at higher elevations. In general, Mount Veeder is cooler with fewer degree days than the neighboring Oakville and Spring Mountain AVAs. The moderate growing conditions give Mount Veeder a long growing season and the latest harvests of Napa, sometimes extending into November.

Although the current drought makes it difficult to believe, the historic average annual rainfall is about 50 inches in the center of the AVA, almost double that of the valley floor, which helps explain the giant redwoods that once flourished here. Rainfall ranges from 25 inches at lower elevations to 65 inches at higher elevations. Surprisingly, the Mount Veeder side—the leeward side—of the Mayacamas receives considerably more rainfall than the adjacent Moon Mountain side to its west. The reason is that the moisture laden Pacific air cools as it rises over the mountains, condensing and then dropping on the leeward side.

The drought of recent years has made Mount Veeder growers dependent on the mountain's groundwater, which they tap using increasingly deep wells. Unlike the valley with its uniform aquifer, the supply of water in Mount Veeder is much more spatially variable and less well understood. For the purposes of calculating water availability for winery use permit applications, an allowance of one acre foot per acre is used for valley floor locations, while in hillside locations, which includes all of the Mount Veeder AVA, the allowance is only one-half acre foot per acre.[5]

The Mount Veeder Vineyard



While the Mount Veeder AVA is large, less than 1 percent (about 1 thousand acres) is planted to vines, mostly in small parcels on sloping hillsides surrounded by native vegetation. Twenty-four growers, ranging from the very small (e.g., Lagier Meredith's 4.5 acres of vines on an 84 acre parcel) to the moderately large (e.g., Mayacamas' 52 acres on a 465 acre parcel), grow a number of different red and white varieties. Bordeaux varieties, especially Cabernet Sauvignon, dominate, but Rhone varieties, especially Syrah, show significant promise. Carole Meredith [see box] and Stephen Lagier first introduced Syrah to Mount Veeder. Their success with that variety has led others to follow suit. Scaggs Vineyard, at the northern end of the appellation, has a sole focus on Rhone varieties, especially Syrah. Lampyridae Vineyards, the highest altitude vineyard in Mount Veeder, also grows Syrah. Other Syrah producers include O'Shaughnessy, Rubissow, and Spotted Owl.

However, Mount Veeder is losing its varietal diversity. The low yields and high cultivation costs of mountain vineyards have by and large squeezed out those varieties that can't command premium prices. This led Rubissow, for example, after phylloxera hit in the early 1990s to replace their Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon varieties (which André Tchelistcheff had recommended they plant back in the early 1980s) with Cabernet Sauvignon and other Bordeaux varieties. The trend continues today. After purchas-

[5] The groundwater allowance is determined based on average recharge rates for the aquifer. For Napa Valley, it is estimated that in years of average rainfall about one foot of precipitation seeps into the groundwater basin. For Mount Veeder, that estimate is one-half foot.

ing his property in 1999, Rob Jennings of Paratus grafted over Chardonnay vines to Cabernet Sauvignon, and, Tom Gamble, the new owner of the LaTour Vineyard will most likely rip out the 40 year old, head trained, dry farmed Chardonnay on that site. Cabernet Sauvignon fruit from Mount Veeder commands 8 to 12 thousand dollars per ton, double or triple the prices received for other varieties.

Rootstocks and Clones

Cabernet Sauvignon is the dominant variety grown in the Mount Veeder appellation, but the diversity of terroir calls for an equal diversity of plantings. Thus, a large number of Cabernet Sauvignon clones are grown on several different rootstocks within the appellation and often within a single vineyard.

After the AXR#1 rootstock disaster in the 1980s, almost all vineyards in Mount Veeder had to be replanted using new rootstock. The most popular of them are 101-14, 3309, 110R, 1103 Paulson and the old standby St. George. Which one is used depends on soils and other growing conditions. For example, in volcanic soils water drains very quickly, so vines need a rootstock that's good at seeking out water and doesn't crash when there's no water. St. George is a water scavenger that works well in volcanic soils, but it's also vigorous, so it requires careful management.

Cabernet Sauvignon

In the 1990s, Mount Veeder vintner and UC Davis Professor Carole Meredith proved that Cabernet Sauvignon is the offspring of Cabernet Franc and Sauvignon Blanc. Of course, this humble child is now the main grape variety of Bordeaux's left bank and, also, Mount Veeder, both warm climate zones with cooling marine influence. It produces the long lasting wines for which both regions are famous.

A French nurseryman, Antoine Delmas, first brought Cabernet Sauvignon to California in 1852, and it was first planted in Napa around 1880. Phylloxera and Prohibition took a serious toll on the variety, reducing its statewide plantings to 200 acres. Upon Repeal, Professors Albert Winkler and Maynard Amerine recommended the variety for Winkler regions I, II, and III, climates with a coastal influence. By 1976 at the time of the Judgment of Paris 27 thousand acres of Cabernet Sauvignon were planted. Today there are over 30 different Heritage and ENTAV-INRA clones planted in California.[6]

While there is no census of Cabernet Sauvignon clones planted in Mount Veeder, numerous ones are planted, including Clone 4, which was imported from Mendoza, Argentina, in 1964 because it was believed to be virus-free. Other popular clones include 7 and 8, which both came from the Concannon Vineyard in Livermore and were widely planted in California in the 1970s and 1980s.

[6] See the Foundation Plant Services Grape Program Newsletter of October 2008 for more detail.

Carole Meredith Carole is first and foremost famous as UC Davis' pre-eminent plant geneticist, having joined the faculty in 1980 and retired to attend to her vines on Mount Veeder in 2003. As a researcher, she discovered that Cabernet Sauvignon's parents are Sauvignon Blanc and Cabernet Franc; first identified Zinfandel as the Croatian variety Crljenak Kastelanski; discovered that Pinot Noir and Gouais Blanc are the parents of Chardonnay, Aligote and many other varieties; and helped determine Syrah's parentage as Dureza and Mondeuse blanche. She and husband Stephen Lagier purchased their 84 acre Mount Veeder property in 1986 before the appellation was created but didn't plant their first vines until 1994 and released their first vintage of Lagier-Meredith Syrah in 2000. They grow Zinfandel, Malbec, Mondeuse, and six clones of Syrah--Durell, 174, 383, 470, 525, and 877--on 110 Richter and 1103 Paulsen rootstock. They follow minimal intervention in the winery with no extended maceration and aging in neutral French oak.

Viticulture

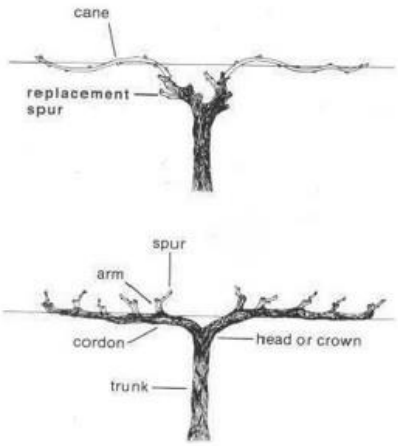
Newly Planted Vineyards at Yates

It's a challenge to grow grapes on Mount Veeder. The terrain is rugged and often steeply sloped with stony soils and outcroppings of rocks. Planting new vineyards requires clearing the land, creating terraces and sometimes blasting rocks. Although average rainfall is sufficient, the soils are thin and drain quickly. Drought times can force

wineries like the Yates Family Vineyard to delay planting or replanting as newly planted vines require more water than established vineyards.

Mount Veeder's steep, rugged terrain requires that cultivation and harvesting be done by hand, an expensive operation. Hillside farming is estimated to cost between one-third and one-half more than on the valley floor, partly the result of the difficult terrain and partly due to the need to treat each site differently. Brandlin, for example, divides its 38 acres into 15 discrete blocks that vary by sun exposure, soils and slope. Most other growers have to do the same, as the steep slopes and undulating hills present very diverse growing conditions.

Mount Veeder is heavily forested, which affects the islands of vines planted in the midst of trees. Tall conifers can shade the vines, while oak trees can compete with the vines for water.



Cane vs Spur Pruning

Infertile soils, often with low pH, naturally limit the vigor of vines. Still, premium producers do extensive cluster thinning to increase fruit metabolism and give the already small clusters and berries still greater flavor concentration. Small berries result in a high skin to flesh ratio, resulting in rich flavors and a firm tannic structure for aging.

Most vines are cordon trained, although Lampyridae's Zinfandel is head trained, and Brandlin's 10 acres of old vine Zinfandel is also head trained and dry farmed. Vineyards like Rubissow have changed to cordon pruning and finds it gives greater consistency of ripeness in its fruit, Paratus is also spur/cordon pruned. Renteria is cane pruned. Renteria plants its vines in its south-facing Tambor Vineyard with and up and down row orientation that facilitates the movement of cool evening breezes while giving good sun exposure.

Canopy Management

The diverse growing conditions of Mount Veeder require precision viticulture, like that practiced at Progeny. Proper canopy management facilitates ripening and tannin development. Removing leaves and opening up the canopy reduces transpiration, which helps warm and ripen the fruit. Allowing dappled sunlight to reach the grapes also helps create flavor compounds. However, the increased radiation associated with Mount Veeder's high altitude poses the risk of sunburn if there are too few leaves. As is common elsewhere, more foliage is left on the side of the vine receiving the most sunlight. Intensive canopy management improves quality and reduces variability.

There needs to be enough leaf cover to protect the fruit yet let in the light. A very cool year may require that the canopy be cleared in the autumn to let in heat and light before the sunlight starts decreasing in intensity. Years ago when picking was done earlier in the season on Mount Veeder, clearing the canopy was a common practice. At Lokoya Chris Carpenter sometimes put a reflective, plastic weave material on the vineyard floor to bounce sunlight back up to the vines.

Water and Irrigation

Community Protests of New Development

Growers in Mount Veeder depend on winter rainfall, natural springs and wells to fill their holding tanks and reservoirs. In drought years, like those experienced recently, their dependence on wells increases. New wells are being drilled deeper and deeper, up to 1000', sometimes to the consternation of neighbors who fear adverse effects on their own wells. Unlike the valley, the supply of groundwater in the mountains is site specific, and Napa County has altered the allowance of one-half acre foot per acre to account for local recharge conditions and the proximity of neighbors' wells.

The scarcity of water threatens both the supply of water for existing vineyards and the permission for new vineyards to drill wells. While the Napa County Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors recently approved the new Woolls Ranch Winery on Mount Veeder, if water supply declines in future years Woolls will be required to reduce operations to available yields.

Like other grape-growing regions in California, Mount Veeder growers have altered their irrigation regime to conserve water. Paratus Vineyards has shown it's possible to successfully produce very high quality fruit using dry farming, but the yields are low and not financially feasible for most growers, as John Derr of Lampyridae discovered when he experimented with dry farming.

Most Mount Veeder growers today employ some form of Regulated Deficit Irrigation (RDI), which carefully monitors

vine stress and waters only when absolutely necessary. Hess employs RDI on all its vineyards and finds it produces higher quality fruit, smaller but with more concentrated flavors. More recently, Deep Root Irrigation (DRI) has arrived on the scene with water delivered underground to the roots of the vine. One experiment on Mount Veeder found it reduced water use by 36 percent.

Fine-tuned irrigation, be it RDI or DRI, requires careful monitoring of soil moisture and vine stress. Moisture sensors at different soil depths appear to be as reliable as pressure bombs, and they can offer precise, real time data to guide irrigation. Systems like eKo Pro allow for remote monitoring of soil moisture, water use, and remote control of valves. The digital vineyard has arrived.

Sustainability

Surrounded by nature, Increasing numbers of Mount Veeder growers and producers are concerned about their impact on the environment. As noted earlier, Mount Veeder vineyards are simply parcels carved out of the forest and brush. Most growers have intentionally preserved their natural environment.

Most growers are working towards certified sustainability by the California Winegrowing Alliance (CSWA), which developed its Code of Sustainability in 2003 with the support of the Wine Institute and the California Association of Winegrape Growers.[7] Mount Veeder's Hess Winery was one of the first to be certified in California, in 2010.

Producers also pursue certification in two other county wide programs. One is the Napa Green Winery Program, a third party certified, voluntary program of the Napa Valley Vintners Association, with the objective of protecting the regional watershed. It works closely with Fish Friendly Farming, another environmental certification program that aims to improve the health of the region's many streams and creeks.

Cover Crop at Rubissow

[7] The California Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Workbook can be downloaded at sustainablewinegrowing.org.

Growers can also obtain certification as organic from California Certified Organic Farming or other organic certification organizations. Organic viticulture is not common in Mount Veeder. However, the Segassia and Scaggs vineyards are farmed organically, and the new management team at Mayacamas Vineyard is converting to organic. Many growers like Peter Rubissow use organic materials wherever possible but are not certified.

The types of sustainable viticulture practices include using non-chemical pesticides and fungicides, encouraging beneficial insects like ladybugs that help control leafhoppers and mites, and planting cover crops to reduce erosion, fix nitrogen in the soil, and provide an environment conducive to organic farming. The Scaggs Vineyard, for example, uses a no till cover crop of native grasses and legumes. Rubissow uses winter cover crops like fava, sweet pea, mustard, clover, and native grasses.

Vintages

2015: The earliest growing season ever with bud break on March 3. There was high shatter and very low yields, about half the norm, but the quality is high. The harvest began with sparkling wine grapes in late July.

2014: One of the driest winters in memory was followed by heavy early spring rains and warm weather with no frost risk. A heat spike in early September speeded up harvesting, and yield levels were high. The drought resulted in smaller berries with excellent concentration and ripeness. Some growers picked well into November.

2013: This was a very early year in all respects, early bloom (about two weeks earlier than 2012), early veraison, and a very early harvest. Weather conditions were temperate except for a late June heat spike, and the drought was only briefly interrupted by mid-September rains. Yields were well above average and quality was high.

2012: A classic vintage with textbook growing conditions—ideal spring bud break, even fruit set, moderate summer weather, and dry weather at harvest time. The wines are concentrated yet elegant with supple tannins.

2011: A wet winter and spring that went through mid-June delayed bud break and disrupted fruit set. It was followed by a very cool growing season and a late harvest—even later than 2010—with autumn rain followed by an Indian summer that bode well for late harvested varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon. Mold and rot reduced yields, but after careful sorting the quality was good.

2010: Spring rains delayed flowering and fruit set, and a cool summer that extended into early September resulted in a late harvest despite some heat spikes in late summer. However, the late autumn was dry and sunny, and while the harvest was late and yields were low, quality was good.

Wines and Winemaking

The wines of Mount Veeder, the Cabernet Sauvignons in particular, are endowed with concentrated fruit flavors and structure that are different from the Napa Valley floor. The fruit ripens slower on Mount Veeder than on the valley floor and yields are usually well below three tons per acre on average and the berries are intensely flavored. The wines often have a minerality or earthy character different from deeper alluvial soils. Flavors are generally quite ripe, spicy and concentrated with well-defined fruit character.

A wealth of microclimates contribute to the nuanced flavors of Cabernet Sauvignon and other varieties. Many wines are long-lived with a complexity that unfolds over time. Mount Veeder wines exhibit considerable tannic structure and age-worthiness Over the years producers have developed ways of softening the tannins while retaining the unique structure of Mount Veeder wines. Indeed, the effective extraction of polyphenolic substances (mainly the tannins and anthocyanins) is critical to the crafting of top quality wines.

The top producers on Mount Veeder follow rigorous methods of winemaking that begin in the vineyard. Their methods are by no means unique or uniform, any more than the vineyards as their winemaking approaches combine both theory and practice---often many years of practice. Below is a summary of the methods commonly used on Mount Veeder, as elsewhere in Napa, to produce high quality Cabernet Sauvignon.

Harvest and Sorting

Harvesting on Mount Veeder is mainly done by hand. The decision of when to pick is guided by numerous variables, including taste (organoleptic), phenolic data on colors and tannins, and Brix. The sugar content (Brix) of grapes at harvest vary from 24 at a traditional producer like Mayacamas to 28 or 29 at the other extreme. Growers often harvest the sun-exposed side of the vine first and often harvest different parcels at different times.

The complexity of vineyard estates often requires growers to perform row-by-row evaluation of grape maturity. This is done by walking the vineyards and tasting the grapes constantly until they determine full flavor, tannin development, and the right "crunch" of the grape seeds that tell when to start hand-picking. The grapes are usually harvested into small boxes and then hand-sorted before gentle destemming and light crushing.

Today, producers generally consider tannin/color maturity (phenolic maturity) a more important mark of grape maturity than sugar. The effects of global warming has meant, however, that in order to get more flavorful, phenolically balanced wines, paradoxically the grapes have to be picked at higher sugar/alcohol levels, because phenolic maturity generally lags behind sugar accumulation. This phenomenon favors cool sites like Mount Veeder which slow down and harmonize the two different maturation tracks.

Because of the diverse growing conditions on Mount Veeder, the harvest lasts a long time, with picking commencing in early September and not finishing until early November. Paratus is usually one of the last to harvest, at about 25 Brix.

Fermentation and Aging

Relatively small (size) open or semi-open top fermenters (even some like those of Mayacamas made of cinder blocks dating back to the 1880s) are used to ferment individual vineyard blocks. Many producers give grapes a three to four day period of pre-fermentation maceration (cold soaking). This gently extracts flavors, color and tannins from the skins. Native and commercial yeasts are used for fermentation. Native yeasts are part of the natural winemaking process and generally contribute more complexity to the wines than commercial yeasts. Fermentation temperatures for dark fruit are usually kept between 75-85°. Depending upon the preference of the winemaker, punchdowns and pumpovers are both used in fermenting wines. After the wine has fermented dry, winemakers may extend maceration for a total of eight to ten days of skin contact. Following gentle pressing in an enclosed membrane or basket press, the wine is transferred to barrels for malolactic fermentation and aging. The top producers conduct in-barrel malolactic fermentation for better oak integration as well as to soften acidity. The benefits are less pronounced oak and vanilla in the wine and the integration of oak spice and fruit character.

Oak Aging

Maycamas' Old Casks

Most producers on Mount Veeder age their wines for a minimum of 18 to 24 months in small new and used French oak casks while a few like Mayacamas use large decades-old wood casks before moving into smaller older barrels. The type of French oak, level of toast and age of the barrel are carefully selected

to achieve the desired oak influences that enhance each wine's evolution while avoiding harsh bitter wood tannins. During barrel aging the wine is usually racked five times to increase clarity, enhance flavor development and further soften the tannins. Some producers like Progeny have been aging their wine for 30 to 36 months in small French oak casks aiming to craft wines of elegance and extra-long ageability. As the results of such long oak aging haven't been entirely satisfactory, they are now experimenting with a combination of small oak casks for twenty-four months and a 600 gallon oval vat for 12 months. The oval vat (which has larger staves than the small oak casks) is being employed to slow down the oxidation that occurs in the long term maturation of wine. This innovation was inspired by Progeny owner, Paul Woolls' visit to Vega Sicilia, which follows a somewhat similar oak regime.

Tannin Management

Managing Mount Veeder's notable tannins is one of the main challenges facing the region's winemakers, a challenge that increases as producers pick earlier at lower Brix and higher acidity in search of more elegant wines.

Tannins are a class of phenolics, organic compounds including anthocyanins (color pigments) that derive primarily from the skins, seeds and stalks of the grapevine. They are many in type, some of which react well with oxygen (primarily those in skins), while those found in the seeds and stalks do not, and thus are less soluble, remaining in the wine as harsh or bitter. Tannins can also be introduced via aging in wood casks. We sense them in our mouths; they contribute texture, harmonious or not.

Traditional producers such as Bob Travers of Mayacamas and others crafted highly rich, full-textured, highly tannic wines which required many years of cellaring before they were approachable. Others like the Bernsteins of Mount Veeder Winery attempted to soften tannins by means of heavy fining of their wines with egg whites—a dozen per barrel. They later blended Cabernet Sauvignon with other Bordeaux varietals that began to be grown on Mount Veeder to make more complex and agreeably textured wines.

In addition to blending different varieties and fining, today's winemakers follow other practices to manage tannins. They intensively manage the canopy to promote early ripening, leave fruit on the vine longer to allow tannins to more fully develop before harvest, and they harvest different vineyard blocks and sides of the vines at different times to ensure greater uniformity of ripeness, resulting in extended picking times, even for a single vineyard. Thorough sorting both in the vineyard and at the sorting table, using modern optical as well as manual sorters, also ensures only the best berries enter the fermentation tank, while green fruit, stems, leaves and raisins are discarded.

During fermentation, aerated pumpovers introduce oxygen that helps bind tannins together and soften them. Reduced maceration times also help control tannins. Gentle, small scale pressing like the small basket presses used at Mt. Brave also helps control tannins. Small volumes allow the winemaker to make more precise press cuts by more accurately determining when the tannins shift from sweet to green. As noted above, the oak regime also affects tannins. The percent of new oak, toast levels, barrel size, racking, etc. are additional tools in the winemaker's toolkit.

Finishing the Wine

The top producers are known for their meticulous blending. Most producers keep their vineyard lots separate until July of the second year the wines are in barrel. They then begin composing the blend for each wine. Some wines are 100% Cabernet Sauvignon or some other variety; most, however, are blends of both varieties and parcels. In view of the rich variety of growing conditions—exposures, soils and microclimates—on Mount Veeder, producers are able to blend lots having a wide variety of flavors and nuances.

Most wines are bottled without fining or filtration, although egg white fining softens tannins without stripping the wine. Most producers age their wines in bottle for a minimum of 12 months before release in order to soften tannins and permit the wine time to evolve and integrate. A few, like Mithra, hold them back for a minimum of 24 months, but many producers are under financial and commercial pressure to release wines early.

Summary

Mount Veeder is one of Napa Valley's finest appellations. While total production is modest (less than 2 percent of all Napa Valley wines), Mount Veeder's wines, especially its Cabernet Sauvignon, are unique compared to those of the valley floor. Mount Veeder fruit ripens more slowly than on the valley floor, yields are relatively low, and the berries are small and intensely flavored. Mount Veeder wines have a firm tannic structure and are age-worthy, often showing their best with a few years cellaring. Over the years producers have developed ways of balancing acidity and softening the tannins while retaining the unique structure of Mount Veeder wines.

The wines of Mount Veeder are very high quality, based on our own tastings for this report and those of America's prominent wine critics. Cabernet Sauvignon is also in-

creasingly recognized as the appellation's top variety and yields the highest return on investment to growers. Mount Veeder Chardonnay is also of excellent quality, although it is being uprooted in many vineyards in favor of the more remunerative Cabernet Sauvignon. Cabernet Franc, Syrah, Zinfandel and other grapes also do well on Mount Veeder in selected sites, but they are only a small share of total production.

Mount Veeder's longstanding reputation as an appellation that yields very high quality wines is reinforced by the new investors and new winemaking talent it has attracted in recent years. However, the small size of most producers means many wines are not widely distributed and are unfamiliar to many wine consumers. The promotion of these exceptional wines is the major challenge facing the appellation today.

The Mount Veeder Appellation Council has an important role in the marketing and promotion of Mt. Veeder and its wines, including sponsoring annual tasting events for consumers, the media and the trade, like their Bud Break Celebration in San Francisco in April; Mount Veeder on the Road, programmed for Santa Barbara and Monterey in July; Taste of Mount Veeder, held in August at The Hess Collection Winery; and Holiday Tasting in Yountville in December. These annual events are especially important given that only a handful of wineries in the appellation have tasting room facilities for consumers to visit and taste wines. Annual events like these are useful for educating consumers about the unique qualities of Mount Veeder wines.

Winery Profiles and Tasting Notes

In this section we provide profiles of Mount Veeder's producers along with tasting notes and ratings of their wines. The focus of the wine reviews is the 2011-2013 vintages, which are the current releases of most wineries. However, we also include reviews of some 2014 vintages that have been bottled but not yet released. We also review a few 2014 wines still in barrel, and we include reviews of selected older vintages.

Our program of tastings was organized in collaboration with the Mount Veeder Appellation Council. Our main tastings were held at the wineries during a visit in late October 2015. We also tasted wines at the International Wine Review offices.

We follow the 100 point system in our evaluations, although we do not write up wines that receive a rating below 85 points. As usual, we employ the following scale:

95 and above	A wine of distinction
91-94	A wine of outstanding or superior quality
89-90	A wine of very good to excellent quality
87-88	A wine of good quality
85-86	A wine of fair or acceptable quality
84 and below	Not recommended

We commonly add a + to a point score to indicate our judgment that a wine is deemed to be of higher quality than its point score but is not at the next quality level. That said, we urge our readers to look at our comments that help explain our ratings and provide more useful information about a wine than a simple number.

Anthem Winery & Vineyards Anthem was established in 2009. The team includes winemaker Jeff Ames and vineyard manager John Truchard. Originally from Germany, Jeff Ames began making wine in 2001 for Oregon and California wineries. John Truchard is a seasoned vineyard manager with extensive farming experience that today includes vineyard management services for 25 small high end clients. Anthem produces a Cabernet and Merlot from Mount Veeder and Cabernets from other Napa Valley sites.

Anthem Winery and Vineyards 2011 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($95) 91 Dark ruby, almost opaque, this Cabernet Sauvignon has ripe aromas of blackberry and purple plum with a hint of underbrush. It is ripe, almost jammy-tasting and dense on the palate with good acidity and balance, firm tannins, and a long persistent finish. Drink 2015-2025 **Anthem Winery and Vineyards 2010 Estate Merlot Mount Veeder ($70) 91** The 2010 Merlot displays fragrant ripe dark plum aromas with hints of earth, toast and spice. On the palate it offers concentrated dark fruit flavors, a velvet texture, good balance and acidity, round firm tannins and a persistent finish. Drink 2016-26

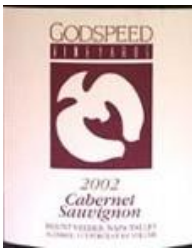
Fontanella Family Winery This family winery was established in 2005 on Mount Veeder by Jeff and Karen Fontanella. It is situated on 26 acres close to the border with the Carneros AVA and is planted with Cabernet Sauvignon. In 2008 Jeff and Karen built a winery which currently also serves as a custom crush facility for several wineries. The winery produces about 3,000 cases annually from Mount Veeder and other AVAs. The talented Jeff Fontanella, a graduate of the University of California Davis and a student of Carol Meredith, has extensive winemaking experience in Napa Valley and is the winemaker. He also consults with a number of premium Napa wineries. Two premium Fontenella Family wines crafted from purchased fruit are reviewed here.

Fontanella Family Winery 2013 Chardonnay Mount Veeder ($36) 91 The 2013 Chardonnay offers aromas of chirimoya, pineapple and other tropical fruits. The palate also offers tropical fruit flavors with notes of vanilla and a creamy mouth feel. A lovely, elegant wine. **Fontanella**

Family Winery 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($58) 92 The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, sourced from three different vineyards, is an opulent wine revealing aromas of graphite with hints of violet and dark earth. It is silky smooth on the attack with lovely purity of cassis and black fruit flavor, superb mouth feel and a clean long finish.

Foyt Family Wines This family winery was created by AJ Foyt's son and grandson (both former racecar drivers themselves) to pay tribute to the famed race car driver AJ Foyt. The wines are made in small quantities by veteran winemaker Tom Meadowcroft. In keeping with the family heritage, Foyt has a tasting room in Indianapolis.

Foyt Wines 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Mount Veeder ($100) 92 Notes of red cherry and fruit cake on the nose are followed by a soft attack and a silky elegant mouth feel. Polished and beautifully balanced, it offers good acidity and freshness, round tannins and a pleasant finish. Drink 2015-2025



Godspeed Vineyards This artisan grower on Mount Veeder is the project of acclaimed architect Larry Stricker. With a vineyard at 900' to1500' in altitude, the estate has sold fruit to Robert Craig, William Hill, Y Rousseau and other wineries. Since 1990 Larry Stricker has been bottling half of his fruit under his own label. Godspeed produces three wines: Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Trinity, a proprietary red of Malbec, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. Godspeed typically holds its Cabernet Sauvignon back for 5+ years before release.

Godspeed Vineyards 2012 Chardonnay Mount Veeder ($35) 89 The medium yellow Godspeed Chardonnay offers light nutty vanilla scents, and is full on the palate with flavors of butterscotch, tropical fruit and spice. It is nicely balanced with good acidity and has a long finish. **Godspeed Vineyards 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($69) 90+** The 2010 Godspeed Cabernet Sauvignon reveals spicy black currant fruit of moderate intensity and flavor. Fruit forward in character, it offers dry and spicy flavors of graphite and minerals with considerable tannic grip. Drink 2017-2027 **Godspeed Vineyards 2009 Trinity Napa Valley ($50) 89** This proprietary red is a soft and perhaps overly ripe wine with a mature nose offering a lush attack of prune-like flavors, with hints of cherry and dark berries. Drink now.

Hess Collection. The Hess Collection is owned by Hess Family Estates, one of the premier family-owned companies in the world of wine. Donald Hess, a Swiss and the founder of the company, began developing the winery on the slopes of Mount Veeder in 1978, completing the purchase of 900 acres in 1982. After years of careful preparation, the first wines were released in 1987 to critical acclaim. Since then, the Hess Collection has been synonymous with Mount Veeder, producing some of Napa Valley's finest and most affordable Cabernet Sauvignon. More recently, the Hess Collection also begun producing a wide variety of medium-priced varietal wines in its Small Block Series. In addition to his wines, Donald Hess is recognized for his art collection, located at the winery on Mount Veeder, considered one of the finest in the world in private hands.

Hess Collection 2013 Chardonnay Mount Veeder ($40) 90 The 2013 Hess Collection Chardonnay has a silky mouth feel and flavors of orchard and stone fruit with a hint of lemon and vanilla spice. it is perfectly balanced with intensity of flavor and a long finish. **The Hess Collection 2013 Pinot Gris Small Block Series Mount Veeder ($28) 89** The Pinot Gris is fresh and fruity with hints of citrus and herbs. Ripe and round on the palate, it has good balance and acidity and a pleasant finish. **Hess Collection 2013 Gruner Veltliner Small Black Series Mount Veeder ($28) 88** The 2013 Gruner Veltliner Small Block Series offers yellow fruit, hints of flowers and a light herbal nose with good acidity. It is a fresh and drinkable wine with light varietal character. **Hess Collection 2013 Albariño Small Block Series Mount Veeder ($28) 88** The Albariño is full in the mouth with reticent aromas of white fruit with a hint of peach, pear and apple. It is nicely balanced with good freshness and a pleasant finish. Not unlike the Grüner Veltliner in style. **The Hess Collection 2013 Viognier Small Block Series Mount Veeder ($28) 89** This Viognier displays a spicy nose of white pepper with a hint of vanilla bean, soft bruised apple and melon flavors. It is nice and crisp with a pleasant vibrant finish. **The Hess Collection 2011 Auction Lot 11 Small Block Series Mount Veeder ($55) 90+** The Auction Lot 11 offers spicy aromas of black currants, plum and toasted oak. It is soft on the palate, medium weight with round firm tannins, and a pleasant finish. Very drinkable. **The Hess Collection 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($55) 91** A blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon and 20% Malbec, this bottling exhibits an opaque ruby color with ripe, dark and sweet aromas of cassis. It has ripe concentrated flavors, a full-mouth feel, and a long persistent mouth feel. **The Hess Collection 2012 19 Black Mountain Cuvee Mount Veeder ($38) 92+** This is a stand out-cuvée composed of 60% Malbec, 30% Cabernet Sauvignon and 10% Syrah. Opaque ruby in color, it is fruit forward with very rich black currant and cassis fruit on the nose. It is nicely concentrated on the palate with good

balance and acidity, polished firm tannins and a long finish. Drink 2015-2025 **The Hess Collection 2012 Malbec Mt.Veeder ($55) 91+** This 100% Malbec offers a pleasant spicy black raspberry nose. Fruit forward and densely packed, it has gobs of fruit flavor and is nicely polished with good concentration, round firm tannins and a pleasant finish. Among the finest Malbecs tasted in California. Drink 2015-25

Kukeri Wines These wines are produced by winemaker Petar Kirlov , a young winemaker from Bulgaria who crafts the wines at Meadowcroft Winery. These wines are well made and delicious but are produced in tiny quantities with limited distribution.

Kukeri Wines 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($89) 90 The 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of blackberry and cassis with hints of smoke and vanilla. Aged in 60% new French oak, it is silky smooth and rich tasting on the attack with firm round tannins and a persistent and elegant finish.

Lagier Meredith Vineyard Steve Lagier and Carol Meredith are a husband and wife team that began their small, 4.5 acre Mount Veeder vineyard back in 1986. At the time, Steve served as winemaker at Robert Mondavi Winery and Carole was a professor at the University of California, Davis. Following their passion for Rhone wines, they planted four acres of Syrah in 1994 followed by Mondeuse and other unusual varieties. Their first commercial vintage was produced in 1998 and released in 2000. Lagier Meredith wines are fresh and fruit forward stylistically and well made. Their Syrahs are among California's most age worthy. Annual production is about 900 cases in a good year.

Lagier Meredith Vineyard 2012 Mondeuse Mount Veeder ($42) 90 This wine is made of the Mondeuse grape, an ancient dark-berried grape native to eastern France and the Savoie region, in particular. The wine exhibits an opaque color with aromas of dark plum. It has concentrated red flavors on the palate with earth nuances. It is nicely balanced with good acidity and firm tannins. Drink 2017-2025. **Lagier Meredith Vineyard 2012 Syrah Mount Veeder ($48) 91** This Syrah offers meaty and herbal scents with hints of plum and earth on the attack. It is nicely balanced with good acidity and flavors of dark chocolate and dark berries on the palate. It is nicely structured with firm round tannins, and a pleasant finish. **Lagier Meredith Vineyard 2013 Tribidrag Mount Veeder ($45) 90** Tribidrag- the original Croatian word for Zinfandel-- is a 100% Zinfandel offering red berry fruit. dark plum, and floral notes on the nose. It has a spicy sweet attack, elegant mouth feel with good, albeit light flavor, high natural acidity and a crisp finish. The 15.3 alcohol is surprising since the wine is nicely balanced.

Lampyridae Vineyards A 35 acre farm owned by John and Ashley Derr, this is the highest altitude vineyard on Mount Veeder, with one block reaching 2510'. The Derrs have 11 acres of vineyards mainly planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and sell most of it to Beringer for its Single Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder. Lampriydae also produces a delicious 100% Cabernet Sauvignon called Communication Block. The profits from the sale of this wine are contributed to Napa Valley Kids Connect, founded by Ashley Derr and another mom in 2011. The non-profit is dedicated to enriching the lives of Napa Valley children with motor and communication difficulties. http://www.napavalleykidsconnect.org/

Lampyridae Vineyards 2012 Communication Block Mount Veeder ($100) 91 This 100% Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits ripe dark plum with red cherry notes on the nose. It has a silky mouth feel with black currant fruit, good density of flavor, firm tannins and a long dry finish. Needs time as it is restrained at this stage of development. Drink 2018-2028. **Lampyridae Vineyards 2012 Syrah Mount Veeder ($65) 92** The Lampyridae 2012 Syrah displays spicy black tar, blackberry aromas and flavors with chocolate and roast meat. It is full and lush on the palate with moderate acidity, firm tannins, and a rich long finish. The wine has 15.5 alc but is beautifully balanced.

Lokoya This winery owned by Kendall Jackson since 1995 produces four terroir-driven wines from four mountains including a superb Cabernet Sauvignon from Mount Veeder. The wines are crafted by Chris Carpenter (shown here) who also makes the wines of Mt. Brave on Mount Veeder, La Jota on Howell Mountain and Cardinale in Oakville. The Lokoya Mount Veeder is sourced from a small volcanic block from the Veeder Peak Vineyard situated at 1,800 ft. Lokoya wines require many years of bottle aging before they reach their ideal drinking period.

Lokoya 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($350) 98 This is an extraordinary wine, one of four in the series

which celebrates Napa's mountain vineyards. The wine is super elegant and packed with layers of flavors, mostly black fruit with notes of tar, licorice, and violets. The mouth feel is incredibly silky smooth and refined despite the firm, young tannins. Superb!

Mayacamas Vineyards Located near the summit of Mount Veeder, Mayacamas Vineyards consists of 52 acres planted on mountainsides ranging from 1500 to 2400' above sea level with west and south facing exposures. In July 2013 Mayacamas was purchased by Charles Bank and his wife Ali in partnership with Jay Schottenstein and his son Joey. Andy Erickson and Annie Favia lead the winemaking and viticulture team. The next incarnation of Mayacamas, Mr. Banks hopes, will run not only more efficiently but more sustainably. To manage the vineyard, he hired Annie Favia, a viticulturist who is Mr. Erickson's wife. She in turn hired Phil Coturri, who specializes in organic viticulture, to oversee the replanting. Both assert that they will farm Mayacamas organically, as Mr. Travers did not. At the winery's request, the wines reviewed here do not include ratings since most were produced under previous ownership.

Mayacamas Vineyards 2013 Chardonnay Mount Veeder ($45) NR This Chardonnay offers floral aromas with a hint of pear. It is silky on the palate revealing partial malolactic fermentation and perfectly integrated oak with a long persistent finish. **Mayacamas Vineyards 2008 Chardonny Mount Veeder NR** The 2008 Chardonnay displays aromas of butterscotch, honeysuckle and minerals. It is rich and complex on the palate revealing light oxidation, earthy notes with hints of hazelnut and mushroom. It is very long on the finish. **Mayacamas Vineyards 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon ($90) NR** The 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon is a youthful wine displaying aromas of red and black cherry with cassis highlights. On the palate it has good acidity and freshness of fruit with lean bold tannins. **Mayacamas Vineyards 2000 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder NR** The 2000 Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits a fragrant nose with complex flavors of forest floor, dark chocolate, and hints of black raspberry. It shows lots of sweet fruit, round full firm tannins and layers of sweet and expressive dark fruit. **Mayacamas Vineyards 1994 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder NR** The 1994 Cabernet Sauvignon displays hints of mushroom, sweet dark fruit, and a drop of balsamic. It has an earthy forest floor character with excellent structure, acidity and tannin.

Meadowcroft Wines is owned by veteran vineyard manager Tom Meadowcroft (shown here), who purchased his 40-acre estate in 2000. After re-planting 2.5 acres of phyloxera-infested vineyards with Cabernet Sauvingon, Zinfandel and Petite Syrah, he produced his first vintage in 2004. Tom became interested in wines working the harvest in Bordeaux back in 1979. He subsequently worked in wineries in Washington State and Napa Valley. He attended UC Davis and Napa College before becoming a vineyard manager for several Napa and Sonoma properties. Petar Kirilov, a young Bulgarian winemaker helps produce the wines and does a fine job. See also his Kukeri wines.

Meadowcroft Wines 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon- Estate Grown Mount Veeder ($70) 90 The 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of black currant, cassis and plum. It is soft on the attack with spicy toasted oak and notes of tobacco. Moderately lush, it is rather dry on the mid-palate with firm tannins and a persistent finish. Drink 2017-2025.

Meadowcroft Wines 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate Grown Mount Veeder ($65) 91 The 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon is more concentrated and flavorful than the 2011 with aromas and flavors of black currant, spice, toasted oak, graphite, espresso, and tobacco. Still quite young, it has a soft texture, elegant mouth feel and firm tannins that need time to evolve. Best from 2020-2030

Mithra Winery The Mithra Estate Vineyard on Mount Veeder consists of 19 acres planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. Established in 2006 by California real estate entrepreneur Aria Mehrabi, Mithra is now in its seventh vintage. While most of its grapes are sold to other producers, Mithra retains the best fruit to craft small quantities of very high quality Cabernet Sauvignon. The wines are made with the help of Hope Goldie, winemaker at Napa Valley's Darioush Daruse Vineyard. The wines reviewed here, including the newly bottled 2013 vintage are outstanding, albeit a little pricey. They are currently only sold to the winery's mailing list.

Mithra Vineyard 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($190) 93 The 2012 Mithra is a blend of 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc and 5% Malbec. It displays a dark ruby color and fragrant aromas of graphite, blackberries, cassis and toasted oak. On the

palate it reveals superb density of dark fruit flavors, a silky and elegant texture, round firm tannins and a persistent finish. Aged for 20 months in 80% new and 20% used French oak. **Mithra Vineyard 2009 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($190) 93** The 2009 is equally rich and flavorful. It offers ripe black fruit a rich, dark, charred nose, and cracked pepper. It is silky smooth on the attack, with concentrated graphite and cassis flavors, a syrupy texture and outstanding extract on a very long finish.

Mt. Brave Established by Kendall Jackson in 2007 on vineyards previously owned by Chateau Potelle, Mt. Brave produces intense and complex wines from this high altitude vineyard situated above the fog line, ranging from 1400 to 1800'. The high altitude keeps midday temperatures cooler than in the valley while being above the fog line provides longer daily exposure of grapes to sun light. The vineyard also has great variability with more than 30 distinct blocks processed during fermentation. The talented Chris Carpenter, a Chicago native and graduate of UC Davis, serves as director of winemaking. He also crafts the wines at Lakoya, La Jota, Cardinale and other Jackson Family prestige estates.

Mt. Brave 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($75) 92 The Cabernet Sauvignon displays an opaque ruby color and aromas of lovely black fruit and spice. On the palate it reveals deep concentrated flavors with a silky texture and firm round tannic grip. It has superb mouth feel and is not the least bit aggressive. **Mt. Brave 2012 Merlot Mount Veeder ($75) 92** The Merlot is dark and juicy. It is rich and full in the mouth with rich dark ruby and black cherry flavors and hints of chocolate. It is a Cabernet drinker's Merlot offering big black fruit flavors and firm tannins on a long finish. **Mt. Brave 2012 Malbec Mount Veeder ($75) 93** This 2012 Malbec is simply magnificent. It displays a meaty nose with hints of earth and black fruit. It has sweet and pure blackberry fruit flavors on the palate with considerable extraction and great length.

Mount Veeder Magic Vineyards Karen Crouse is owner and grower of this 16 acre estate primarily planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and small amounts of Merlot and other varieties. The vineyard, which consists of seven different soil types, is sustainably farmed with yields usually below 3 tons per acres. It's also one of Mount Veeder's most picturesque. Yields do not exceed 2 tons per acre. This property utilizes a leading edge irrigation monitoring system to maximize water usage. The Cabernet Sauvignon reviewed for this report is outstanding. Fontenella makes their wines.

Mount Veeder Magic 2012 Cab Mount Veeder ($70) 94 One of the finer Cabernets tasted for this review. Opaque ruby in color, it is dense and concentrated with aromas of black currant and cassis that are mirrored on the palate with loads of spice. Soft and round on the palate, it has firm tannins, superb balance, and a long finish. A gorgeous mountain wine that will provide pleasurable drinking in years to come. Drink best 2018-30

Mount Veeder Winery Michael and Arlene Bernstein discovered Mount Veeder in the 1960s and used it as a rustic retreat. In the ensuing years they transformed the property's prune orchard into a vineyard. The debut wine from the Mount Veeder Winery was a 1973 Cabernet Sauvignon. Mount Veeder Winery expanded to three vineyards subsequently. In 1989 Agustin Huneeus, then the owner of Franciscan Estates, purchased Mount Veeder Winery. Janet Myers is winemaker and Matt Ashby serves as Vineyard Manager. The vineyards are planted with five Bordeaux varietals.

Mount Veeder Winery 2012 Cabernet Franc Mount Veeder ($50) 89 The Cabernet Franc has a lovely palate of dark berry fruit with good intensity of flavor, firm round tannins and a long and rather dry finish. **Mount Veeder Winery 2012 Reserve Red Blend Mount Veeder ($90) 93** The 2012 Mount Veeder Reserve is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petite Verdot and Malbec. It is a bold and flavorful wine offering aromas and flavors of ripe and spicy dark berry fruit. On the palate it reveals rich, lush and concentrated flavors, perfect balance and a persistent finish. A beauty.

O'Shaughnessy Estate Winery Betty O' Shaughnessy Woolls and Paul Woolls, are the proprietors of this winery which produces wines from Howell Mountain , Oakville and Mount Veeder. The Mount Veeder wines are sourced from the steeply terraced, very low yielding Betty's Vineyard, which has six blocks of Cabernet Sauvignon, clones 7, 8, and 337. Sean Capiaux, who also makes Progeny for the Woolls, serves as winemaker at the O'Shaughnessy Estate Winery. O'Shaughnessy produces about 1,500 cases of its stunning Cabernet Sauvignon, reviewed here.

O'Shaughnessy Winery 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($100) 93 Virtually opaque ruby in color, the 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon offers aromas of crème de cassis and smoky mesquite on the nose. On the palate it has a soft texture with concentrated black currant and cassis flavors. Perfectly balanced with good acidity, firm round tannins and a long finish. Drink 2018-30 **O'Shaughnessy Winery 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($120) 95**

The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon is elegant and intensely flavored with rich cassis, red plum and herbal notes. It has an elegant mouth feel with good intensity of flavor, firm round tannins, perfect balance and a persistence finish.

O'Shaughnessy Winery 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($120) 94 The 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits notable spiciness, with lots of bay leaf and herbs. It also reveals somewhat redder fruit than the 2012 and is lighter and more elegant with a persistent finish.

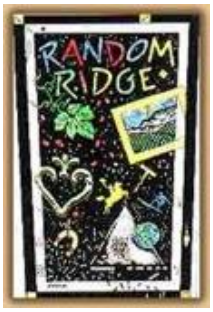
Paratus Vineyards Rob Jennings and wife Christina purchased their 12-acre vineyard in 2001 and created their small, 1400' altitude Mount Veeder vineyard just a few years ago. Today they dry farm 12 hillside acres of Cabernet Sauvignon and produce under 500 cases/ year. They grafted four clones of Cabernet Sauvignon (15, 191, 337, and 338) on to Chardonnay vines. Massimo Monticelli is the winemaker with his brother Mario, while Mark Obserschulte is the vineyard manager assisted by Sam Turner of Vista Vineyard Management. We very much enjoyed tasting three current vintages of Paratus as well as the 2006 vintage, which should last another decade.

Paratus 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($125) 94 Despite the cool vintage, the 2011 Paratus reveals both high acidity and excellent ripeness. It shows lovely black and red fruit aromas with hints of a wild character and minerals. On the palate it shows dry herbs, bay leaf, soft round tannins and a persistent finish. This wine is drinking beautifully now. **Paratus 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($125) 94** The 2012 Paratus is riper than the 2011. It exhibits a dark ruby purple and aromas of roasted meat, earth and dark berry fruit. It has a fleshy palate with hints of pepper, earth. and slate. It has firm dry tannins, and should drink well within five years of the vintage and over the next ten to fifteen years.

PROGENY

Progeny Betty O'Shaughnessy Woolls and Paul Woolls, both originally from the Midwest, are owners of Progeny, which they launched in 1985 with the planting of 30 acres on the crest of Mount Veeder hill. They also own another vineyard on Mount Veeder called Betty's Vineyard. They grow both Bordeaux and Rhone varietals. Sean Capiaux, who has had winemaking experience at Jordan, Pine Ridge, and Peter Michael, serves as winemaker. He also produces his own Pinot Noir wines under the Capiaux label and serves as winemaker and COO for O'Shaughnessy Estate Winery. Alan Pierson serves as vineyard manager. Progeny is made from special vineyard blocks and generally aged 30 months in new French oak. The wines reviewed here are all first-class.

Progeny 2014 Trinity Blanc Mount Veeder ($60) 92 The Trinity Blanc is an attractive white Rhone blend of Marsanne, Rousanne, and Viognier . It reveals aromas of yellow flowers, stone fruit and bright acidity. It has lovely mouth feel, vibrant flavors, and excellent depth. **Progeny 2013 Tinity Rouge Mount Veeder ($68) 92** The Trinity Rouge is a Rhone red blend of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre and Counoise. It offers full dense lush red fruit flavors, a full mouth feel, firm dry tannins, excellent acidity, and a pleasant finish. **Progeny 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Mount Veeder ($125) 95** This is a very polished wine sourced from Woolls Ranch Vineyard. Opaque ruby in color, it is densely flavored with outstanding purity of blackberry, lavendar and cassis. On the palate it reveals a soft texture, rounded firm tannins, and a long persistent finish. Blended with small amounts of Malbec, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Best from 2018-2030. **Progeny 2008 Special Selection Reserve Mount Veeder ($225) 94** The 2008 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve is also a first-class bottling. It's 100% Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from Betty's Vineyard and exhibits intense aromas of red cassis, chocolate and dark fruit. It is big and concentrated on the palate with a lush mouth feel, soft round tannins and a persistent finish.



Random Ridge This is a 47-acre mountain top ranch situated on the southern-most ridge of the Mayacamas Mountains in the Mount Veeder AVA. At 2400' altitude and surrounded by forest and chaparral, it is one of the highest vineyards of the AVA. It is owned by Bill and Susan Hawley who purchased the property in 1978 and planted the first vines in 1982. Their 9.5 acre vineyard is planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc and lesser amounts of Merlot and a small block of Sangiovese. Annual production is about 1200 cases.

Random Ridge Winery 2011 Cabernet Franc Mount Veeder ($30) 90 This Cabernet Franc exhibits an opaque ruby color and aromas of black pepper, graphite and spice. It reveals dense mulberry and black tea on a silky palate with very firm dry tannins and a medium-bodied finish of good complexity. **Random Ridge Winery 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($35) 88** This opaque bottling from a light vintage offers aromas of black cherry with hints of licorice, black pepper, mulberry and blackberry. It is light-bodied on the palate with moderate density of flavor, firm tannins and a long finish. **Random Ridge Winery 2011 Cabernets Reserve Mount Veeder ($35) 91** The 2011 Cabernets is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon yet offers aromas of dark red and blackberry fruit with lots of cedar. On the palate the wine is both flavorful and nicely balanced with a good concentration of black currant fruit and elegance. Drink 2015-2025. **Random Ridge Winery 2012 Fortunata Mount Veeder ($35) 91** The Fortunata is a delicious blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Sangiovese. With hints of violet and cassis, it is ideal for everyday drinking offering smooth spicy red berry fruit flavors and earthy blackberry with a persistent finish.

Robert Craig Winery Founded in 1990 on Howell Mountain by Robert Craig, former general manager of the Hess Collection, the winery released its first offering, a Cabernet proprietary blend, in 1992 and its highly successful Affinity in 1995. Elton Stone serves as President and CEO. Arriving in 2004, he spearheaded the overhaul and reinvestment of the farming, winemaking, and sales structure at the winery. The winery produces Cabernet Sauvignon sourced from several mountain vineyards including Mount Veeder where it cultivates a 26 acre vineyard planted over 20 years ago. Vineyard manager Carlos Mendez practices precision viticulture. Its Cabernets are ripe, dark fruited and spicy.

Robert Craig Winery 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($80) 94 The 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon offers fresh blackberry and cassis aromas with spicy black cracked pepper. It has a velvet mouth feel, firm round tannins and a long finish. **Robert Craig Winery 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($80) 92** Ripe aromas and dark red fruit are revealed in this excellent Cabernet Sauvignon. It doesn't have the breath or depth of the 2010, but it is still drinking nicely. **Robert Craig Winery 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($80) 94** Robert Craig's 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon is a magnificent wine. Opaque ruby in color, it is dense and flavorful, silky on the attack and packed with blackberry, cassis and a note of sweet oak. Among the top wines tasted in this report. Drink 2018-2030. **Robert Craig Winery 2013 Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder ($80) 95** This dream vintage produced a superb bottling with an inky, dense, black and red fruited nose. It is very fresh and youthful on the palate with high acidity, very firm tannins and a persistent finish. Drink 2018-2030

Rubissow Wines The grapes for Rubissow wines are sourced from a 45-acre Mount Veeder hillside estate (18 acres planted) begun in 1986 by George Rubissow and partner Tony Sargent. The property is steep with south-facing slopes, weathered soils and scarce water, and is divided into 25 lots for management purposes, The wine is bottled at a winery in Berkeley. Since 2007, Rubissow Wines has been operated by second generation vintners, Peter Rubissow, General Manager, and Ariel Rubissow-Okamoto, Vineyard Manager. The wines are crafted by winemaker Timothy Milos who started out at Opus One.

Rubissow 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Mount Veeder ($75) 90 The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon exhibits brambly red and black currant fruit on the nose and is light-bodied and elegant on the palate. It offers moderate fruit concentration and density of flavor with soft round tannins and a medium finish. **Rubissow 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Mount Veeder ($130) 92** The 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve is a big step up in quality. Dark ruby and almost opaque in color it displays graphite, chocolate, cola and a hint of dark cassis on the nose. It is silky smooth on the attack with loads of black fruit and graphite on the palate, a soft texture and plenty of structure for aging. Drink 2016-26 **Rubissow 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve Mount Veeder ($175) 92+** This lovely bottling reveals aromas of fruit cake spice, smoke and blackberry. It has dense and concentrated flavors and is lush, round and polished. It has a soft texture yet firm tannins for long aging. Amazing. Drink 2016-27 **Rubissow 2012 Estate Merlot Mount Veeder ($50) 89** The 2012 Merlot displays dark red fruit with aromas of dark cherry and toasted oak. Light-bodied and delicate on the palate, it exhibits good acidity, smooth mouth feel, good balance and firm round tannins on the finish.

Rudd Winery This Oakville estate produces a Mount Veeder Sauvignon Blanc. Produced in concrete tanks, its Sauvignon Blanc is sourced from an 80-acre vineyard situated just north of Mount Veeder at 1,600 ft. Leslie Rudd is the owner, Patrick Sullivan makes the wine.

Rudd Oakville Estate 2013 Sauvignon Blanc Mount Veeder 92 The Rudd 2013 Sauvignon Blanc is a blend of 80% Sauvignon Blanc, 13% Semillon and 7% Sauvignon Gris. One of the few Sauvignon Blancs produced on Mount Veeder, it offers rich flavors of citrus and herbs with a hint of minerality. Fermented 8 months in concrete tanks and aged in a combination of stainless steel, concrete eggs and new oak, it has a honeyed texture, excellent acidity and balance and a long unctuous finish. A terrific wine from a superb vineyard of shale and volcanic ash at 1600 ft.

Sbragia Family Vineyards This family winery located in Dry Creek Valley is now in its fifth generation. Ed Sbragia, the current owner's grandfather, was an immigrant from Tuscany and his father acquired vineyards near Healdsburg growing Zinfandel for sale and home winemaking. Ed studied enology at Cal State Fresno and worked for Byron Nightingale at Beringer before starting his own vineyards in 2006. His son Adam and other family members help manage the vineyard and winery. Having one foot in Sonoma and one in Napa, Sbragia produces a delicious Cabernet Sauvignon from Mount Veeder.

Sbragia 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Godspeed Vineyard Mount Veeder 91 This Cabernet Sauvignon offers rich dark fruit aromas with smoky toasted oak on the nose. It is smooth and silky on the attack with a rich mouth feel, good density of fruit flavors and notes of graphite, minerals and oak on the finish. Drink 2018-28

Trinchero Napa Valley This winery is part of the Trinchero Family Estates, a global company first established in 1947 with the Sutter Home brand by John and Mario Trinchero. Today Trinchero Family Estates represents over 40 brands in the United States and imports from around the world. The company's holdings include 7,000 acres of vineyards. In 2007 the company purchased Cloud's Nest Vineyard on Mount Veeder from which it produces the excellent Cabernet Sauvignon reviewed here.

Trinchero Family Estates 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Cloud's Nest Vineyard Mount Veeder ($70) 92 The 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon Cloud's Nest Vineyard offers aromas of blackberry fruit, smoke, slate and a touch of licorice. It has a lovely creamy texture with good density of flavor, uplifting acidity and overall freshness. It is beautifully balanced and has a lovely long finish.

VGS Chateau Potelle was first established in 1983 by Jean-Noel and Marketta Fourmeaux who arrived from France in 1980. They fell in love with Napa Valley and opened their own winery on the slopes of Mount Veeder, making their wine originally at the Hess Collection. In 2007 they sold the property (not the name) to Jackson Family who converted it into Mt. Brave. The name VGS Chateau Potelle was retained by Jean-Noel, and the wines are made under the direction of Jean- Noel using natural yeasts, focusing on fruit and aging all wine in new French oak. VGS Chateau Potelle produces cult wines from Mount Veeder and other appellations.

VGS Chateau Potelle 2011 Cabernet Franc Mount Veeder ($80) 90 This is a meaty wine of ripe, almost jammy dark red fruit with a nice Asian spice note. The wine is big and soft, lush in the mouth, finishing with an herbal note. Complex and a tad rustic. **VGS Chateau Potelle 2012 Syrah Mount Veeder ($75) 91** Showing notes of charred wood, blackberry, and a touch of sandalwood on nose, this is a soft, lush wine with a lovely mouth feel, firm round tannins and a long finish. VGS Chateau Potelle 2012 Zinfandel Mount Veeder ($65) 88 A big dense wine with dark plum fruit flavor. Ripe and concentrated with crisp acidity on the mid palate and a long persistent finish. It's earthy and big in the mouth.

Vinoce Vineyards. The 24 acre Vinoce vineyard is owned by winemaker Brian and Lori Nuss, who planted the vineyard in 1990. They have a total of 11 vineyard blocks with south facing exposures, and two distinct sections of the vineyard, ranging from 1600 to over 2100 feet elevation. The upper block's eight acres are planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. The lower 16 acres are planted to Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. They claim that picking can take up to two months as they aim for only perfectly ripe berries with each pass. Both of the wines we tasted were terrific, especially the very appealing 2008 Cabernet. Brian is both the vineyard manager and winemaker. Total production is about 2000 cases.

Vinoce Vineyards 2012 Cabernet Franc Mount Veeder ($60) 91 The 2012 Cabernet Franc is a deeply colored blend of 80% Cabernet Franc, 15% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Merlot. It exhibits concentrated flavors of red plum, cassis, spice and chocolate with notes of underbrush and

earth. Aged 18 to 24 months in 65% new French oak, it is ripe and flavorful with good balance and excellent acidity, firm round tannins and a long finish. **Vinoce Vineyards 2012 Vinoce Mount Veeder ($75) 91+** The 2012 Vinoce is a blend of 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc and 5% Merlot. It offers aromas of black fruit, roasted meat, cedar, coffee and forest floor. It is dense and lush on the palate with complex flavors, firm tannins and a long finish. Drink 2015-2023

Y. Rousseau Wines This is a family owned and operated winery by Frenchman Yannick Rousseau, who is the founder and winemaker of this estate. Born in Gascony, Yannick made his first wine, a Colombard, in 1996. He earned a master's degree in Enology and Viticulture from the University Paul Sabatier in Toulouse. Since 1999 he helped make the wines at Newton as assistant winemaker where he worked closely with winemaker Luc Morlet and consulting winemaker Michel Rolland. He also made the wines at Chateau Potelle Winery 2001-2005 where he was instrumental in developing the VGS cult wines.

Y Rousseau 2012 Chardonnay Milady Mount Veeder ($42) 92 One of the finer Chardonnays from Mount Veeder, this bottling offers lovely aromas and flavors of orchard fruit, lychee and spice. It is fresh on the attack with good density of flavor, perfect balance and acidity and a long finish with hints of minerals and flint. Kept on the lees for 10 months with about 25% new oak. **Y Rousseau 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Le Roi Soleil Mount Veeder ($80) 93** The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon displays a dark ruby color with a nose of dusty herbs and dark berry fruit. The palate is dense and elegant with spicy dark berry fruit flavors. It's beautifully balanced with a soft creamy attack, offering concentrated pure fruit flavors, firm tannins and a long finish. A superb mountain wine. Includes 10% Merlot. The 2010 vintage of the same wine was even more impressive.

Yates Family Vineyard The Yates family owns 272 acres on the southern end of Mount Veeder purchased by founder Perry Yates in 1950. Thirty-seven acres are currently planted with Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Viognier. Michael and Lynn Yates currently operate the vineyard as well as a winery launched in 1999. Daughter Whitney serves as co-winemaker and vineyard manager and daughter Mary is in charge of sales and marketing. The wines are all well-made with the clear standouts being the Fleur de Veeder and the Alden Perry Reserve Bordeaux blend. Yates produces about 700 cases of excellent wine annually.

Yates Family Vineyard 2013 Viognier Mount Veeder ($38) 91 The 2013 Yates Viognier offers lovely floral notes of white flowers, not unlike a good quality Condrieu. It has clean aromas of peach and excellent mouth feel with hints of lanolin. It is soft but with good backbone of acidity, melon flavors and a slight spritz on the palate and the finish. **Yates Family Vineyard 2012 Fleur de Veeder Mount Veeder ($40) 91** The 2012 Fleur de Veeder is a delicious 100% Merlot offering aromas of earth and hints of forest floor. On the palate it displays dark red fruit with complex notes of chocolate, tobacco and oak. It has well rounded tannins, good balance and a medium finish. Aged 18 months in barrel and 12 months in bottle before release. **Yates Family Vineyard 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon 92** This is a lovely spicy wine with cassis and cedar on the nose. Full-flavored, it offers dense black fruit flavors with a hint of chocolate and firm, suave tannins. Includes clones 4, 34, and 337. **Yates Family Vineyard 2010 Alden Perry Reserve Mount Veeder ($65) 93** The 2010 Alden Perry is a delicious blend of 52% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot, and 8% Cabernet Franc. It offers ripe plum fruit aromas with hints of tobacco, forest floor and earth. It has a silky texture, round firm tannins and perfect balance. A polished seductive wine. Best 2017-27.

Annex: Mount Veeder Appellation Map

Previous Wine Reports

Issue 1	California Petite Sirah
Issue 2	Red Table Wines of Portugal
Issue 3	Grenache Wines
Issue 4	Syrah
Issue 5	Malbec: Argentina's Magnificent Malbec
Issue 6	The Wines of Southern Italy: From Quantity to Quality
Special Report	Portugal: The Douro Boys and Barca Velha
Issue 7	New Zealand's Exciting Pinot Noirs
Issue 8	The Wines of Ribera del Duero
Issue 9	Champagne
Issue 10	Unoaked Chardonnay: It's More Than Wood
Issue 11	2005 Bordeaux Crus Bourgeois
Issue 12	California Petite Sirah - Syrah Update
Issue 13	The Wines of Rioja: Classical and New Wave
Special Report	Introduction to Sherry
Issue 14	The World of Sparkling Wines and Champagne
Issue 15	Wines of Chianti Classico
Issue 16	Oregon Pinot Noir
Issue 17	Sauvignon of the Loire
Issue 18	Wines of Navarra
Issue 19	Wines of Greece: Assyrtiko and Santorini
Issue 20	The Santa Lucia Highlands
Issue 21	The Chilean Wine Revolution
Issue 22	Grapes and Wines of the Western Loire
Issue 23	Ribera del Duero Revisited
Issue 24	The New Wines of Portugal Double Issue
Issue 25	The Wines of Austria
Issue 26	The Diverse Wines of Argentina Double Issue
Issue 27	Sweet and Dessert Wines of the World
Issue 28	The Wines of Priorat
Issue 29	The Wines of Monterey County
Issue 30	The Wines of South Africa Double Issue
Issue 31	Brunello di Montalcino
Issue 32	The New Wines of Israel
Issue 33	The Wines of Paso Robles
Issue 34	Champagne Revisited
Issue 35	The Wines of Soave
Special Report	South African Chenin Blanc
Issue 36	The Wines of Santa Barbara
Issue 37	The Wines of Sicily
Issue 38	The Wines of Washington State
Issue 39	The World of Grenache
Special Report	The Wines of Montefalco
Issue 40	Rosé Champagne and Sparkling Wine
Special Report	The Exciting Sparkling Wines of South Africa
Issue 41	The Amarones of Valpolicella
Issue 42	The Wines of Catalonia
Issue 43	The Wines of Rioja—A New Look
Issue 44	The Wines of Sonoma County
Issue 45	Virginia Wine Comes of Age
Issue 46	Special Report: The Best of Soave
Issue 47	Special Report: The Best of Tuscany
Issue 48	The Wines of Los Carneros
Issue 49	Special Report: The Best of Spain
Issue 50	The Wines of Chablis
Issue 51	Special Report: The Best Indigenous Wines of Sicily
Issue 52	Special Report: The Best of Sherry
Issue 53	American Sparkling Wine

These reports are available online at www.iwinereview.com