

Wine Spectator's Insider Weekly

A First Look at Our Editors' Most Exciting New Wines | April 19, 2023

A Delicious Range from Napa Valley

With the 2020 vintage of California Cabernet notably reduced in both number of offerings and quality due to the wildfires that affected many vineyards near harvest time, the 2019s and 2018s continue to be your best bets right now. These two vintages offer dramatically contrasting styles with nearly equal quality. 2018 is the current benchmark vintage for the state. The wines are decidedly structured in feel, with a bit of a brooding persona. In contrast, the 2019s are generally more expressive and fruit-forward, offering delicious wines for drinking both now or after some cellaring.



Cathy Corison is one of California's most celebrated Cabernet winemakers. (Tia Gavin)

This selection of new releases shows off not only the stylistic differences between these two vintages, but the terrific diversity that California Cabernet now offers. There's a pair of densely structured and packed Abreu wines from winemaker Brad Grimes, alongside the lush, broad and classic Oakville style of Accendo from winemaker Nigel Kinsman. For those looking for a more streamlined and elegant version, winemaker Cathy Corison's Kronos Vineyard bottling is a compelling wine made from old vines planted on St. George rootstock. There's even the debut Fiadh Ruadh Cabernet from former Mondavi winemaker Nova Cadamatre, and relative values from Fess Parker and Reilly Family. —*James Molesworth*

J.H. WHEELER

**Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer
Georges III Vineyard 2019**

94 points | \$225 | 304 cases made | Red

Ripe but fresh, with nice lift from a sweet bay leaf note amid the core of warmed cassis and blackberry preserves. Stays sleek through the finish, with a buried iron note peaking through the delicious fruit. Nicely done. Best from 2024 through 2038. —*J.M.*



J.H. WHEELER

**Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer
Missouri Hopper Vineyard 2019**

94 points | \$225 | 315 cases made | Red

A rock-solid offering, with a core of cassis and boysenberry reduction laced with subtle sweet bay leaf and sassafras notes that lend enticing energy. Shows a solid loam backdrop and a nicely buried graphite spine, which drive the finish as the fruit plays out. Best from 2024 through 2038. —*J.M.*

