

Wine Spectator's Insider Weekly

A First Look at Our Editors' Most Exciting New Wines | July 21, 2021

California

Cabernet & Blends

The Stars of 2018

Following last week's collection of 2018 California Cabernets, we're bringing you another bevy of top releases, all recently blind-tasted in our Napa office. These wines showcase the profile of the 2018 vintage: pure, vivid, yet remarkably restrained and focused fruit, with perfectly embedded structure. It's a very sleek and refined set of wines.

Highlighted here is the Oakville AVA, the filet mignon of Napa Cabernet growing areas. These wines always show a tug of warm loam and iron minerality, buried deep in a core of rich, plush cassis and plum fruit, often backed by flashes of menthol, licorice and tobacco. The heart of Oakville is the famed To Kalon vineyard (pictured); its fruit is on full display in the Schrader lineup, as well as in the MacDonald bottling, which comes from the vineyard but can't use the name because of its trademarked status.



Photo by Greg Gorman

There's a smattering of other top wines from outside Oakville as well, including Dominus and Quintessa.—*James Molesworth*

J.H. WHEELER

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer
Missouri Hopper Vineyard 2018
95 points | \$225 | 273 cases made | Red

Another densely fruited 2018, with this one sporting flavors of açai berry, loganberry and blackberry preserves enhanced by singed alder, warm earth and tobacco. A note of warm cast iron emerges on the finish, adding length and cut to the hefty fruit core. Best from 2022 through 2038. —*J.M.*



J.H. WHEELER

Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Beckstoffer
Georges III Vineyard 2018
93 points | \$225 | 91 cases made | Red

Nicely packed with plum paste and cassis flavors that are inlaid with dark licorice and warm earth notes. The polished structure lets the fruit play out on the finish. Textbook. Drink now through 2035. —*J.M.*

