

# THE CASE FOR CABERNET

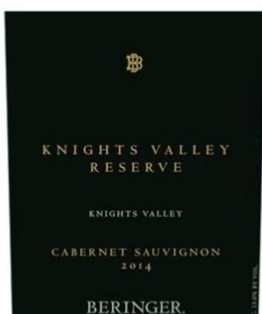
CONSISTENCY AND VALUE ARE THE HALLMARKS OF THESE 12 TRUSTWORTHY WINES, ALL \$75 OR LESS

By Aaron Romano

Savvy wine shoppers know that for everyday enjoyment consistency is as important as star power. When it comes to California Cabernet Sauvignon, this means that a solid collection should include not only a few prized, rare bottles, but also wines that are readily available at reasonable prices vintage after vintage. With that in mind, we've compiled this mixed case of Golden State Cabernets that overdeliver on quality for the price, offering dependability in a shifting marketplace.

Each of the dozen wines featured in this story was produced in

a quantity of at least 1,000 cases and earned an outstanding score of 90 points or higher. The selections represent a spectrum of styles from regions throughout the state, with sites ranging from valley floor vineyards to the rugged terrain of higher-elevations. Some of the producers are names you'll recognize, while others tend to fly under the radar, but all count to varying degrees on estate vineyards to help control cost, maintain quality and ensure volume. Overall, it's a diverse selection of well-priced wines that can be stashed in the cellar or enjoyed now.

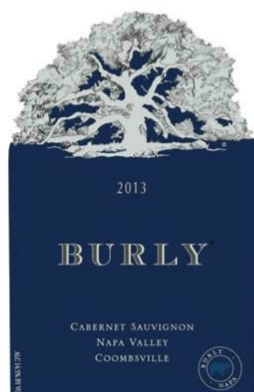


## **BERINGER | Cabernet Sauvignon Knights Valley Reserve 2014 | 93 | \$70**

That Knights Valley ranks as one of Sonoma's best districts for Cabernet is in no small part due to Beringer. The winery has been farming the area since the 1960s and first used the designation in 1974. Located in northeastern Sonoma County, just north of Napa Valley, Knights Valley

produces wines comparable in style to those of its southern neighbor. A barrel selection of the best lots from 600 acres of vines planted in rocky alluvial soils, the Reserve bottling balances elegance and muscle, with generous fruit flavors and an array of earth and spice notes.

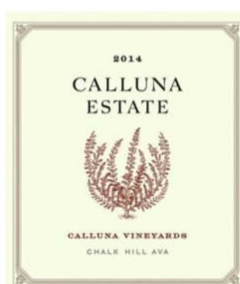
**3,500 cases made**



## **BURLY | Cabernet Sauvignon Coombsville 2013 | 92 | \$75**

Coombsville is Napa Valley's newest appellation and it is beginning to attract attention with well-structured wines such as this bottling from Burly. Located just outside downtown Napa, Coombsville benefits from the cooling influences of nearby San Pablo Bay. Burly winemaker Massimo Monticelli has been quietly producing an elegant rendering of Coombsville Cabernet from the Simpkins Family Vineyard since the winery's first vintage in 2005.

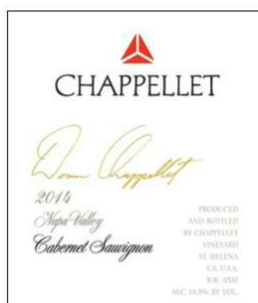
**1,300 cases made**



## **CALLUNA | Calluna Estate Chalk Hill 2014 | 92 | \$75**

Calluna owner David Jeffrey offers ample proof that successful second acts are possible. In 2001, at the age of 44, Jeffrey left his corporate career in New York and headed west to study enology and viticulture at the state university in Fresno, Calif. Jeffrey then spent a harvest burnishing his skills in Bordeaux at Château Quinault L'Enclos. In 2005, his search for suitable vineyard land led him to Sonoma's small Chalk Hill district, where he established his 12-acre estate and produced his first vintage in 2009. The 2014 bottling blends all five Bordeaux varieties, with Cabernet Sauvignon taking the lead. The wine offers ample structure and tannins, supported by an herbaceous and earthy core of flavors.

**1,095 cases made**

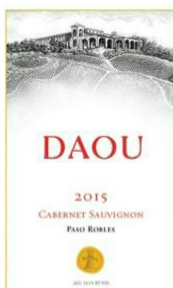


## **CHAPPELLET | Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Signature 2014 | 90 | \$65**

Few flagship bottlings of Napa Cabernet are as consistent and affordable as Chappellet's or have a more reliable track record for aging. The Chappellet family has been making Cabernet Sauvignon from Pritchard Hill since the late 1960s, and in 1980, owner

Donn Chappellet put his signature on the label to designate a wine of superior quality. The grapes for the Signature bottling are harvested from Chappellet's 100 acres of mountain vineyards, grown on rocky, well-drained soils. The wine delivers concentrated dark fruit and spice flavors that are nicely structured and supported by firm tannins.

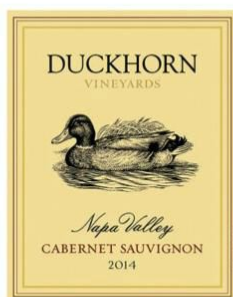
**12,000 cases made**



### DAOU | Cabernet Sauvignon Paso Robles 2015 | 93 | \$28

Paso Robles is primed to be California's next great destination for Cabernet, and brothers Georges and Daniel Daou are among those leading the way. The Daou estate is located high in the Adelaida district at an elevation of 2,000 feet. It benefits from a long growing season and cool nights that help to retain acidity. The Daous' strategy since their first vintage in 2010 has been to offer a range of Cabernet bottlings, starting

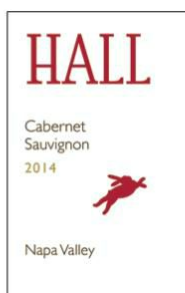
with this entry-level version, which is polished and plump, with juicy red fruit flavors. **20,000 cases made**



### DUCKHORN | Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2014 | 92 | \$75

Duckhorn made its name with Merlot, but it has always produced high quality Cabernet from various sites throughout Napa Valley. Grapes come from seven different estate vineyards, ranging from the valley floor to the hillsides, as well as additional supplies from independent growers. The diverse vineyards utilized in the blend

yield a complex and lively mix, and the 2014 bottling is the highest-scoring vintage to date. **36,400 cases made**



### HALL | Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2014 | 91 | \$55

Craig and Kathryn Hall are a winemaking juggernaut in Napa, producing 16 different Cabernets in a single vintage. The Halls can do this by drawing on 150 acres of vineyards that they organically farm in multiple appellations. This bottling is a blend of roughly half estate fruit combined with purchased grapes from more than 70 vineyards. The wine holds true to Hall's style, which winemaker Steve Leveque has developed during his tenure—dark, rich flavors, with earth nuances and oak

shadings to round out the palate. **33,410 cases made**



### HONIG | Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2014 | 90 | \$50

This Cabernet is a dependable charmer. At its heart are grapes from the Honig family's sustainably farmed Rutherford estate, which it has owned since 1964, with additional sourcing from various long-term growers to bulk up the production. Winemaker Kristin Belair, who has been making the Honig wines since 1998, has the formula down for creating a wine that has the muscle you'd expect from a Napa Cabernet while also showing grace and finesse.

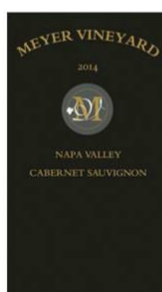
**15,840 cases made**



### LANCASTER | Cabernet Sauvignon Alexander Valley 2014 | 94 | \$75

The 53-acre Lancaster estate is located at the southernmost tip of Alexander Valley, near Knights Valley and Chalk Hill, where growing conditions are influenced by varied microclimates. This bottling exemplifies Alexander Valley Cabernet at its best: Bordeaux in style, showing tobacco and savory herb notes, with structured tannins that are dusty or gravelly. In warm years such as 2014, the wine reveals a rich, fruity core, making it enjoyable to drink now and into the future.

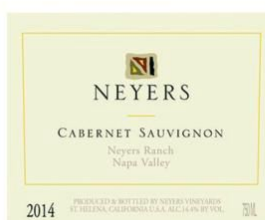
**4,075 cases made**



### MEYER | Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2014 | 95 | \$70

This showstopper hails from cookware tycoon Stanley Cheng's Hestan Vineyards, situated in a remote pocket of the far southeastern corner of Napa Valley. Meyer, named for Cheng's global cookware company, is a second label to the more expensive Hestan Cabernet Sauvignon, but shows comparable complexity, on a suppler frame, which makes it drinkable now. Winemaker Thomas Rivers Brown utilizes mature Clone 337 vines, which he believes produce more nuanced and expressive Cabernets as the vines age.

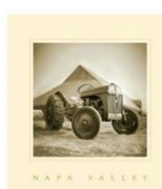
**1,200 cases made**



### NEYERS | Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2014 | 90 | \$60

Bruce Neyers is a Francophile dedicated to making wines that express *terroir* and show a measure of restraint. His ranch in Conn Valley east

of St. Helena ranges from 400 to 1,200 feet in elevation, offering multiple plots from which to source this estate bottling. The wine ferments naturally without the use of cultured yeast and is aged in French barrels made to Neyers' specifications. The result is a Cabernet with vibrant fruit, rich oak shadings and dusty tannins. **1,122 cases made**



### ROUND POND ESTATE | Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2015 | 90 | \$35

The first barrel of Cabernet the MacDonnell family made from its vineyards in Rutherford was in 1992 and it was solely for family and friends to enjoy. The Kith & Kin pays homage to that first wine; it's a balanced and juicy red that's ready to drink straightaway. One of the most pocket-friendly wines in this group, the Kith & Kin offers a glimpse of the Round Pond style, which is definitively Rutherford, offering a vibrant fruit backbone, with dusty, loamy notes.

Cabernet from the family estate anchors the wine, supplemented by grapes from other Napa Valley growers. **14,392 cases made**