

P R I D E M O U N T A I N V I N E Y A R D S

2005 - 2014 VERTICAL TASTING

PRIDE MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS VINTNER SELECT CABERNET SAUVIGNON

The genesis of our Vintner Select Cabernet Sauvignon cuvee was that one of our favorite vineyard blocks of cabernet sauvignon, the Carolyn's block named after my mother, had always blown us away each vintage ever since it was replanted to 75% Clone 337 and 25% Clone 15 in 1993. Year in and year out, Carolyn's always had weighty concentration and superb flavor intensity but achieved this with less tannic expression and more elegance on the finish compared to other vineyard blocks. Historically, we have always blended up to say 20 to 30% of Carolyn's into the Reserve Cabernet to deepen the middle and soften the finish. We liked Carolyn's so much that two other blocks, Rim Rock and Quartz Hill, were also planted to the same field blend of 75% Clone 337 and 25% Clone 15 in 1998. By the time I took over running the business in 2004, we therefore had three great vineyard blocks producing subtly different expressions of this same concentrated yet elegant cabernet sauvignon and it seemed appropriate to make a separate bottling that featured these dominantly Clone 337 blocks in a 100% varietal cabernet sauvignon. Thus was born the Vintner Select Cabernet Sauvignon. The language we used at the time of the first 2005 vintage release, and that still guides us today, is that while our goal with our Reserve Cabernet is to make a macho wine packed not only with flavor but with loads of structure, the goal of the Vintner Select Cabernet is to make a more feminine wine that shows off pure cab flavors in a weighty but seamless non-aggressive package. Ironically, our first vintage 2005 was one of the rare vintages where the Carolyn's block had huge tannins that rivaled our Reserve Cab and when the wine was young we even thought it had more structure than the Reserve. The subsequent vintages of Vintner Select Cabernet have been more in line with our initial expectations.

On January 23, 2017, the ten existing vintages of PMV Vintner Select Cabernet Sauvignon (2005 to 2014) were tasted non-blind by Steve Pride in a single flight after a 2-hour decant. The wines are listed in the order tasted:

2005: Great aromas of dried black cherry, subtle menthol, tobacco and earthiness. In the mouth a pleasing round and thick middle transitions into still present but pleasant tannins on the long finish. At the end (6 seconds and beyond in the tasting experience), there is still some chalky grip. Super complex flavors of black cherry, cedar, earthy forest floor, subtle pencil shaving, camphor, spices. Wow! The most thrilling range of flavors of all the vintages tasted. This 2005 VS Cab was one of the biggest cabs we ever made despite it being made entirely from the Clone 337 Carolyn's block. With age it has rounded out into a real beauty but the tannins still need time to further resolve themselves. The flavors are the best at the tasting!

2006: Enticing aromas of sweet black cherry, almond paste, sandalwood and pot pourri excite the nose. What a pleasurable wine in the mouth. It has mouth-coating density and only the slightest hint of tannin that subtly, but non-aggressively, emerge in the 5 to 10 second range. Classy flavors of black cherry, cedar and subtle floral really please. In a more resolved and refined place than the 2005 but still with plenty of depth and concentration. A beautiful wine that I would enjoy right now (and for the years to come) and that perfectly expresses what we are trying to achieve with our Vintner Select Cabernet Sauvignon.

2007: Both cassis and black cherry on the nose along with briney olive and almonds. Surprising syrah-like flavors of pepper and spice add interest on the attack and middle before the flavors transition to more traditional dark black fruit and subtle cedar. Fantastic texture with the tell-tale VS Cab density and roundness and the emergent ripe tannins only presenting themselves in a pleasant way on the long finish. Thicker than the 2006, this has the stuffing to go for many more years. A beautiful full-bodied wine.

2008: Complex aromas merge black cherry, spice, cherry pit and cinders. What a great wine in the mouth. Again, density and thickness with no rough edges and although there is structure on the finish, it is elegant and pleasant with no chalky grippiness. Flavors are beautiful and distinct with black cherry, barbecue and tarry nuances that remind me of Haut Brion. Another beauty. A seamless wine with great extraction and deft balance, a total pleasure in the mouth (and still great when the same bottle was retasted 24 hours later). Give this a good decant.

2009: Wow, these wines have amazingly consistent profiles. The nose has a similar black cherry, cherry pit, pot pourri and briney character as previous vintages. Seamless on the palate with dense round texture and a similarly subtle tannin expression that only emerges in a pleasing way on the long finish. Classic dark PMV cabernet flavors of cassis, resin and tar. A great wine with the stuffing to last for years and yet deserving to be consumed now. Maybe lacks an unusual aromatic or flavor nuance to make it stand out from the others. But wow, what a beautiful and balanced cabernet. Another of the favorites.

2010: Classic nose of black cherry, subtle smokiness and almond paste. Texturally, not quite as dense and round as previous vintages. This was one of the coolest vintages in our history and due to nice weather through the fall, we let the Carolyn's block hang for a very late harvest. One notices a subtle emergent alcohol in the finish on this wine at 15.4% which is unfortunate given the cool vintage. Flavors are consistent with other vintages but due to the relative thinness in the mouth followed by the hint of alcohol on the finish, this is the one wine in the line up that, though still quite pleasant, is a relative disappointment compared to expectations for this cool-climate vintage. Will be interesting to follow over the years to come. Reminds me a bit of our 1997 Reserve Cab that had some noticeable alcohol and volatility in its youth but with time shed those impressions to become a beauty.

2011: An even cooler vintage than 2010 (the coldest in our history), this wine is a beauty possessing density and thickness with zero emergent alcohol nuance despite a very long hang time! I am very pleased with this wine that has a long life in front of it. Pleasing nose of cherry pit, pot pourri and almonds. The palate has a great density and richness that the 2010 lacked but that all previous vintages had. Consistent flavors of cassis, black cherry, resin and a subtle white pepper note. The finish still has some emergent chalkiness that needs more time to resolve but this is a great wine that will please for years to come.

2012: Wow, super concentrated fruit-driven nose with cassis, ripe black cherries, cherry pit and subtle briney olive nuances. Fabulous palate with great density and plenty of thickness but no grippy tannins on the finish. What a pleasant wine to roll around the mouth even at this young age. The flavors are great with cassis, dark cherry compote, subtle floral, resin and a hint of vanilla. What a superb wine. You can pop and pour today or hold for another 10 years with equal reward.

2013: Expressive nose that displays all of black cherry, perfume nuances, underbrush, resin, almond paste and cherry pit. Interesting textural experience similar to many of our 2013 wines. Absolutely seamless and round on the attack through the middle with a silky suave delightful character. But then with time in the mouth, say after 6 seconds or more, the 2013 tannins begin to present themselves with a chalkiness that fully coats the tongue and cheeks. A fascinating tasting experience! Flavors are classic VS Cab with dark cherry, resin and dark smoky nuances. Will be fascinating to watch how the tannins on the very long finish soften over the next few years to come. Needs more time.

2014: Still has not thrown any sediment. As a first clue of when a wine might begin to be enjoyed, we look for sediment accumulation on the cork and in the neck. This is when tannin chains, that we sense on the palate, have grown to a sufficient length that they begin to precipitate. This wine is still squeaky clean which is typical of a young wine with less than one year in bottle. The texture is gorgeous and in line with what we want our VS Cab to be: it has weight and concentration with only a subtle hint of tannic grip on the finish. This young wine has a velvety character as we envision it should have. Consistent aromas and flavors of cassis, cherry pit, tea leaf and subtle floral nuances. Will be a winner. Needs time to continue taking on weight and definition.

Rankings: The goal of this tasting was to rank the wines on overall pleasure and drinkability at present. If everything is aging as it should, we should see the older wines listed first on the list below and the younger wines ranked later, which is for the most part what happened:

1. 2006 [the most elegant and perfect wine at the tasting that can be enjoyed right now or held longer]
2. 2008 [beautiful dark expressive mysterious cabernet with great mouth feel; drink now or hold, either one]
3. 2009 [another beautiful, rich, balanced cab to be enjoyed now but will age well for years to come]
4. 2005 [best range of complex flavors at the tasting; can be enjoyed now but still has some tannin to resolve]
5. 2007 [a great full-bodied cabernet that can be enjoyed now but has the stuffing for the ages]
6. 2012 [a thrilling young wine that is really great right now but that will beneficially age over the next decade]
7. 2011 [a great cabernet that has it all but I would give this another few years to more fully unwind]
8. 2013 [packed with everything we've got at PMV but needs a few more years to let the tannins soften]
9. 2014 [this has it all and just needs a few more years to fill out and more completely take shape]
10. 2010 [this is last due to being a bit thinner than the others with a note of subtle alcohol on the finish; give it more time to integrate and resolve]

Conclusions: These wines were remarkably consistent over the 10 vintages with some pleasing distinctions as noted that made things interesting. Each wine except 2010 reflects well the characteristics we have come to know and expect from each vintage.