

# Our 10 Top-Rated California Cabernet Sauvignons of 2019

BY WINE ENTHUSIAST



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Our three California editors reviewed nearly a thousand bottles of Cabernet Sauvignon in 2019. It makes sense: Cabernet Sauvignon is the state's most widely planted red wine grape and is a signature of the Napa Valley.

But northern California isn't the only place producing quality Cabernet. Of the top 10 California Cabernets we reviewed last year, one is from Santa Barbara while another hails from Paso Robles. While Mendocino and Lake Counties don't make a showing here, we do suggest seeking their quite affordable bottles.

From Napa power players to Central Coast gems, here are our top 10 California Cabernets of the year.

**Alpha Omega 2015 Thomas Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Rutherford); \$220, 98 points.**

This is a gorgeous, memorable and classically styled wine, grippy in tannin and a leathery texture that's complex and complicated. Black pepper, black cherry and toasted oak give it definition that evolves stunningly in the glass. –*Virginie Boone*

**J. Davies 2014 Jamie Cabernet Sauvignon (Diamond Mountain District); \$210, 98 points.**

Named for the late matriarch of the property, this is a blend of 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 19% Malbec and 5% Petit Verdot, all of it grown on hillside estate vineyards. It dances around cherry, cassis and rose petal, the core of the wine soft in integrated tannins and oak. Balanced in weight, it is undeniably lovely, complex and beautiful. It will do well in the cellar; enjoy 2024–2034. **Cellar Selection.** –*V.B.*

**Larkmead 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$135, 98 points.** This stellar, powerhouse wine is perfumed in aromas of pencil, leather and sage that season a core of mineral and crushed rock. The fruit is equally savory in currant and plum, with a dusting of dark chocolate. Enjoy now–2029. **Editors' Choice.** –*V.B.*

**Chappellet 2016 Hideaway Vineyard Mountain Estates Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$125, 97 points.** The grapes for this wine are sourced from the steep slopes of the producer's own Pritchard Hill spot at 1,425 feet. Juicy black cherry and wild berry yield to rich vanilla and oak, with ample grip and tension that lend structure. It's simply delicious, voluptuous and lush yet complex. –*V.B.*

**Crown Point 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon (Happy Canyon of Santa Barbara); \$150, 97 points.** This winery is focused on setting a new benchmark for what Cabernet Sauvignon from Santa Barbara can be, and this bottling is its best yet. Beautifully layered aromas of black cherry, baking spice, star anise and crushed slate lead into a roasted palate of black plum and chai spices, with acid that carries into the finish. –*Matt Kettmann*

**Patrimony 2015 Cabernet Sauvignon (Adelaida District); \$275, 97 points.** The Daou brothers are intent on making this brand the most expensive and luxurious in Paso Robles. This vintage begins with intense aromas of roasted blackberry, tangy black-plum skin and crushed peppercorn. The palate is expertly layered in flavors of cassis, caramel, gravel, loam, cocoa and a hint of licorice. The tannins are firm but already approachable. –*M.K.*

**Realm Cellars 2016 Farella Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (Napa Valley); \$195, 97 points.** From this historic Coombsville site comes this earthy, graphite-ridden red, which is herbal within a core of baked red fruit dripping in grippy structure. It has a breadth of expansive full-bodied richness that holds its fruit in check within an herbal, Old World embrace of tight-grained tannin and expansive power. Enjoy this concentrated wine best from 2026 through 2036. **Cellar Selection.** –*V.B.*

**Shafer 2014 Hillside Select Cabernet Sauvignon (Stags Leap District); \$295, 97 points.**

The famous wine lives up to its mighty reputation in this vintage. Densely packed in tones of red currant, cassis and cocoa powder, the palate offers a sublime texture that lingers despite an overall powerful punch of structure and tannin. Elements of crushed rock and black licorice unfold on the finish. Enjoy from 2024–2034. *Cellar Selection.* –V.B.

**Spottswoode 2015 Family Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (St. Helena); \$225, 97**

**points.** Fresh on the palate and floral on the nose in a bouquet of rose, lavender and crushed herb, this perennially beautiful, delicate wine benefits from the addition of 7% Cabernet Franc and 3% Petit Verdot, also from the organically farmed estate. Pencil shavings, coffee and a touch of tobacco add to its savory, earthy nature, contributing to its overall structure and elegance. Enjoy best from 2025 through 2030 if you're able to wait. *Cellar Selection.* –V.B.

**Turnbull 2016 Black Label Estate Grown Cabernet Sauvignon (Oakville); \$150, 97 points.**

This is a head-turning wine, especially at the price—an impressive study in cohesive elements of black currant, lavender and licorice melded with meaty, lengthy tannin. The black currant gives way to more sumptuous flavors of blueberry and cocoa powder, offering balanced body weight and complexity. *Editors' Choice.* –V.B.

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