

DECEMBER WINES, 2007

All wines we taste and review are current releases and can be found and purchased locally, at the winery or on the web

CABERNET SAUVIGNON – THE 'KING' OF REDS

We were thinking *gifts* and *sheer enjoyment* when we chose to taste six very small production Cabernets, all very special and delicious in their own way.

GOT FOOD? PAIRINGS TO PLAY WITH

Cabernet Sauvignon is still the hands-down favorite for any food that's rich, or high in protein.

- *Rare Ahi Tuna steak – yes, red wine with fish! Select a more European -style Cabernet.*
- *Prime Rib, hearty stews, flavorful creamy sauces and, of course, pasta!*
- *Full-flavored hard cheeses such as Cheddar, Asiago, Manchego – experiment!*

THE WINES!

WINES LISTED IN THE ORDER TASTED – TASTING REVIEWS FOLLOW

Wine A	■	2003	WATKINS FAMILY	Sonoma Valley	\$38
Wine B	■	2004	HART'S DESIRE	Alexander Valley	\$30
Wine C	■	2003	DEERFIELD RANCH	North Coast	\$45
Wine D	■	2004	KACHINA	Dry Creek Valley	\$38
Wine E	■	2003	OWL RIDGE	Sonoma County	\$55
Wine F	■	2003	LAUREL GLEN	Sonoma Mountain	\$55.

➤ *The prices listed are winery suggested retail prices.* ◀

“FAVORITE”

2 for Wine B ◊ 2 for Wine C ◊ 4 for Wine D

“BEST VALUE”

2 for Wine A ◊ 2 for Wine B ◊ 4 for Wine D

“Breaking the code” ❖ Terms used in the reviews that follow:

Balance ➤ Refers to Fruit, Acid and Tannin. When they are all perceivable in equal amounts and one doesn't appear to be excessive or lacking, the wine is in “balance”.

Hot ➤ refers to percentage of alcohol. If the alcohol is noticeable, it's not in “balance” and makes the wine unpleasant or “hot”. This can be perceived in both aroma (think Vodka), and taste. – a bitter, peppery and very fruity – often a 'sweet', sensation, even in a 'dry' wine. It can also be more viscous – or 'full' bodied.

According to each individual taster's perception, every wine will have the following self-explanatory terms to describe the **Fruit**, **Acid** and **Tannin**.

Ideal (or “just right”)

'Slightly' **excessive** or 'Slightly' **lacking**,

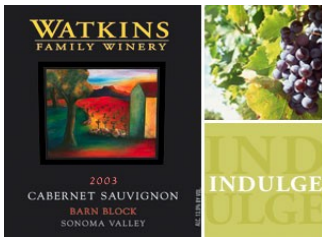
Excessive or **Lacking** (more than 'slightly')

'Very' **excessive** or 'Very' **lacking** (definitely too much or too little)

Over The Top (“OTT”) (self-explanatory)

Each Tasting Panelist has selected their **Favorite (F)** and their **Value pick (V)** of this tasting. You'll find this noted at the end of their summary comments.

ENJOY THE REVIEWS – ENJOY THE JOURNEY!



WINE "A"

2003 WATKINS FAMILY "Barn Block"
Sonoma Valley CA

\$38
13.9% alcohol

Watkins is a small family-owned winery specializing in mountain-grown Cabernet Sauvignon since 2003. This wine comes from a 9-acre vineyard, planted in red volcanic rock and located at 1400 feet on the southwest side of Mt. Veeder. Following a 12-day fermentation, the 100% free-run, unpressed wine spent 21 months in 75% new French Oak barrels. Only 200 cases of this wine were made and are available only through the winery.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking; **Acid and Tannin:** slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
"I detected black currant and coffee. The wine was soft and even a little dusky. This is a big Cabernet – lots of tannin and acidity. Good aging potential – 1 - 6 years."
- James M** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly excessive; **Acid:** Excessive / Medium body, Med - long finish.
"This wine was more a fruit-forward wine – lots of red fruit that was balanced by the tannins and some definite acidity. It's an age-worthy wine and should soften nicely in 2 – 3 years."
- Mary** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal balance; **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Med - full body, Med-long finish
"Nice wine! Full-bodies, flavorful, nice tannins. Probably great with steak or other flavorful meat. I would also drink it by itself – it is not over the top." ✓
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Medium finish
"Delightful wine except the alcohol seemed a little hot and out of balance. It had great flavors, great structure and a clean finish."
- Debra** **Fruit and Acid** Excessive; **Tannin:** Very excessive / Med-full body, Med - long finish
"Great nose. First impression was one of good fruit, then the acidity built and the fruit fell short. Tannins are a bit harsh, but food should help. The finish had some bitterness."
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Ideal; **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish
"This has a whole lot of those classic Cabernet qualities. A big wine with nice tannin structure. Dark fruits, strong tannins, dry finish. This is one is good now, but should soften very nicely with age. Blackberries cranberries come in late too."
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish
"Clean, ripe fruit aromas. Very nice food wine – great balance and lots of complexity which carries through to the nice, clean finish. One sip makes me want another."

GUEST PANELIST:

- Linda** **Fruit and Acid:** Ideal; **Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
"Full, pleasurable aromas. Wonderful taste! This is an enjoyable wine that I would definitely buy."



WINE "B"

2004 HART'S DESIRE

Alexander Valley CA

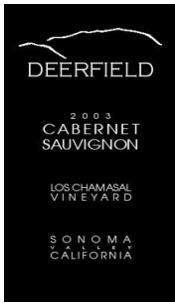
\$30

13.8% alcohol

A small boutique winery in the Alexander Valley, Hart's Desire was founded in 1991 by John and Desiré Hart. The wines are made by hand using a small basket press and gravity flow (no pumps), and are bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. The wine we tasted comes from Hidden Spring vineyard planted on slopes above the Russian River in the Alexander Valley. The wine spends 20 months in 60% French and 40% American oak barrels. Only 120 cases of this wine are produced.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full bodied, Med-long finish
"First impression was one of rose petals, coffee, currants and other berries. This wine had an appealing mouthfeel and texture – soft and luscious. The finish was long peppery."
- James M** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:**
(Notes not located)
- Mary** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking; **Acid and Tannin:** Excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
"This was a difficult wine for me. My first impression was one of a very tannic, spicy wine, and the tannins persisted, giving me a very dry sensation and a slightly bitter finish."
- James H** **Fruit:** slightly excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Med-light body, Med-short finish.
"Blackberry and oak aromas. Good body. I would say this was more of a fruity style wine, and a bit too "jammy" for my taste."
- Debra** **Fruit:** Excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** very excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
"Yummie! Chocolate, deep plum, cedar, pepper, soft leather and dark fruit aromas. Well balanced acid and tannin. I liked this wine very much. Very balanced and great body." F, V
- Rob** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Medium finish
"This is a very nice wine and I'm getting over the ripeness of the fruit as I have it in my glass. It is filled with flavors of dark fruit and spice, but a bit of bitterness at the end." V
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Long finish
"Nice, bright fruit aromas. A lovely, balanced drink-now wine. Great fruit in the smooth finish. Good for sipping and with food – basically a yummy wine." V
- GUEST PANELIST:**
- Linda** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Full body, Long finish
"Beautiful color. Fruity and smoky aromas. This was a full-bodied wine that could carry a spicy food well. It had a long, enjoyable lingering finish. A great sipper. I'd buy this." F, V



WINE “C”

2003 DEERFIELD RANCH “Los Chamasal” \$45
 North Coast CA 14.5% alcohol

Deerfield Ranch Winery began life in 1972 with a gift of a home winemaking kit and a Zinfandel that took Best of Show at the CA State Fair. This Cabernet from the Las Chamasal vineyard, is a blend of 80.3% Cabernet Sauvignon, 9.2% Cabernet Franc and 10.5% Merlot. The grapes come from vines planted on a steep hillside, in a valley near the town of Sonoma. This wine was barrel-aged for 30 months in 85% French oak and 15% American oak barrels. 670 cases were produced.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

Donna **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
“I like this wine a lot. It's very accessible without being simple. The finish is soft, and it's easy to drink. A soft, silky voluptuous wine.” F

James M **Fruit:** Ideal; **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish.
“I found this to be a good wine. First impression was a little light, with a touch of smoke.”

Mary **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish
“I really enjoyed the wine. I think it was a little too hot, but I loved the fruit, and the creamy, rich body.”

James H **Fruit:** excessive; **Acid:** Ideal; **Tannin:** lacking / Medium body, Med-long finish.
“Nose had a woody-mahogany character. The wine was a typical California 'fruit-bomb' with not enough tannin to age well. It was also a bit 'hot'”

Debra **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All three are excessive / Medium body, Long finish
“This wine had ripe fruit and an almost sweetish first impression. Then came tart cranberry and pomegranate. The mouthfeel was satin but the tannins were harsh. A tad hot, but good.”

Rob **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-light body, Med-short finish.
“I like this wine. It's a bit light for my personal taste, but it would be good with the right food. It's a 'drink-now' wine with very little aging potential, but a nice wine.” F

Von **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Long finish.
“Classic aromas of bright red berries and cassis. I liked the balance and the fruitiness in the finish. I would drink this both a sipping wine and with dinner.”

GUEST PANELIST:

Linda **Fruit:** Slightly lacking **Acid and Tannin:** Lacking / Med-light body, short finish
“Didn't care for this wine much – not much to it. I would likely not buy his wine



WINE "D"

2004 KACHINA VINEYARDS
Dry Creek Valley CA

\$38
13.8% alcohol

Four years ago Greg and Nancy Chambers produced their first wines under the “*Kachina*” label, the Hopi Indian spirit symbol of favorable weather, bountiful crops and a peaceful, prosperous life. The grapes come from high altitude vineyards tucked in mini-valleys in the Dry Creek Valley hills. Greg is the winemaker, and produces only 500 total cases of wine – Cabernet Sauvignon and a Zinfandel Port. This Cabernet was barrel aged for 26 months in 70% new French oak and 30% new American Oak, bottled unfiltered and unfiltered, then spent another year in bottle before release.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Ideal, **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly excessive / Med-full body, Med-long finish
“You don't even have to drink this wine because it smells so good! The aromas keep changing from berries, to herbs, to cherries, to toast – even banana – all wonderful. The taste is also very intriguing – dark berries, pepper, a bit of coffee then currants. So interesting!” **F, V**
- James M** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly lacking; **Acid:** Slightly excessive / Medium body, Medium finish
“Dense, dark color leads to a surprisingly light and bright wine. I love the nose, with sage and red berries. This is a good food wine.” **F, V**
- Mary** **Fruit:** Excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
“Very cherry-fruit aromas. To me, this was a very fruity wine, with lots of dense cherry flavors as well as aromas. I could even see this with brownies that my husband makes.” **F**
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Long finish.
“Woody, berry nose – beautiful! Everything a Cabernet Sauvignon should be! Great structure, slightly tannic, making it great for aging 5 – 10 years. Long, delightful finish – no flaws.” **F, V**
- Debra** **Fruit:** Excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** slightly excessive / Medium body, Long finish.
“Deep ruby color, with lots of dark cherry – cough syrup intensity, and oak aromas. This was a lighter style Cabernet, though it was mouth-filling.”
- Rob** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Long finish
“Big and yummy wine. Lots of fruit with some dust of cocoa. A gorgeous, balanced wine with a long finish.”
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish.
“Oh yeah, it's a Cab! Classic cassis and ripe fruit aromas. Very European – very balanced, and food-friendly, with definite tannins that will make it age well – I'd say 7 – 12 years. Loved the fruit and spice characteristics and the fruit in the finish. A yummy wine!” **F**

GUEST PANELIST:

- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive; **Acid:** Lacking **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-short finish
“I found this wine stringent and couldn't find a lot to identify. I probably wouldn't buy this.”



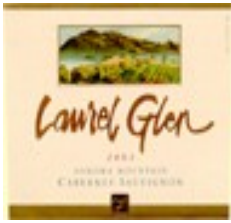
WINE "E"

2003 OWL RIDGE "Brigden Vineyard" \$55
Sonoma County CA 14.3% alcohol

The winged image of Owl Ridge Winery came about because of the owners love for owls. Barn owls, particularly, are much beloved by vineyard owners, as a natural form of rodent control – replacing dangerous poisons and pesticides. Owl Ridge began as a winery in 2000, with 2002 as the first vintage release of Brigden Vineyard Cabernet. The mountain vineyard lies between Sonoma and Napa, and the 2003 vintage – 100% Cabernet – spent 23 months in French oak barrels – 40% new. 340 cases were produced.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit:** Ideal; **Acid and Tannin:** slightly excessive / Medium body, Med-longt finish
"Another wine with a great nose – licorice, cherry and roses. I also get currants with warm red fruits. The wine is a little lighter than I expected from the nose, but pleasant. Age 1- 6 years."
- James M.** **Fruit:** Excessive; **Acid:** Slightly excessive; **Tannin:** Lacking / Med- light body, Med-short finish.
"Cocoa covered cherries with some coffee, tea and no real body, but it's drinking nicely. I could drink it all night."
- Mary** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Long finish
"Very nice. Well balanced and soft. Spicy nose, berry fruit. Easy to drink on its own. Not heavy, but not very complex. I'm sure it would be good with pork, chicken, even hamburger."
- James H.** **Fruit:** Slightly lacking; **Acid:** ideal; **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Medium finish.
"Almost a Beaujolais style – light for a Cabernet. Alcohol is a bit overpowering. Acidity is good but a bit harsh."
- Debra** **Fruit:** very excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** excessive / Medium body, Med-long finish.
"Lovely complex nose – raisin, coffee, leather, crushed herbs, damp earth. Very ripe juicy fruit and well-integrated tannins – good example of a fruity cab. I liked the finish – dusty, slightly chewy. Should age 2 – 5 years"
- Rob** **Fruit and Tannin:** Slightly lacking; **Tannin:** Ideal / Full bodied, Long finish
"This is drastically different from the other Cabs – darker fruit. Butterscotch, toffee. Has some earthiness and the dry, tannic impression that's expected from a Cab."
- Von** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Med-full body, Med-long finish
"Great nose – cassis, cherry, blackberry, herbs. Very different character, but good complexity and balance, with soft, velvety tannins. It should age 5 – 7 years, but also good to drink now."
- GUEST PANELIST:**
- Linda** **Fruit:** slightly excessive; **Acid:** ideal; **Tannin:** slightly lacking / Med-light body, Med-long finish
"Has jam berries – a really pretty wine. I like the way it rolls to the back of my tongue with a little spice. I'd buy this one."



WINE “F”

2003 LAUREL GLEN
Sonoma Mountain

Estate
CA

\$55
14.5% alcohol

Patrick and Faith Campbell started Laurel Glen in 1977 with the goal of making traditional wines using natural yeasts, gravity flow whenever possible, and hand punch down during fermentation. The grapes come from thirty-five acres of vines, planted at 1000 ft. above Glen Ellen and are sustainably and organically farmed. The Estate Cabernet spends 22 months in new French oak barrels, is racked 8 – 10 times to soften the mountain fruit tannins and remove sediment. The wine is 100% Cabernet and should age nicely for 5 – 10 years.

PANEL EVALUATIONS AND COMMENTS

- Donna** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Med-long finish
“Some plums and roses and cherries on the nose. It opens up nicely and gets better as it goes. It's a nice Cab, but a little hot. For all six Cabernets we tasted, I just want a simple roast chicken, with the browned skin left on, to show off these wines!”
- James M** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive; **Acid:** Excessive; **Tannin:** Lacking / Medium body, Med-short finish.
“Red fruit and spice aromas. Light, but with a creamy mouthfeel and some tartness.”
- Mary** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive; **Acid:** Excessive; **Tannin:** Ideal / Med-full body, Med-long finish
“I enjoyed the wine, but it isn't for the faint of heart. It is extremely flavorful, complex and fruity. The food to accompany it would need to be very flavorful as well to balance it. It's somewhat hot, but the more I sipped the more I liked it. ”
- James H** **Fruit, Acid and Tannin:** All ideal and in balance / Medium body, Medium finish.
“Aromas of cherries and cocoa. Dense and structured wine that would be fantastic with the alcohol toned down a bit. Finish is like cardamom and it should age 3 -5 years.”
- Debra** **Fruit:** Excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** Very excessive / Med-full body, Long finish
“Complex nose of dark Bing cherries, blueberries, mushrooms, violets and rose petals. Soft, then a tantalizing briary finish with coffee and chocolate. I could sip this without food.”
- Rob** **Fruit and Acid:** Slightly excessive; **Tannin:** Ideal / Medium body, Med-long finish
“An intriguing wine. Cocoa-dusted berries, maybe a touch of cinnamon, but not sweet. There's a spicy quality in the finish. Could age 7 – 10 years.”
- Von** **Fruit:** Excessive; **Acid:** Ideal; **Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Med-full body, Long finish
“Yummy nose – cherries, other fruit aromas. Fruit predominated in this wine. I find this is a big, dense fruit-forward wine with some hotness from the alcohol showing through. Could go well with a chunk of anything with protein and a big, flavorful, slightly sweet sauce over it.

GUEST PANELIST:

- Linda** **Fruit:** Slightly excessive; **Acid and Tannin:** Slightly lacking / Medium body, Med-long finish
“Yum! Looks like, smells like, and tastes like Cabernet. It's a bit too tangy and tart for me, but it's also a pretty wine, and I'd probably buy it.”

AND FINALLY...

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO...

THE SUPPORTERS / ENABLERS, WHO HAVE GIVEN THE PANEL THE NECESSARY BOOST TO HELP IT FLY.

Linda and Donna, owners of **PELICAN GALLERY** in Petaluma who continue to so graciously offer their beautiful gallery for our tastings. Linda is our much appreciated, ongoing guest panel member.

**SEE YOU NEXT MONTH FOR MORE
WINES TO EXPLORE,
MORE WINES TO ENJOY!**

