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*Wine Spectator* senior editor James Laube introduced the makers of some of the best new California Cabernet Sauvignons.

Jean Phillips of Screaming Eagle, who poured her opulent Napa Valley wine, was an audience favorite.

Bill Harlan makes one of the most sought-after Cabernets in California today.

# An Up-Close Look at Some of California's Latest Cabernet Gems

**E**ight of California's hottest new Cabernet Sauvignons were presented in a tasting led by *Wine Spectator* senior editor and Cab expert James Laube on Saturday, Oct. 25. It provided a rare opportunity to try some trendsetting wines that can be hard to find outside the Golden State.

All of the wines were from the 1994 vintage, which Laube has rated as the best of the 1990s so far. Along with his commentary, he introduced the vintners responsible for making these gems.

"The wines were chosen to reflect different areas in California and different styles today," Laube said. Six wines, however, were from Napa Valley. Gallo of Sonoma was from Sonoma County; Bernardus Carmel Valley Marinus was made in Monterey County. Yet all three regions are marked by a great diversity of microclimates, which express themselves differently

in their respective grapes' flavors.

Truchard Carneros 1994 was presented by Tony Truchard, better known for his dynamic Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Smooth, focused and refined, this intense wine was loaded with black cherry, cedar, cassis and anise flavors, all intertwined with seamless elegance. It's made in Napa Valley but in the southernmost corner, cool Carneros. The Truchard stood in contrast to Jean Phillips' Screaming Eagle, a vividly opulent wine made in Oakville, a warmer part of Napa Valley.

While all the wines tasted showed beautifully, Screaming Eagle, made in minuscule amounts, was clearly the crowd's favorite. It was charged with raspberry, currant, cassis, spice and smoke flavors, with a velvety texture and a long, supple finish. "Why walk when you can fly?" said Phillips to the enthusiastic tasters who wondered where the name

Screaming Eagle originated.

Former Indianapolis 500 race-car driver Randy Lewis was on hand to present his Lewis Cellars Napa Valley Cabernet 1994. "I did five Indianapolis 500s in front of thousands of spectators," Lewis began, "and I wasn't as nervous as I am today." He had little to fear. His wine, ripe, robust and intense, passed with flying colors.

Other vintners in attendance were Robert Craig, who planted the Mount Veeder vineyard, now owned by The Hess Collection, and who now has his own Robert Craig label; Randy Snowden, whose family has grown grapes in Napa Valley since the 1950s, but who made his first Snowden wine in 1993; Bill Harlan, whose Harlan Estate is one of the most sought-after Cabernets in Napa today; Gina Gallo of Gallo of Sonoma; and Ben Pon of Bernardus, in Carmel Valley.

—Jeff Morgan