

# The New York Times

## In Napa, Some Wineries Choose the Old Route (Excerpts)

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THE POUR - By Eric Asimov

. . . The prevailing style of Napa cabernet today emphasizes power, weight and extravagance, but Frog's Leap is one of a small but significant number of cabernet producers that form a kind of alternate Napa universe. They are making wines of balance and restraint that are a direct link to Napa's past, when wines like the Inglenook forged the region's reputation as a source of great cabernet sauvignon wines . . .

. . . These wines are often derided by critics as rustic or green. That's a damning term in today's Napa that refers not only to the vegetal quality that comes from underripe fruit but also to any herbal aromas and flavors, which to my mind are integral to cabernet sauvignon. . . .

. . . Many producers of the big, modern style assert that up-to-date vineyard practices, improved grape clones and vastly more sophisticated winemaking techniques dictate the style of their wines. They point to current notions of physiological ripeness, that is, judging the ripeness of a grape not merely by its sugar content but by when the tannins and seeds are no longer green. Sometimes achieving the desired level of seed and tannin ripeness requires far more "hang time" on the vine, resulting in much sweeter grapes than in decades past. Years ago, cabernet grapes might be harvested at 23 or 24 on the Brix scale of sweetness. Nowadays, producers of ultra-ripe cabernets routinely harvest grapes at 28, 29 or even 30 Brix.

But to get more restrained cabernets, producers find ways to insure full ripeness at a much lower sugar level.

**Eric Asimov recommends checking out these Producers** - *Following are some producers of balanced, restrained Napa cabernets: Truchard Vineyards . . . as well as Chateau Montelena, Clark-Claudon Vineyards, Clos du Val, Continuum, Corison Winery, Dominus Estate, Dyer, Forman Vineyard, Frog's Leap, Grgich Hills, HdV Vineyards, Heitz Cellar, J. Davies, Joseph Carr, Kongsgaard, Mayacamas Vineyards, M by Michael Mondavi, Rubicon Estate, Seps Estate, Smith-Madrone, Spottswoode Estate, Tom Eddy Wines, Trefethen Family Vineyards, White Rock Vineyards*

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