

## WINERY STORY



## REALM

BY LISA PERROTTI-BROWN MW

Founded in 2002, Realm is a young producer by global standards, yet one of Napa Valley's most sought-after names worldwide. The past couple of decades have been a rollercoaster with plenty of ups, downs, twists, and leadership turns. Most recently, in early 2025, it was announced that Realm's superstar winemaker, Benoit Touquette, was stepping back into a consulting role. Managing partner, Scott Becker, sees this as "more of an evolution than a revolution." With two new hires in charge of the day-to-day viticulture and winemaking, it's clearer than ever that the only constant at Realm is change.



THE ONLY CONSTANT IS CHANGE

– Heraclitus

## 2002-2015 – This blessed plot, this earth, this Realm.

Realm was co-founded by Juan Mercado in the early 2000s. Mercado had been a medic in the army during the Gulf War and then came to work as a nurse at a hospital in Oakland, California, before moving to Napa. He caught the winemaking bug, and in 2002, with the help of friends in the industry, he was able to buy a few tons of Beckstoffer To Kalon fruit plus a little fruit from Dominus to make his own wine. By 2010, production had gone from just a few hundred cases to 2,500 cases.

In 2011, French-born winemaker Benoit Touquette came on board. Touquette had studied Chemistry and Oenology at Bordeaux University and worked at several Bordeaux wineries before arriving in California to work with wine consultant Andy Erickson. In the early 2000s, he quickly made a name for himself, working at Screaming Eagle, Ovid, and Dalla Valle. Realm was less well-known, but Touquette was drawn to the spirit of this project. He brought along his friend and mentor Michel Rolland as a consultant, adding the cherry on top of this emerging recipe for success.

Come 2011, Realm was doing everything right, but it all went horribly wrong. Like so many wineries that purchase fruit and live hand to mouth, the team was one difficult vintage away from disaster. That vintage was the cold, rainy wash-out that was 2011. The business was about to hit a financial wall.

Then, one fateful day in 2011, a young Air Force veteran and Harvard Business School Graduate named Scott Becker walked into a bar and sat down next to Mercado. Becker had been working for Bill Harlan for a few years but dreamt of striking out on his own. Before long, Becker found himself joining forces with Juan Mercado and Benoit Touquette. He had the secret ingredient they were missing—business acumen.

## WINERY INFORMATION

**Region:** USA, California, Napa Valley

**Address:** 5795 Silverado Trail,  
Napa, CA 94558

**Open for Tastings:** By Appointment  
Only

**Major Grapes:** Cabernet Franc,  
Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot

**Vineyard Size:** 40 acres (owned)

**Own Winery:** Yes

**DTC Mailing List:** Yes

**Vineyard Sustainability:** NA

**Year Established:** 2002

**Owner:** Scott Becker  
(Managing Partner)

**Winemaker:** Benoit Touquette,  
Chris Cooney, Kelly Fields

**Website:**  
<https://www.realmcellars.com/>



Benoit Touquette and Scott Becker



By the end of 2011, debts at Realm were spiraling out of control. Juan, Benoit, and Scott had to restart Realm in early 2012. At the time, the business was bankrupt. But, with Scott's financial know-how, they decided it was worth trying to turn things around. Scott bought out Juan's old business partner, but that didn't leave much capital to invest in the company. 2012, '13 and '14 were skinny years. Benoit became active in the vineyards, working with growers to fine-tune farming standards. They were making the wines at Chateau Boswell, which was great, but it wasn't the same as having their own home. Juan and Scott traveled across the country selling wine to whoever they could. There was a lot of back-vintage wine to move, which in theory was good for cash flow, but these were older wines not made by Benoit, wines that didn't necessarily show the future.

"I could tell stories for days about what it was like to try to turn around a brand," said Scott. "Lots of heartache, holding onto hope, cleaning up an old mess, repairing relationships with vendors who weren't paid, earning back trust from consumers who were promised something that never materialized. But through those scrappy years, the thing that kept us going was tasting the wines in barrel from 2012. We thought if we could just hold on until we put those 2012 wines onto the market, there was a chance Realm could turn into something special."



## MOST RECENT REVIEWS FOR THIS WINERY

2023 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer  
Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon  
-100 points

2023 Realm Cellars Hartwell XX  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
- 97 points

2023 Realm Cellars Houyi Vineyard  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
- 98 points

2023 Realm Cellars The Absurd  
-98 points

2023 Realm Cellars Heavenly Questions  
Houyi Cabernet Franc  
- 98 points

2023 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer  
To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Franc  
- 98 points

2023 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer  
To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon  
- 100 points

2023 Realm Cellars Farella Vineyard  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
- 98 points

2023 Realm Cellars Moonracer  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
- 97 points

2023 Realm Cellars The Bard  
- 96 points

Published: September 2025

When the moment of truth came, so much was riding on Robert Parker's assessment of Realm's 2012 vintage. His reviews of the 2011s had been disastrously lackluster, with just one wine receiving a 90-point score, and the rest were in the 80s—the kiss of death. At the end of October 2014, Parker published his annual Wine Advocate Napa report, focused on the 2012 new releases. Realm's Dr. Crane Vineyard and The Absurd both received 100 points, with no label scoring below 96.

"The meaning of tasting those 2012 wines with Bob..." Becker said, "...we will never forget that, and we continue to wake up every day trying to live up to the opportunity he gave us."

Realm was back in business.

### **2014-2016 – Back in the Black.**

In 2015, the team at Realm took the next step toward achieving their dream. They purchased a home—the Hartwell Winery and vineyards located just off the Silverado Trail in Stags Leap District, up on Wappo Hill. "To go from struggling for survival to being able to farm our own vineyards, it's hard to overstate the significance of that," Becker said. "We worked our tails off to get here, but we are still constantly humbled by the gravity and responsibility we now carry to be stewards of the land. When you are just buying fruit, you are living year to year. When you plant your own vineyard, you have to be thinking about the next 30 or 40 years."

The team named their new home vineyard "Moonracer," paying homage to the Wappo indigenous people of Northern California, who once used the hill as a central lookout. Jack London, who wrote about the competitions among Native American tribes that took place during full moons, noted that the Wappos often won. Thus, Moonracer is a reference to this heritage.

"The vineyard is made up of about twelve acres in production at the moment, with another eight acres in the stage of replanting, so ultimately, we will have twenty acres surrounding the winery," Becker informed me at the time of purchase. "The original Hartwell blocks at the top of the hill are planted to two acres today, but we hope to expand that to five acres or more in time."

The acquisition of their new base kick-started a massive project to build a new winery, expand the cellars, and restructure the vineyards. Make no mistake, this was a huge financial bet—all or nothing.



Moonracer Vineyard

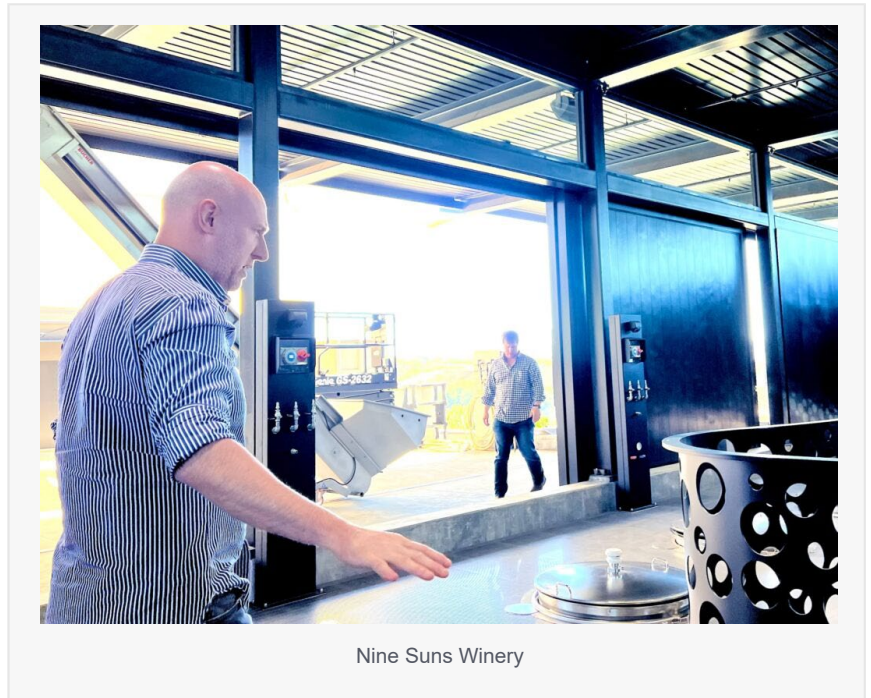
## 2016-2024 – Beyond the Realm of Possibilities.

In 2018, Juan Mercado parted ways with Realm to start his own new passion project in Paso Robles called RIISE. Since then, Realm continued to grow under Becker's and Touquette's management. Its juggernaut rate of development and expansion was nothing short of jaw-dropping.

Today, Realm has an impressive winery and underground cellar facility in Stags Leap. Surrounding this is the Moonracer vineyard, which underwent a costly redevelopment project that involved shifting a literal mountain of topsoil to install a state-of-the-art drainage system. Not forgetting the old Hartwell Estate vineyard on top of the hill, which is in the process of replanting. And, from 2018, Becker and Touquette entered into an agreement with Farella Vineyard in Coombsville, taking over the farming and management of the site, rendering it, for all intents and purposes, an estate vineyard.

In 2022, Realm purchased Houyi Vineyard and the accompanying Nine Suns Winery within the illustrious neighborhood of Pritchard Hill, placing them in the big leagues.

“We were purchasing fruit from Houyi Vineyard for years (since 2013), but the previous owners would keep the blocks they wanted for their label, and we got what they gave us,” said Scott. “We only ever got Cabernet Sauvignon. When we purchased the vineyard, there were 21 acres planted here, with one acre fallow. We’ve since grafted over three acres to Cabernet Franc. We have 18 acres producing this year.”



Nine Suns Winery

## 2025 Onwards – The Only Constant is Change.

Napa Valley's Realm Cellars has always been a winery in motion, but the past year has marked a particularly significant turning point. After more than a decade as the creative force behind Realm's wines, winemaker Benoit Touquette has stepped back into a consulting role, opening the door for a new leadership structure that Managing Partner Scott Becker describes as “the best of both worlds.”

“Benoit was the guiding force behind the Realm wines since the 2011 vintage,” Becker said. “Yet he always had a handful of his own personal projects, and that was important to him for his creative freedom. As Realm grew, it took on more estate vineyards, and it became clear that Realm needed someone in a full-time, dedicated role.”

The solution was a division of responsibilities: Chris Cooney, previously with Dana Estates, now serves as Realm's winegrower/head of viticulture, while Kelly Fields, from Tench Vineyard and Joseph Phelps, takes the role as winemaker. Touquette remains involved, advising on blending, participating in vineyard walks, and key technical decisions.



"In some ways, I see this arrangement as the best of both worlds—we get to keep Benoit's creative spark and palate around the wines, while at the same time building a strong leadership team who is committed to the quality of both the wines and our culture," Becker explained.

Touquette's move to a consulting role also coincided with the end of Michel Rolland's involvement with Realm. The renowned Bordeaux consultant had been a trusted voice for the winery since its early days. "Michel had a huge impact on Realm," Becker acknowledged. "He took a chance on us all those years ago when we were trying to find our way. I will forever be grateful to Michel for his contributions." Over its two-decade history, Realm's "house style" has never been static. Becker notes that the wines have steadily evolved from dense, rich bottlings in the early 2010s to fresher, more precise expressions today. "The key for me is evolution not revolution," he stressed. "In the early years—2012, '13, '14—I would say there was more emphasis on richness. By 2018, I would say we started to focus more on freshness, without trying to compromise on the density in the midpalate."



Kelly Fields, Chris Cooney, and Scott Becker

This shift, Becker explained, reflects not only stylistic decisions but also the winery's transformation from tenant to landowner. "We went from buying all our fruit and renting space in someone else's winery to owning our own vineyards and making wine in our own home," he said. "That's a transformation that few are lucky to make." Today, Becker describes Realm wines as "giants who are light on their feet," aiming for both early approachability and the capacity to age gracefully for decades. "Greatness is ultimately defined by a measure of time," he said. "It's not just how these wines show young. The greatest wines on the planet have the ability to age gracefully for decades."

Now that Realm stewards three estate vineyards—Houyi, Farella, and Moonracer—the team is working to refine its approach block by block. With Cooney and Fields walking vineyards daily, Becker says the emphasis is on listening to what each site wants to express.

"The microclimate at Houyi is very different than Farella, as one example," he said. "So why should we expect that fermentations or barrel ageing should be similar for those two, when the underlying fruit composition is naturally different? We are running experiments this year using different coopers, different thickness of staves or seasoning for different wine components."

That commitment to site specificity, he stressed, is part of a long-term journey. "Winegrowing is always trying to solve multiple equations with multiple variables simultaneously. Our intent is clear—showcase

a portfolio of single vineyard wines that reflect the diversity and greatness of Napa Valley. How we get there is always evolving. It's a work in progress, and to some extent it always will be. I still believe our best wines are in front of us. And the day we stop believing that, we should hang it up."

If the last decade at Realm has been defined by transformation, the next promises refinement. Becker sees the winery's role as balancing artistry and audience—pushing stylistic evolution while bringing drinkers along for the journey.

"As I get older, or maybe as Realm matures, I sense that our wines can become more focused, more precise...they don't have to shout but rather they can be quietly confident," Becker said. "We must also be mindful that an artist needs an audience. Our role is to bring our audience along with us for the journey...and I recognize that it's a lifelong journey to discover the real essence or expression of the Realm house style."



## Recent Vintages

### The 2021 Vintage

Realm continues to outsource some fruit for a few top labels, most notably from Beckstoffer's Dr. Crane and To Kalon vineyards, but they are increasingly becoming estate-driven. As for quality, after a non-existent 2020 vintage (they took the difficult decision not to bottle and sell any reds because of potential smoke taint), with 2021, the team was firing on all cylinders again.

"In 2021, gentle extraction was key," said Benoit. "It was easy for the wine to go too far, to be too much. Ripe but not over-ripe, that's 2021."

A couple of wines not made in 2021 are the Cabernet Franc-based wines. Falstaff is only made occasionally and was not made in 2020, 2021, or 2022.

Also, the last vintage of the Beckstoffer's Bourn Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon label is 2021.

A new wine in the 2021 line-up was the Nine Suns label, named after the former winery. This is a one-time wine, made only in 2021 to commemorate the Realm purchase. Nine Suns' former winemaking consultant, Philippe Melka, crafted the wine, and the Realm team blended and bottled it. "Our first instinct was to blend it in with our Houyi Vineyard wine," said Scott. "But this wine is constructed so differently. We wanted to honor what Philippe did. So, this is a one-off label." Only 500 cases were made, and the fruit is all from the Houyi vineyard.

Realm has finished preexisting contracts to sell fruit from Farella and Houyi Vineyards, keeping the production for Realm's wines.

“It’s an important part of our business plan,” said Scott. “Now, we’re making wines with more freshness, precision, and structure because we’re now in control of all the variables. We’re more in control of our winemaking and fruit sources.”

### The 2022 Vintage

Coming on the heels of an impressive but small 2021 crop, 2022 was tracking to be a relatively effortless vintage for Napa Valley until Mother Nature decided to throw growers a heatwave curve ball during the first week of September. Many winemakers were able to bring in some fruit before and during this heat event, but a significant portion of the Bordeaux varieties were not ripe at this stage. Most Napa vintners would need to ride the potentially devastating wave for a proportion of their crop. Fortunately, similarly timed heatwaves had occurred in 2017 and 2020, so evasive maneuvers were ready to be deployed.



As the early September heatwave approached, the two major choices were stark: 1) Pick what was ripe or close to ripe before and during the heatwave, or 2) Ride the heatwave out with whatever irrigation, shade cloth, and mister strategies you had. Knowing this, I expect to see some under-ripe 2022 Napa Cabernet expressions on one end of the spectrum, and some desiccated fruit and VA-stripped train wrecks at the other. This said, Realm did a really great job of toning down the possible deleterious aftermath of both major harvest options.

“One of the big saviors in 2022 was having the extra tank space at Nine Suns (the winery on Pritchard Hill purchased by Realm in June 2022),” Scott pointed out. “We had to harvest quickly, and being able to process everything as it was coming in was a real advantage.”

“We pulled in what we could before the heatwave,” said Benoit. “We wanted to capture more crunchy fruit and tension for the Merlot. By September 5th, the peak of the heat, we had all the Merlot in.”

The Tempest, mostly Merlot, is a lovely surprise in 2022. Merlot has a broader ripening spectrum than Cabernet and very little tolerance for extreme heat, so most, including Realm, brought their Merlots in before the heatwave. I love this 2022 brighter, fresher Tempest (maybe even prefer it?). The other big, pleasant surprise is Dr. Crane Vineyard. Benoit chose to harvest this before the heat, which was a brave move. I find him to be one of Dr. Crane’s most skilled crafters, and he really pulled this 2022 off. It’s a more elegant, shimmery wine—so counterintuitive to the vintage—and similar in style to what Sam Kaplan does with Dr. Crane for Memento Mori.

“Houyi Vineyard, we also picked early,” said Benoit. “We saw what was happening, and it was like, ‘Just go, go, go!’ We picked from September 2nd onwards, same as Dr. Crane.”

The heat hit hard on Pritchard Hill, and so Houyi was picked through the heatwave. This vineyard needed a lot of selection—nearly 30% of the fruit was discarded. It’s an excellent wine, given the circumstances.



To Kalon came in not long after the heatwave. Andy Beckstoffer's crew did an amazing job getting this vineyard through the storm. I've now tasted a few different To Kalon 2022s made by other wineries, and they are also impressive.

"The vineyards that were most sensitive to the heat were those that were closest to being ready," said Benoit. "Farella wasn't close to ripe, so we let it hang. The fruit that was further behind did better than the fruit right on the ripeness line. After the heatwave, we went through and cleaned up the vineyard by clipping away the raisins. We also had to go through and inspect the vines to figure out if the vine was finished or if it was still progressing after the heat. If the vine isn't functioning, you have to pick."

Farella Vineyard (Coombsville) and the Stags Leap District vineyards (Moonracer and Hartwell XX) weren't ready when the heat hit and rode the wave. Again, there was a lot of selection here, but the wines are not that far off 2021 in terms of quality and fruit style. The big difference is the structure. 2021 is a more structured vintage—more acidity and tannins (and riper tannins)—and the 2021 wines will be longer lived than their 2022 counterparts.

Meanwhile, The Bard and Absurd are delicious uber-blends that don't miss a beat. "We did a lot more aging in concrete in 2022 to maintain the brightness," said Benoit. I asked Benoit if he back blended the 2022s with the 2023 vintage, which is permitted in Napa up to 5%. "We used a little 2023 in some of the blends," he said. "But it was a very different animal, so we couldn't use too much. We wound up using 2 or 3% at most, even though we could have gone up to 5%."

## The 2023 Vintage

2023 was a growing season anomaly for Napa Valley. It was cool—similar to 2011 but without the harvest rains. Following a series of vintages dogged by heat domes, winemakers in Napa spent much of the summer of 2023 bracing for a scorching heat event that never transpired. Only a single day barely tipped 100 degrees F in early July. Otherwise, daytime highs were firmly in the 80s and 90s. On top of the relatively cool temperatures, the valley returned to the foggy summer mornings of yore. Most areas were regularly blanketed with mist from early morning until 10 or 11 a.m.; sometimes, the sun didn't break through until afternoon. In the run-up to harvest, more than a few growers were panicking that the fruit might not achieve full ripeness. Fortunately, the weather turned slightly warmer and sunnier coming into autumn, and it remained dry. Those who had their yields in balance were well-placed to just go with the flow and wait for ripeness.



Benoit Touquette crafted these 2023s with newcomers Chris Cooney and Kelly Fields helping with the final blends and bottling. "The nature of 2023 really allowed the individual sites to show," said Scott Becker.

The vibrant expressiveness of Realm's 2023 wines beautifully highlights the Grand Cru terroirs of Beckstoffer's To Kalon and Dr. Crane, while also demonstrating the potential of the estate vineyards. Additionally, the wines serve as a stunning send-off for Benoit Touquette's tenure and a strong springboard for launching the new team.

2023

### 100 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Chinese Five Spice, Violets, Loam, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Velvety Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Oakville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is composed of 99% Cabernet Sauvignon and 1% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet-purple colored, after a little swirling, the nose erupts with a powerful perfume of cassis, violets, and juicy blackberries, giving way to underlying Chinese five spice, dusty soil, and garrigue hints. Full-bodied, the palate is classic To Kalon—rich and structured with firm yet velvety tannins and bags of freshness, finishing long and ferrous. Gorgeous!

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### 98 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Franc

Intense, Fragrant, Red Fruit, Roses, Pencil Lead, Lavender, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Oakville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Franc

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Franc is composed of 98% Cabernet Franc and 2% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple colored, fragrant wafts of red currant preserves, rose bud tea, graphite, and lavender oil lead from the glass, followed by hints of bay leaves and damp soil. The full-bodied palate is graceful and fragrant with intense red and blackberry layers and lots of minerally spark, supported by fine-grained tannins and seamless freshness, finishing long and chalky. So beautiful!

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### 100 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Blueberries, Dark Chocolate, Violets, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, St. Helena

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is a blend of 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple colored, it is quite closed at this youthful stage, eventually unfurling to offer glimpses of crème de cassis, blueberry compote, and dark chocolate, leading to touches of lilacs, Provence herbs, crushed rocks, and underbrush. The concentrated, full-bodied palate is densely laden with black fruit preserves and perfumed floral and earth accents, supported by super-firm, grainy tannins and a lively line, finishing very long and decadent. Classic Crane.

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### 97 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Hartwell XX Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Forest Floor, Cedar, Black Olives, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Notable Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Stags Leap District

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Hartwell XX Cabernet Sauvignon is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple in color, it comes barreling out with bold notes of blackcurrant preserves, juicy black plums, and cedar chest, plus suggestions of underbrush, tapenade, and fertile loam with an exotic waft of cumin seed. The full-bodied palate is taut and structured with muscular black fruit, finishing long and spicy.

## 98 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Houyi Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Sandalwood, Black Pepper, Earthy, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Houyi Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is a blend of 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Cabernet Franc, and 1% Merlot. Deep garnet-purple colored, notes of blueberry pie and plum preserves erupt from the glass, plus nuances of black pepper, anise, tapenade, and mossy tree bark, with a fragrant waft of sandalwood. The full-bodied palate delivers impactful black fruit preserves layers with a firm, grainy texture and plenty of freshness, finishing long and perfumed. Gorgeous!

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## 98 points - 2023 Realm Cellars The Absurd

Powerful, Juicy, Black Fruit, Chinese Five Spice, Forest Floor, Dark Chocolate, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 The Absurd is very deep garnet-purple colored. After a little shaking, the nose detonates with explosive scents of preserved plums, blueberry pie, and crème de cassis, followed by hints of Indian spices, potpourri, forest floor, and chocolate box. The full-on, full-bodied palate is concentrated and decadent, delivering a firm backbone of grainy tannins and just enough freshness, finishing with epic length.

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## 98 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Heavenly Questions Houyi Cabernet Franc

Opulent, Bright, Red Fruit, Blueberries, Violets, Baking Spices, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Oakville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Franc

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Heavenly Questions Houyi Cabernet Franc is composed of 95% Cabernet Franc and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple colored, it prances out with showy notes of kirsch, black raspberries, and wild blueberries, leading to an undercurrent of violets, aniseed, fallen leaves, and iron ore with a hint of cinnamon stick. The full-bodied palate has bright, shimmery red and blue fruit flavors with firm, finely grained tannins and a refreshing line, finishing long and perfumed. Fantastic Franc! Only about 200 cases made.

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## 98 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Farella Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Roses, Cedar, Licorice, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Notable Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Coombsville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Farella Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple colored, it gallops out with powerful notes of black currant jelly and black cherries, leading to wafts of red roses, licorice, cedar, fallen leaves, and black truffles. The full-bodied palate is tight-knit and multi-layered with loads of mineral nuances coming through, supported by firm, ripe, grainy tannins and seamless freshness, finishing long and earthy. Stunning.



## 97 points - 2023 Realm Cellars Moonracer Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Red Berries, Pencil Lead, Minty, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Stags Leap District

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 Moonracer Cabernet Sauvignon is 99% Cabernet Sauvignon and 1% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet-purple colored, it charges out with vibrant notes of crushed blackberries and red currant jelly, giving way to hints of pencil shavings, wild thyme, clove oil, and mint tea. Full-bodied, the palate is tightly wound with taut, muscular black and red berry layers, supported by firm, grainy tannins and a lively line, finishing on a lingering minty note.

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## 96 points - 2023 Realm Cellars The Bard

Intense, Juicy, Black Fruit, Cedar, Black Olives, Earthy, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Notable Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** This was the last wine bottled—in August 2025. To be released in Spring 2026. The 2023 The Bard is composed of 75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, and 5% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet-purple colored, it needs a fair bit of shaking to wake up notes of juicy blackcurrants and ripe plums, leading to hints of cedar, pencil lead, wild sage, black olives, and tilled soil. Full-bodied, the palate is plush and juicy with lots of fragrant savory/earthy layers restraining the ripe black fruit flavors, finishing with impressive length.

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## 95 points - 2023 Realm Cellars The Tempest

Intense, Bright, Black Fruit, Blueberries, Lavender, Cedar, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Notable Oak, Velvety Texture, Medium Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Merlot

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2023 The Tempest is a blend of 61% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc, 24% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 3% Petite Sirah. Deep garnet-purple colored, it sails out of the glass with energetic notes of wild blueberries and black raspberries, giving way to an undercurrent of lavender, dark chocolate, cedar chest, and star anise. The full-bodied palate delivers nice bright black and blue fruit layers with lots of spicy sparks and a velvety texture, finishing long and satisfyingly opulent.

**98 points** - 2022 Realm Cellars Hartwell XX Cabernet Sauvignon

Opulent, Juicy, Black Fruit, Red Berries, Pencil Lead, Black Olives, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Stags Leap District

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2022 Hartwell XX Cabernet Sauvignon is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple in color, it opens with a classic nose of blackcurrant cordial, red currant jelly, and pencil shavings, followed by slowly emerging nuances of iris bulb, black olives, and Indian spices. The full-bodied palate delivers a rock-solid structure of firm, grainy tannins and just enough freshness, finishing long and spicy. Only 200 cases were made from this tiny 1.5-acre plot of mature vines.

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**96 points** - 2022 Realm Cellars Moonracer Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bright, Black Fruit, Baking Spices, Minty, Roses, Medium to Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Chewy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Stags Leap District

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2022 Moonracer Cabernet Sauvignon is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple colored, it shimmies out of the glass with energetic scents of red currant jelly, Morello cherries, mint tea, and rose oil, followed by suggestions of clove oil, cinnamon toast, and graphite. The medium to full-bodied palate delivers lightly chewy tannins and impressive freshness to frame the baking spice-laced red berry flavors, finishing with a minty lift.

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**96 points** - 2022 Realm Cellars The Tempest

Opulent, Juicy, Red Fruit, Lavender, Licorice, Dried Herbs, Medium to Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, Medium Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Merlot

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2022 The Tempest is a blend of 67% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Franc, and 23% Cabernet Sauvignon. Deep garnet-purple colored, it comes skipping out of the glass with bright, cheery notes of black raspberries, mulberries, and kirsch, leading to hints of lavender, wild sage, and aniseed. The medium to full-bodied palate delivers bright, crunchy fruit with firm, fine-grained tannins and great tension, finishing on a lingering peppery note. This was bottled in March 2024.

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**97 points** - 2022 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Opulent, Juicy, Blue Fruit, Violets, Cedar, Chinese Five Spice, Medium to Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Notable Oak, Chewy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Oakville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2022 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is composed of 94% Cabernet Sauvignon and 6% Cabernet Franc. Deep garnet-purple colored, it prances out of the glass with showy scents of violets, dark chocolate, juicy blueberries, and kirsch, leading to hints of menthol, cedar chest, and Chinese five spice. The medium to full-bodied palate offers layers of exotic spices and earthy nuances, supported by firm, lightly chewy tannins and plenty of freshness, finishing with epic length. That classic To Kalon power really comes through on the finish!

## 99 points - 2022 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bright, Black Fruit, Crushed/Wet Rocks, Earthy, Dried Herbs, Medium to Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, St. Helena

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2022 Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon was one of Realm's first harvests that year, coming in just before the early September heat hit. The blend is 96% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot. Deep garnet-purple colored, it shoots from the glass with bold notes of fresh blackberries and blackcurrants, plus hints of crushed rocks, dried sage, and fragrant earth. The medium to full-bodied palate is electric with black fruit and mineral layers, supported by firm, grainy tannins and incredible tension, finishing long and earthy. This is on the crunchier side of Dr. Crane fruit, and I love it!

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## 97 points - 2022 Realm Cellars Farella Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Opulent, Juicy, Blue Fruit, Cassis, Pencil Lead, Dried Herbs, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Coombsville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2022 Farella Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Merlot, sporting a deep garnet-purple color. After a bit of shaking, the nose erupts with vibrant wild blueberry and fresh blackberry scents, soon opening out to classic cassis, pencil lead, and bay leaves notes with a touch of tree bark. The full-bodied palate is tightly wound with muscular black fruits and firm, grainy tannins, finishing long with lots of earthy nuances coming through. Clearly, Farella managed this challenging vintage very well. Impressive!

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## 95 points -2022 Realm Cellars The Bard

Opulent, Juicy, Black Fruit, Vanilla, Licorice, Dark Chocolate, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Velvety Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2022 The Bard is composed of 87% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petit Verdot, 1% Petite Sirah, and 1% Charbono. Deep garnet-purple colored, it needs a little swirling to bring out a fruity core of crème de cassis and baked plums, leading to hints of cedar, vanilla pod, licorice, and dark chocolate with a touch of saffron. The full-bodied palate is velvety textured with bags of juicy black fruits and well-knit freshness, finishing on a lingering licorice note. This was bottled in mid-July 2024.



## 97 points - 2021 Realm Cellars The Tempest

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Cassis, Baking Spices, Minty, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, Medium Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Merlot

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** Deep garnet-purple colored, the 2021 The Tempest comes bounding out with exuberant notes of wild blueberries, juicy plums, and boysenberry preserves, leading to a core of warm cassis, spice cake, aniseed, and menthol. The full-bodied palate is chock-full of black and blue fruit layers, framed by firm, grainy tannins, and bold freshness, finishing with lingering mineral sparks and a refreshing lift. It is delicious right now, though has the structure and muscle to age a good 20+ years in cellar. With this fresher, more vibrant style change, in 2021 Realm presented a bright, modern new label for The Tempest, created by the UK artist Richard Twose. The blend this year is 75% Merlot, 20% Cabernet Sauvignon, and 5% Malbec.

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## 96 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Moonracer Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Lavender, Dark Chocolate, Minty, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Velvety Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Stags Leap District

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2021 Moonracer is a single vineyard wine from Realm's vineyard in Stags Leap District. "The wine is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon this year because the vineyard is being replanted," said winemaker Benoit Touquette. "The Merlot and Cabernet Franc were pulled, and the new plantings aren't in production yet. By the time we're done, we will have replanted all this vineyard. Then a true footprint of the place will be in this wine." Deep garnet-purple colored, gregarious notes of blackberry pie, black cherries, and black currant pastilles prance out of the glass, leading to fragrant wafts of lavender, chocolate mint, and cinnamon stick. Full-bodied, the palate is taut with ripe, crunchy black fruits, supported by a solid frame of grainy tannins and compelling tension, finishing long with loads of mineral and baking spice sparks. 720 cases were made.

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## 98 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Chinese Five Spice, Loam, Licorice, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Oakville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2021 Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon has 5% Cabernet Franc in the blend. Deep garnet-purple in color, it explodes with a mushroom cloud of plum preserves, boysenberries, and creme de cassis with an undercurrent of Chinese five spice, cast-iron pan, and aniseed plus a waft of dusty soil. The full-bodied palate is rich and seductive, with firm, grainy tannins and plenty of freshness to support the generous black fruit layers, finishing long and spicy.

## 98 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Houyi Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Prunes, Dried Herbs, Black Olives, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2021 Houyi Vineyard, 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, is deep garnet-purple in color. It comes barreling out with powerful notes of blackcurrant jelly, stewed plums, and fruitcake followed by hints of charcoal, wild sage, mossy tree bark, and black olives. The full-bodied palate delivers a rock-solid frame of firm, grainy tannins and plenty of freshness to support the densely packed black fruits, finishing long and earthy. Just under 1,000 cases were made.

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## 98 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Hartwell XX Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Cedar, Roses, Loam, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Notable Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Stags Leap District

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The jewel sitting atop of the Moonracer Vineyard is the 1.5-acre estate owned Hartwell Vineyard. Only 150 cases were made of the 2021 Hartwell XX Cabernet Sauvignon. This the former Hartwell property, purchased by Realm in 2020, constituting the highest blocks above their Stags Leap District vineyard. The vines originate from budwood acquired by Bob Hartwell from Dick Grace of Grace Family Vineyards in the 1980s. "This is the first year of us getting out hands around the farming," commented owner Scott Becker. Deep garnet-purple colored, it sashays out with flamboyant notions of roses, clove oil, and juicy plums, leading to a core of warm cassis, cedar chest, and fragrant earth, plus a waft of camphor. Full-bodied, the palate bursts with expressive blackberry and baking spices flavors, supported by super-fine, silt-like tannins and seamless freshness, finishing long and minerally.

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## 100 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Crushed/Wet Rocks, Violets, Dark Chocolate, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, St. Helena

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2021 Beckstoffer Dr. Crane Vineyard, with 5% Petit Verdot in the blend, is deep garnet-purple in color. Quite closed to start off, it requires a lot of shaking to wake up notes of blackcurrant pastilles, juicy blackberries, and fresh plums plus suggestions of crushed rocks, candied violets, dark chocolate, and licorice with a touch of iron ore. The full-bodied palate delivers a firm, fine-grained texture and seamless freshness supporting the taut, muscular black fruits, finishing with a firework display of mineral, floral and chocolaty notes.

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## 99 points - 2021 Realm Cellars The Absurd

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Sandalwood, Roses, Cassis, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Youthful

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** Deep garnet-purple in color, the 2021 The Absurd needs a fair bit of swirling to unlock notes of blueberry compote, chocolate-covered cherries, mulberries, and blackcurrant cordial giving way to scents of rose oil, cinnamon stick, and sandalwood plus a touch of garrigue. Full-bodied and jam packed with black fruit and exotic spice layers, the palate has a rock-solid structure of firm, grainy tannins and just enough freshness, finishing long and layered.

## 97 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Farella Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Blueberries, Dark Chocolate, Vanilla, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Velvety Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley, Coombsville

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2021 Farella Cabernet Sauvignon, with 5% Merlot in the blend, is deep garnet-purple in color. It rolls out with playful notes of blueberry compote, chocolate mint, and blackcurrant jelly followed by hints of iris bulb, allspice, and vanilla pod. The full-bodied palate offers chunky, rounded tannins and just enough freshness to support the spicy black fruits, finishing long and perfumed.

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## 97 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Nine Suns Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Cassis, Tar, Tobacco, Full bodied, Moderate Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2021 Nine Suns is composed of 65% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25% Cabernet Franc, and 10% Merlot. Deep garnet-purple in color, it storms out of the glass with powerful notes of baked plums, boysenberry preserves, and creme de cassis followed by suggestions of tar, wet slate, unsmoked cigars, and tapenade. The full-bodied palate is packed with concentrated black fruit and earthy flavors, supported by firm, grainy tannins and just enough freshness, finishing long with a peppery lift. This Nine Suns label, named after the former winery, is a one-time wine made only in 2021, following the Realm purchase of the Nine Suns Winery and the surrounding Houyi Vineyard in 2022. The former winemaking consultant, Philippe Melka, made the wine and the Realm team blended and bottled it. "Our first instinct was to blend it in with our Houyi Vineyard wine," said owner Scott Becker. "But this constructed so differently. We wanted to honor what Philippe did. So, this is a one-off label." Only 500 cases were made, and the fruit is all off the Houyi vineyard.

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## 97 points - 2021 Realm Cellars The Bard

Intense, Bold, Black Fruit, Red Berries, Dark Chocolate, Minty, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Grainy Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** A blend of 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Franc, 3% Petit Verdot, and 1% Petite Sirah, the fruit for the 2021 The Bard comes from sites across the valley, including some estate fruit and some sourced fruit. Deep garnet-purple colored, it shoots from the glass with vibrant notions of crushed black currants, red currant jelly, black raspberries, and pencil shavings, giving way to notes of lilacs, dark chocolate, and a waft of spearmint. The full-bodied palate is firm with ripe, fine-grained tannins and a lively backbone framing the tightly wound red, black, and blue fruit flavors, finishing with great length and a real skip in its step.

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## 96 points - 2021 Realm Cellars Beckstoffer Bourn Cabernet Sauvignon

Intense, Bold, Blue Fruit, Chinese Five Spice, Roses, Licorice, Full bodied, Refreshing Acidity, Subtle Oak, Velvety Texture, High Tannin, Ready to Drink

**REGION:** United States, California, Napa Valley

**MAIN GRAPE VARIETY:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**REVIEWER'S COMMENTS:** The 2021 Beckstoffer Bourn Cabernet Sauvignon, the last vintage of this label, has 5% Petite Sirah in the blend. Deep garnet-purple in color, it charges out of the gate with notes of black cherries, crushed blueberries, Indian spices, and dusty soil leading to wafts of potpourri and star anise. The full-bodied palate is rich, concentrated, and impactful, delivering mouthcoating black and blue fruit preserves supported by a refreshing backbone and velvety tannins, finishing long and opulent.