

Robb Report

FOOD & DRINK / WINE

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13 Wines That Prove 2018 Is One of the Best Vintages of the Decade

These are the Bordeaux-style reds from Napa and Sonoma you should add to your cellar this fall.

By SARA L. SCHNEIDER 

It would be a mistake to think that, in sun-drenched Northern California wine country, all vintages are created equal. It's true that California vineyards rarely struggle to ripen as those in Old World regions often do, but a late frost can threaten after bud break; a sudden August heat spike can send sugar levels surging; a fire...enough said.

But then there was 2018. After several years of drought, generous rain set vineyards up with the moisture they needed. Cool, foggy mornings, warm afternoons and cold nighttime temps—sans heat spikes—held through the summer into fall, giving winemakers the choice to let their fruit hang (without losing crucial acidity), to develop complexity. As it turns out, Mike Sullivan, winemaker and co-owner at Benovia Winery—known for beautiful Pinot Noir and Chardonnay—made Cabernet Sauvignon for the first time under the brand in 2018 (one from Napa and one from Sonoma). It was a brilliant vintage debut. The Cabs, in his view, “have exceptional color and structure, with ideal balance. Ripe tannins, bright acidity, hedonistic aromatics ...”

In short, the best of the 2018 Bordeaux-style reds from Napa Valley and Sonoma County are stunningly beautiful. They've captured the holy grail of finesse and power together, pure fruit with classic tannin structure. These are the wines you'll want to drink the day they land on your porch, but also hold in your cellar for years (good luck with that). Now is the time to order or join mailing lists, to make sure bottles head your way come September. Here are 13 you really shouldn't miss.

Lail Vineyards 2018 J. Daniel Cuvée Napa Valley



This 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon from iconic Napa vintner Robin Lail is a striking contradiction of opulence and delicacy, with minerals and hints of smokebox underlying cassis, dark cherry and sweet floral aromas. The palate combines red and dark fruits, providing lovely texture with prodigious length.

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