

WINE COUNTRY THIS MONTH



Published on 28-09-2022

The 2012s

A Decade Later and Showing Beautifully

By Melissa Vogt

In 2012, Napa Valley wine country was a different place. It was before the state's successive most devastating fires ravaged local communities and long before the pandemic brought life as we knew it to a halt. Now, with another decade of harvests gone by, winemakers reflect on the beauty of the 2012 vintage—a vintage that has been recognized as one of Northern California's greatest and one that will always be cherished for its carefree place in history.



"2012 was almost perfect... no frost, mild spring, no rush to harvest due to rain," said Jason Moore, owner and winemaker of Modus Operandi. "The only issue with 2012 was the issue of an extremely large harvest, so we were all trying to figure out where to put the fruit and ultimately the wine." And while abundance isn't always a mark of quality when it comes to grape growing, in 2012, it wasn't a hindrance to the phenolic ripeness of fruit and overall quality of grapes coming off the vine. "Despite large crops, the fruit composition was of a higher quality than the norm," admitted Tom Gamble, proprietor of Gamble Family Vineyards.

"2012 was a dream throughout the growing season," stated Robin Lail, founder and owner of Lail Vineyards; this was especially the case coming off the heels of the 2011 vintage, which was remarkably wet and cold and resulted in low yields and grapes that struggled to achieve their typical California ripeness.

*"2012 was almost perfect... no frost, mild spring,
no rush to harvest due to rain..."*

JASON MOORE, OWNER AND
WINEMAKER OF MODUS OPERANDI

Inglenook winemaker Chris Phelps stated, "The 2012 growing season in the mid-Napa Valley, and specifically in Rutherford, was reminiscent of the great vintages of 2001 and 2007." The gradual ripening during the impeccable 2012 growing season produced grapes with perfect physiological ripeness, showcasing fruit-forward flavors, complexity, and structure in the finished wines. At ten years old, the 2012 vintage is showing youthful qualities with abundant freshness, and still so much promise for aging upwards of another decade.

"The summer ripening months were somewhat cool with a stretch of warm days that perfectly advanced the ripening period to produce fruit-forward and balanced wines," said Larkmead Vineyards winemaker Avery Heelan. The slow and even ripening set the stage for "wines of remarkable opulence and restraint," furthered Rebekah Wineburg, winemaker at Quintessa. Indeed, the elegant juxtaposition of opulence and restraint is the hallmark of the vintage. These are wines that flirt with perfection and beautifully express why Napa Valley has become the contender that it has on the world wine scene.

Standout 2012s

A horizontal tasting of 2012s offers a glimpse at their fresh youthfulness, seductive opulence, and balanced restraint. For those seeking 2012s, these standout bottlings from this historically perfect vintage won't disappoint.

Lail Vineyards,

2012 J. Daniel Cuvée Cabernet Sauvignon

This wine opens with a seductive, truffle-like aroma combined with black cherry on the nose. It opens soft with loads of spice on the front palate and mouthwatering acidity. The tannins still have grip but are already well-integrated into the flavors of dark chocolate-covered blueberries, clove, and white pepper. This is a seamless, excellently structured 2012 with lovely balance.

