



# Total Locals Club

January 2006 Tasting Notes

A Cabernet Party for your Palate

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Happy New Year and welcome to the latest collection of wines in your *Total Locals Wine Club*.

As many of you know by now, the goals of the *Total Locals Club* are two-fold: first, to give you a chance to enjoy wines from all of our artisan wineries on a regular basis, and second, to offer interesting comparisons of varietal flights within each collection.

For this collection then, we offer an outstanding assortment of Cabernet's from the wineries represented at Locals as well as two "Local Finds" which I know you will be as pleased to discover as I was.

This time around I asked each of the winemakers to speak to you directly about the wines they have made and also to tell us about their favorite food pairings or recipes. Although I asked for a couple of paragraphs their descriptions got just a little long... since clearly they feel strongly about the wines!

So now in (mostly) their own words...on to the descriptions and suggestions...Enjoy!

**Topel Winery, 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon, Hidden Vineyard, Mendocino**  
**(\$34.00 retail / \$27.20 club price)**

**Mark Topel – Winemaker**

We are very pleased to have you taste our 2001 Cabernet Hidden Vineyard. It is one of the best Cabernets we have produced here at Topel Winery.

Our winery is located on Duncan Peak in the southeast corner of Mendocino County. It is a perfect place to grow Cabernet Sauvignon. The yearly temperature profile is most similar to Calistoga with summertime temperatures reaching into the 90's in the afternoon and cooling down to the high 40's in the evening. Our vineyards are mountainside vineyards with topsoil only several feet in depth. The soil is full of minerals, particularly iron, which aid in giving the unique flavor to our Cabernet. This flavor element reminds me most of wines I've had from Graves.

The vines themselves are clone 2, 15, and 337, on 110R rootstock. These clones, when combined with the 110R rootstock and our shallow rocky soil, give rise to relatively light harvests, usually between one and two tons per acre. The berries are quite small in loose bunches. This adds up to highly concentrated flavors with a high ratio of skin to pulp. Our vineyards have a general northeast exposure with two exceptions, which are southern exposures. The different exposures result in layered, nuanced flavors when grapes from all vineyards are combined.



We pick the grapes when each vine is ripe. We don't average and then pick at one time, but rather 4 or 5 times to ensure that all the grapes are at maximum ripeness. We walk the vineyards twice daily during harvest time, checking for seed ripeness, grape turgor, color, flavor, skin softness, as well as TA, pH and brix. I've found that the best determinative of prime ripeness is when the inner flesh of the grape turns clear, from either a green or cloudy appearance. We then pick like crazy to make sure that we don't miss the opportunity that nature provides for getting the grapes when they're just right.

We field-crush the grapes within 15 minutes of picking into small, one ton open top containers. We pick either at night or early in the morning so that the must is between 15 and 20 degrees Celsius. We then let the must cold soak until it begins to ferment (usually 3 to 5 days). This allows for maximum extraction of flavor and color without the inhibitory effects of alcohol. The wine is hand-punched down 4 times a day to assist in the flavor extraction. The wines are then allowed to ferment with the indigenous yeast present in the winery. We never use "industrial" yeast, rather allow each batch to ferment on its own. After fermentation we press the wines off into 60% to 80% new French oak, with the remaining wine going into neutral French oak. The wine is then aged with minimal intrusion and racking between 2 to 3 years.

The 2001 Cabernet was picked over ten days at the end of October, at an average brix of 26.2%, TA .7, pH 3.55, alcohol 14.2%. The moderate growing season allowed the grapes to ripen slowly, without a serious loss of acid. The wine is 95% Cabernet, 2% Petit Verdot, 3% Merlot. All grapes are estate grown. The wine was aged in 80% new French oak for 31 months. The wine is unfiltered. 860 cases were produced.

I recommend the Cabernet Sauvignon with all types of roasted and grilled meats as well as rich cheeses, and chocolate. Please visit [http://www.tastelocalwines.com/and\\_more.html](http://www.tastelocalwines.com/and_more.html) for one of our favorite dishes to have with the Cabernet, Braised Beef Short Ribs with Gremolata.

Winemaking is an adventure, with every vintage leading us to new and delightful results.

**Hawley 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon, Dry Creek Valley**  
**(\$28.00 retail / \$22.40 club price)**

**John Hawley – Winemaker**

I have been making wine from grapes in Dry Creek Valley for 30 years now. Though the valley is around 20 miles from the ocean, it gets a lot of coastal influence. While it is not uncommon to see daytime temperatures in the 90's and 100's during the summer, nighttime temperatures usually drop down into the 50's. This combination of warm days and cool

nights provides a perfect environment for a wide variety of grapes.

Cabernet Sauvignon tends to perform best in the rocky hillside soils, where there is good sun exposure, so that is where I get my grapes. I planted my two-acre, steep, terraced Cabernet vineyard at the very top of my property. The grapes produce an inky wine with intense blackberry fruit flavors, high acidity, and a lot of tannin. I also purchase Cabernet grapes from Shubert Vineyard on the other side of the valley, in the Lytton Springs area. Their Cabernet is a bit more plummy, and has low acidity, and soft tannins. I feel that the combination of the two vineyards makes a better balanced, more complex wine.

The three vineyards were vinified separately to bring out their best qualities, using traditional French Bordeaux winemaking techniques, including extended maceration on the skins for maximum flavor extraction. After fermentation, the two Cabernet lots were blended and transferred to French chateau barrels for 18 months. The Merlot was barrel aged separately, then blended in prior to bottling. Extensive barrel aging has added vanilla, spice, and smoky oak flavors to the cherry and blackberry flavors from the grapes. Careful barrel to barrel rackings every three months eliminated the need for filtration. I believe my gentle handling and attention to detail are reflected in the quality of the finished wine. Only 719 cases were bottled on July 7, 2003.

This mountain grown Cabernet is deep in color with intense fruit flavors reminiscent of black cherries, currants, and blackberries. On the palate it is rich and opulent, bursting with flavors of black fruits backed by toasty vanillin oak notes and round, chewy tannins. Though enjoyable at present, this classic wine has the structure and intensity to improve with aging.

I would suggest that this versatile wine is an excellent accompaniment to any red meat, fowl, or pasta dish.

**Peterson 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon,**  
**Bradford Mountain Vineyard**  
**(\$29.00 retail / \$23.20 club price)**  
**Fred Peterson - Winemaker**

This is our most terroir-driven wine. A Peterson wine that shouts out its origins with every sip. The Bradford Mountain vineyards produce wines with a unique and very recognizable minerality, and that expression of place reaches its apex in the Bradford Mountain Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon.

The intensity of the Cabernet Sauvignon is complemented with the fleshy fruit and wonderful aromatics from Cabernet Franc and Merlot to create a wine that offers layer upon layer

of flavors and aromas. Tough big and bold, this is still a wine with balance and finesse. It is not one of those overoaked, over-extracted and high-alcohol creations that are currently the rage with wine critics, yet have no place on the table, nor the potential for successful bottle aging. This is a wine that will definitely benefit from both bottle age and/or decanting to allow the wine to open and reveal all of its depth and complexity.

Aromas of currants and minerality greet you as you sip this smooth and full-bodied Cabernet. Gentle tannins and the firm acidity of mountain fruit frame the flavors of currant, cherry and cedar. The lingering finish of lush berry and sweet vanilla bring you back for more. (350 cases produced).

My favorite food pairing with this wine would be lamb chops grilled over mesquite, served with au gratin potatoes and hearts of romaine salad with a rich, Roquefort dressing. Hardly a meal for anyone watching either calories or cholesterol.

**Hart's Desire 2002 Cabernet Sauvignon,  
Alexander Valley  
(\$27.00 retail / \$21.60 club price)  
John Hart - Winemaker**

The 2002 vintage of our estate cabernet vineyard was earmarked by a year of moderate weather finishing with warm-hot days in September and October, followed by extremely cool nights. Those who were patient, (and we are), waited into October to allow the grapes to fully develop rich ripe flavors while maintaining natural acidity. The cabernet sauvignon showed black color in the skins with mature (crunchy) seeds. We chose the first week of October for our harvest date and hand-picked fruit from the "center cut" of our two cabernet blocks. The remainder of the fruit went to Simi Winery, and yields were about 2.5 tons to the acre. Whole berries and some partially crushed were allowed to cold soak three days in small bins. Bordeaux yeast was used to ferment for two weeks, with punch downs occurring three times a day. We used a small basket presses and barrel age our cabernet for 18 months in 50% new and once used French barrels, medium plus toast. The final blend contains about 5% Cabernet Franc from our vineyard and the finished wine was bottled unfiltered and unfiltered. Because of the new grape contract, we're only able to produce a total of 56 cases of this special wine.

The 2002 Cabernet shows ripe aromas of currants with a hint of cedar. Soft and luscious on the palate which explodes with deep stone fruit characters of black cherry and plum. The balance finish lingers with flavors of chocolate and caramel with a nice accent of toasty oak. Tannins are mouth filling, yet smooth with a lingering flavor of cherry liqueur. As this

cabernet matures from its youthful state it will become more expressive in the bottle and age beautifully over the next ten years.

Hidden Spring Vineyard is located in the northern end of the Alexander Valley on rolling hillsides near Asti. This valley tends to be warmer up north than in its southern most areas, yet cools off rapidly because of out proximity to the Russian River. The temperature extremes on each end contribute to our bright natural acidities with balanced ripe fruit flavors. The vineyard is on gentle hillside slopes above the river, near the base of the Mayacamas Mountains. The vines benefit from the sites deep gravelly loam soils with underlying volcanic rock and clay layers. The vineyard is vertically trellised to maximize sunlight to the fruit, and open the canopy. Our vineyard rows are facing east-west to utilize the area's warm climate and sun exposure throughout the day ideal for slowly ripening the fruit. This estate vineyard is often one of the last vineyards which Harts Desire harvests every year. The hillside fruit year in and out produces aromas of cherries, cassis, with a touch of mint. There tends to be a tight core of fruit surrounded by smooth fleshy tannins which are a signature of the vineyard.

We have paired this wine with grilled sausage, but you can serve it with any roasted meats or other dishes with a Mediterranean herbs, tomatoes, and garlic or flavorful cheeses.

**Martin Family Vineyards 2003 Rockpile  
Cabernet Sauvignon  
(\$36.00 retail / \$28.80 club price)  
Mike Martin - Winemaker**

There are only eleven vineyards from the Rockpile viticultural area and the Martin Family had an opportunity to buy some outstanding fruit and they jumped at the chance to make this outstanding Cabernet Sauvignon. To understand just how limited this wine is you need to learn more about the history of Rockpile.

On April 29th 2002, Rockpile became Sonoma Country's twelfth viticultural area. Rockpile is a rugged ridge top with a rich history, stunning natural beauty, and a geography capable of producing world-class wines. The ridge stretches from lake Sonoma, northwestward to the Mendocino Country line. It includes over 14,000 acres, delineated by elevation, 800 feet above sea level or higher. Rockpile is home to just eleven vineyards, totaling about 150 acres, and no wineries. The quotes from the press have been equally as exciting.

**Laurel Glen 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon**  
**(\$50.00 retail / \$40.00 club price)**

**Patrick Campbell - Winemaker**

Not since 1985 and 1986 has California had back-to-back outstanding vintages. But then along came 2001. It's interesting to note that the three earliest Laurel Glen vintages were also among the best ever. 1984, 1997, and 2001 all began on September 7, a couple of weeks earlier than average. Bud break in each of these years was also two weeks before normal, in the first week of March. Thus, while the harvest date was early, the growing season (or hang time, as some call it) was the traditional full seven months long. The 2001 is hands down the best of these three early vintages, and will likely prove to be our finest vintage to date. It certainly is the richest, deepest, and most succulent Laurel Glen we have produced. Over the past six years, we have modified vineyard and cellar practices to promote a more graceful mouthfeel without losing the natural minerality, terroir, verve, and intensity of the vineyard. The key to this subtle change in style is tannin management, which is too complicated to go into here, but we'd be glad to field questions if you want to delve deeper into the subject. The 2001 Laurel Glen is typically violet black to the rim, aromatic with dark fruits and spices, with a deep intensity buttressed with a breadth not found in earlier Laurel Glen vintages. This is a very special wine from a very special vintage.

As for us at Laurel Glen, we think that over time, a wine true to its mountain origins will be more satisfying, and, now with 25 harvests under our belt, we have a track record to support that claim. Here is what a few others had to say about the wine.

WINE ENTHUSIAST, Oct. 2004

92 points Laurel Glen Vineyards

2001 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma Mountain

High-octane mountain wine. Bone dry, with a big refined structure that promises long life. The blackberry and cherry flavor is as rich as any Laurel Glen in memory. Big time tannins, too, but soft and sweet in the modern style. Drink 2006-2020.-S.H.

WINE & SPIRITS, Dec. 2004

92 points Laurel Glen Vineyards

2001 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Sonoma Mountain

You can drink this when its just been opened, the wine feeling silky and solidly built, just sweet, round fruit surrounded by edgy, stony tannin. Or you could wait and let the tart cherry flavor evolve into elegance, the oak invisible and the fruit itself seeming to give the wine all its structure, to provide

an inner clarity. It's a subtle and beautiful wine from Patrick Campbell's mountain vineyard planted in 1968

(Carolyn's note: When I asked Patrick for a food pairing...he said he always thought his wine went well with Taco's...so there you have it.)

Well...that's it for your Total Locals Club selections for January of 2006. As always I hope you enjoy our selections and don't forget about your 45 day follow up discounts and the fact that several of these wines are in very limited supply. For those of you in the area...stop by, taste and stock up on more of these wonderful wines while they last.

In an effort to keep your club costs to a minimum, this quarter we have made your coupons available for you online at:

<http://www.tastelocalwines.com/coupons>

until February 1st so be sure to visit our website and print out some that appeal to you. There are also more great recipes and food pairing ideas for you here:

[http://www.tastelocalwines.com/and\\_more.html](http://www.tastelocalwines.com/and_more.html)

Cheers! And here is to a happy and peaceful 2006

—Your Friends at Locals Tasting Room

**Locals is open seven days a week, 11am-6pm.**

We always enjoy hearing what you think. Drop us a line at Box 124, Geyserville, CA 95441. Or just email us at [yummy@tastelocalwines.com](mailto:yummy@tastelocalwines.com). If you cannot visit in person read more about the wines at [www.tastelocalwines.com](http://www.tastelocalwines.com).

