



NAPA VALLEY'S 2014 VINTAGE IS ONE OF ITS BEST YEARS IN THE LAST TWO DECADES

JAMES SUCKLING, MAY 2017

I've now tasted more than 400 reds from Napa's 2014 vintage – mostly cabernet sauvignon-based — and I have to say that they are extremely attractive. Though they are slightly overshadowed by the magical 2013s, this is a vintage not to miss. And even beyond cabernet, from syrah and to pinot, the wines show a wonderful aromatic tension, balanced palate, and vivid finish.

I wrote earlier this year how the 2014s showed their true character of their respective soils and microclimates. Profiles were more about the vineyards they came from, rather than the weather patterns of the year. It helps that heat spikes were not a factor during the grape growing season. The wines show a harmony in fruit and structure that will allow early drinking as well as aging. It's much better to drink the 2014s or 2012s now and leave the powerful 2013s to mellow with bottle age. I am a huge fan of 2013, which produced reds that show a superb structure that harkens back to the great vintages of the 1970s, 1960s, and 1950s.

Many will remember this vintage as the year of the earthquake, which wrecked havoc in most of Napa Valley on August 24. Besides structural and ancillary damage, some winemakers believe that the seismic trauma changed the water table, giving a thrust of water to deep rooted vines a few weeks before the harvest. This reduced the effects of the drought in 2014, so they say. I can't say for sure whether that's really the case, but I can say that the 2014s are sensational. Go get some.



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VINTAGE	NAME	TASTING NOTES	SCORE
2014	Cabernet Sauvignon	Loads of blue fruits and wet earth with hints of mushrooms. Full body, round and juicy tannins and a savory finish. Edgy fresh acidity. Lightly chewy. Needs two or three years to soften but already beautiful.	95
2014	LMV Salon	Lots of blueberry, licorice and gun-powder aromas follow through to medium to full body, fine tannins and a savory finish. Lovely balance and fruitiness. Lovely now. Tangy minerality. Drink and enjoy.	94
2014	Firebelle	The blackberry and bramble berry aromas with cloves, walnuts and cedar undertones follow through to a full body, firm and chewy tannins and a fresh finish. Needs time to soften, but impressive backbone of tannins and fruit. Better in 2020.	94
2014	Dr. Olmo	Blueberries and blackberries with hints of lavender and fresh mushroom. Full body, wonderful depth and resounding intensity. Plenty of asphalt and tar. Hot stones. Gorgeous ripe and fine tannins. Great depth. Drink or hold. September 2017 release	97
2014	Solari	Aromas of spices, redwood, blackberries, tile and plums follow through to a full body and super-integrated, chalky tannins. Savory and juicy. Real tension and drinkability. Released in September 2017.	96
2014	The Lark	Aromas of dark berries and currants with pine needles and minerals as well as well as stones. Full body, dense and silky tannins and a savory finish. Blackcurrants and hints of lead pencil. Released in September 2018. Needs at least three to four years to soften.	97