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TOP 100 WINES 2011



"What we're trying to do is give the most perfect expression of the Bordeaux varieties in Napa Valley. I feel that we need to craft a wine that speaks to the ancestry of these grapes, and at the same time treat Napa Valley with all admiration and respect."

— Lou Kapcsandy, Kapcsandy Family Winery

Cabernet, Merlot and blends

At their best, the 2008 Cabernets from up and down the coast found the quality often lost with that grape: a true sense of place.

While Cab is still subject more than most grapes to the whims of size and ripeness, there's evidently a growing interest in wines that speak just a bit more softly, and can be affordably enjoyed without a special occasion. There's still that drive to make Cabernet into an important, top-dollar wine, but more of those wines are being made with a lighter touch.

2008 Kapcsandy Family State Lane Vineyard Estate Cuvée Yountville Red (\$150, 14.5%):

After a successful career in the Seattle construction business, Lou Kapcsandy happened onto a chance to buy Beringer's noted State Lane vineyard. With help from winemaker Dennis Malbec, he has turned his namesake estate into one of Napa's brightest lights. This Cabernet-dominant blend, with Merlot, Cab Franc and Petit Verdot, is marked by an absolute harmony — deep tobacco and dark mineral notes, rich cassis and a brighter berry edge, subtle dried-chile accents, coffee and licorice. No shortage of ripeness, but the headily aromatic profile is a new California benchmark. The more Merlot-heavy Endre (\$80, 14.1%) isn't far behind.