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[Baltimore Sun] Wine, etc.: Our top 10 cabernet sauvignons for Father's Day | COMMENTARY

— June 4, 2024

Read Time: 5 Minute, 36 Second

Each year we examine some of the best red wines from Napa Valley to make some suggestions for Father's Day. We know these are expensive gifts, but we theorize that this is a special occasion that calls for a special wine.

Perhaps you can split the cost with your siblings to make it more affordable. Just don't expect him to share it with you — June 16 is his day.

We also offer some good alternatives if these prices are too high. Here are our top 10 cabernet sauvignons for Father's Day:

Chappellet Hideaway Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($175). The Hideaway vineyard was formerly planted to chenin blanc, but in 2007 the producer planted six blocks of cabernet sauvignon on this secluded 13-acre plot. Since then, this mountain wine has been a home run. Said winemaker Phillip Titus, "When grown the correct way in the right soils, mountain cabernet gives you more of almost everything — complexity, more power and more tannins." This is an immense wine with concentrated black fruit notes and hints of herbs and pepper.

Flora Springs Napa Valley Trilogy 2021 ($100). The family sold this historic St. Helena winery in 2019, but kept 20 acres of prime vineyards to make wine with a greater interest in reducing production nearly in half. The family also revitalized 20 acres in the prized Komes Ranch Vineyard in Ruthford, the primary source for this beautiful wine. This Trilogy — a blend of cabernet sauvignon, petit verdot and malbec — continues a label that is nearly 40 years old. It has concentrated black fruit flavors with hints of mint, coffee and cola.

Turnbull Amoenus Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($145). Most of the vineyards used by this respectable Napa Valley producer are from the Oakville AVA, but the Amoenus Vineyard is on the rolling hills of Calistoga. Floral and spicy aromas hand off to a beautiful tapestry of ripe blackberry and cherry flavors that are enveloped by soft, fine tannins.

Beringer Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2020 ($175). We have tasted enough of Beringer's top marquee wines that are 10-15 years old to know that these wines can age — just like dad. Always big and concentrated, the 2020 has floral and blueberry aromas, classic dark cherry, plum and currant fruit flavors, hints of vanilla and spice, and plenty of tannins to complement that grilled steak.

Beaulieu Vineyards Georges de Latour Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon 2020 ($160). BV's private reserve was a collector's prize as soon as it was first released in 1940. We have tasted different vintages of this wine since the 1980s and enjoyed every one of them, including some that have been decades old. It is dense, complex and full of that great Napa Valley fruit. Black cherry and plum notes dominate the palate experience.

Double Diamond Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($90). This is a colossal but approachable wine from the Schrader house. Aggressive black fruit and cassis aromas with plum and black cherry flavors, hints of tea, earth and vanilla.

Acumen Mountainside Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($85). This Napa Valley producer has a stunning array of cabernet sauvignons ranging from this one to its dense and opulent PEAK Edcora Vineyard. Maybe it's hard to call the Mountainside a "bargain," but it stands tall with anything else in this ranking.

It is more expressive than the PEAK cousins, which have a classic style reminiscent of those old-style, age-worthy cabernets from the 1970s. The Mountainside has a fruit-forward personality with merlot and malbec to round off the tannins. Ripe plum mingles with chocolate and mocha on the palate. Floral, violet aromas add to the black cherry notes.

Ehlers Estate Jean Leducq Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($160). Named for French entrepeneurs and philantropists Jean and Sylvia Leducq, this top-shelf wine from St. Helena is an iron fist in a velvet glove. Made only in the best vintages, it will be drinking nicely well into the future, but can be enjoyed now. We tasted it alongside the more concentrated **1886 Cabernet Sauvignon ($120)** from the same vintage. The 1886 date is when the winery was founded by Bernard Ehlers. It was purchased by the Leducq Charitable Trust in 1996.

Sullivan Coeur de Vigne Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($100). This tribute to Sullivan Rutherford Estate's historic location is a colossal wine with classic Napa Valley character. A blend of cabernet sauvignon (80%), merlot and petit verdot, it utilizes the personality of each grape variety to achieve a well-structured, balanced wine with blackberry, black cherry and blueberry flavors. This wine can be enjoyed now, which means dad doesn't have to get any older to enjoy it.

Priest Ranch Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($60). Generous red cherry aromas, flavors of dark fruity, licorice and mocha.

Less expensive alternative wines:

Hahn Family Wines California Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 ($16). Always a decent value, this expressive wine has cherry aromas and a hint of leather with ripe black fruit flavors.

True Myth Paso Robles Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 ($24). This inexpensive cabernet sauvignon from California is a decent wine for everyday drinking. Easy, quaffable with smooth ripe red fruit.

Tenuta Luce Lucente 2021 ($29). One of our favorite wines year after year, this super-Tuscan blend combines merlot with the local sangiovese to present a delicious, round and ripe berry flavored wine that would go with ribs, burgers and other grilled meat.

Domaine Bousquet Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 ($13). For the price, you get a lot of juicy and ripe red berry flavors and supple tannins to make this a decent match with grilled beef. This Argentine producer is making some the best values on the market today.

Querciabella Chianti Classico DOCG 2019 ($32). A very complete Tuscan red wine. Plum and dried cherry elements present in a smooth soft tannin wine. Good now but can age a few years.

Wine picks

Quinta da Fonte Souto Branco White 2022 ($27). This wine from the Alentejo region of Portugal has Symington's stamp of quality. Made mostly from arinto grapes, the wine benefits from being fermented and stirred on its lees. There is a soft texture and extracted fruit that may otherwise have been lost. Good complexity.

J. de Villebois Sancerre Rosé 2023 ($30). Lots of strawberry and raspberry notes in this semi-dry rosé from Sancerre. If you like your wine a little sweet, this is a good choice.

Garofoli Podium Anniversario Verdiccho dei Castlli di Jesi 2021 ($30). From Italy's Marche region, this pleasant and quaffable verdiccho has elegant citrus notes.

Tom Marquardt and Patrick Darr have been writing a weekly, syndicated wine column since 1985. See their blog at moreaboutwine.com. They can be reached at marq1948@gmail.com.

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