Cœur de Vigne Is Sullivan's Truest Expression of Rutherford

Not a single-vineyard statement, but a mosaic that captures depth, restraint and age-worthy Napa Cabernet.

JAMES NOKES
JAN 29, 2026 • PAID

Jeff Cole, winemaker at Sullivan Rutherford Estate.

At Sullivan Rutherford Estate, Cœur de Vigne isn't a single-vineyard flex. It's something more interesting: a distillation of everything in which the estate believes.

Winemaker Jeff Cole describes it as a snapshot of the property in a given vintage. A wine that captures both the voice of the vineyards and the sum of decisions made from vine to cellar.

Subscribed

"The result is a single, cohesive, age-worthy expression defined by depth, structure, and energy," Cole said. "It's our signature style. One that bridges Old World restraint with New World power."

That balance is on full display in the **Sullivan Cœur de Vigne Cabernet Sauvignon 2022 ($100)**. Aromas of blueberry and plum lead the way, followed by shaved dark chocolate, cedar and dried flowers. On the palate, mineral notes anchor the wine as polished tannins frame flavors of dark plum, elderberry and bittersweet chocolate. A thread of dried herbs and loamy earth pulls it back from excess, keeping everything honest.

This is Napa Cabernet that knows when to raise its voice; and when not to.

There's immediate pleasure here, unmistakably New World, but it's delivered with a reserved hand. Fresh acidity and savory, almost feral herbal notes nod toward the Old World, giving the wine tension and lift rather than sheer gloss.

It's a style more Napa winemakers are quietly embracing. Less flash. More substance. Wines built not just for the first pour, but for the next decade.

Sullivan Estate in Napa Valley.

"To create a wine in our style, I look for dark, savory depth of flavor, layered structure, and fine, persistent tannins balanced by fresh acidity," Cole said. "Those elements signal that the wine expresses our site with precision and energy. And that it's built to age."

Because Cœur de Vigne isn't tied to a single parcel, its strength lies in composition. Think mosaic rather than monologue. The fruit comes predominantly from the Sullivan Estate, with each block contributing something distinct.

The estate's oldest Cabernet Sauvignon block, naturally low-yielding, brings structure and that coveted Rutherford dust. Other blocks add layers of aromatics, energy and power. Pieces that Cole assembles into a cohesive whole.

"For the 2022 release, lots showing dark, savory aromatics like black cherry, graphite, earth and subtle herbal tones, along with firm tannins and fresh acidity, rose to the top," Cole said. "Those components allowed me to build a site-driven blend centered on depth, balance, and complexity."

Cœur de Vigne doesn't shout. It doesn't need to. It's a wine that rewards attention, whether that be now or years from now, and quietly reminds you why Rutherford, when done right, still sets the standard.

Discussion about this post

How to find a white wine that makes your hair standup

Matt Dees offers his profound take on white wines and tasting notes for the holidays

DEC 25, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

Staying strong: how to avoid dry January at all costs

A glass of wine at 5 o'clock makes everything better. don't skip that joy for 31 days

JAN 7 • JAMES NOKES

Come Over October: Pizza, Pinot & Good Company

A cozy fall gathering with razor-thin mushrooms, creamy white sauce pizza and Pinot Noirs built for sharing.

SEP 23, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

Why "Tasty" Is the Only Tasting Note That Matters

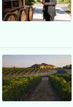
Stripping away wine's gatekeeping language and bringing the joy back to the glass.

SEP 10, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

Stephanie Cohen's Precision Winemaking Pushes Col Solare Into a New Era on Red Mountain

Inside the rising winemaker's quest to unlock the full potential of Washington's hottest AVA.

DEC 3, 2025 • JAMES NOKES



Wine Isn't Going Anywhere: Industry Veterans Share Optimism for the Next Generation

From immersive experiences to deep-rooted values, winemakers are confident that wine's next chapter will be defined by connection, resilience and joy.

JUL 29, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

From Golf Greens to Volcano Vines: Jonathan Walters Builds a Lake County Legacy

Texas-born Jonathan Walters brings hands-on grit, restaurant roots and a passion for real wine from real people to the volcanic slopes of Brassfield...

OCT 18, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

Tom Gamble: Let Greatness Be Earned, Not Assigned

The Napa Valley vigneron warns that a formal classification system could stifle innovation, discourage reinvestment and undermine the region's creative...

JUN 24, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

Le Vigne Winery and the Crafting of Italian Heritage in California Vineyards

From high-acid Sangiovese to rare Italian varietals, GM Phillip Anderson blends tradition, patience and terroir to create wines meant for the table and...

DEC 27, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

How Aly Wente Blends Heritage and Innovation to Guide Wente Vineyards Forward

The fifth-generation leader embraces family heritage while reshaping Wente for a new era of wine drinkers.

NOV 19, 2025 • JAMES NOKES

See all

© 2026 James · Privacy · Terms · Collection notice

Start your Substack Get the app

Substack is the home for great culture