

CHAMPAGNE FOR THE HOLIDAYS } BAROLO BY COMMUNE

# Wine & Spirits

YEAR'S BEST

## CABERNETS

+97 BEST BUYS



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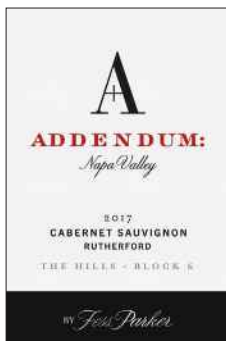


**95 | Kintera** \$150  
**2017 Rutherford Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon** All black-currant energy, this is a sumptuous cabernet with powerful drive to the flavors. Tom Hinde focuses it on fruit from the western benchlands at the Morisoli Vineyard, with a contribution from Lewelling Ranch on the St. Helena bench, aging the wine two years in new French oak barrels. It's sleek and spicy, savory and warm, the flavors combining notes of roasted mushrooms, organ meats and dark-berried cabernet fruit. As fat and fleshy as it may be, the wine holds its shape through a beautiful finish. A delicious 2017 to decant for a New York strip smothered in wild mushrooms. —J.G.

**94 | Inglenook** \$100  
**2016 Rutherford Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon** While Rubicon, Inglenook's top selection, emphasizes cabernet sauvignon, this second selection from the estate includes a wider range of varieties (some cabernet franc, merlot, petit verdot and malbec). And, given the percentage of new French oak barrels in its aging (50 percent, as compared to 75 percent for Rubicon), it is more accessible on release—a bright, pretty cabernet that's easy to love. The fruit feels ripe and supple, with scents of sweet plums and tart cherries. The tannins have a cool richness, like bitter chocolate, along with a green herbal edge of cilantro and hibiscus. That coolness feels like mountain air descending off the Mayacamas into the benchlands of Rutherford, bringing you closer to the vineyard with each taste. —J.G. (*W&S* 2/20)

**93 | Inglenook** \$210  
**2015 Rutherford Napa Valley Rubicon Cabernet Sauvignon** There's a straightforward honesty to this wine that belies its stature as one of the greats of Napa Valley. In 2015, the vineyard produced a generous, welcoming cabernet, a wine Philippe Bascaules and his team selected from five parcels at Francis Ford Coppola's estate in the western benchlands of Rutherford. It has the springtime scent of cherry sap, the

perfume of cherry blossoms and the tart, dusty tannins of ripe cherry skins. Firm and brisk, this is a wine that will take years to fully reveal its pedigree. —J.G. (*W&S* 2/20; 3,622 cases)



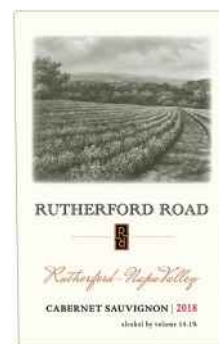
**93 | Addendum** \$110  
**2017 Rutherford Napa Valley The Hills Block 6 Cabernet Sauvignon** Addendum, a Fess Parker project in Napa Valley, includes this wine from a vineyard on Skellenger Lane along the western benchlands of Rutherford. It's a fragrant cabernet, with stamina and shapely richness. Its dark, smoky intensity comingles fruit and earthy tannins, their soft rose and herb notes creating a sagey pillow for the plump fruit. Lovely as a young wine, this is balanced to age with grace. —J.G.

**93 | Donkey & Goat** \$75  
**2018 Rutherford Napa Valley York Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon** It may be unusual to think of cabernet as refreshing, but this wine's edgy energy takes it out of the realm of typical Napa Valley cabernet. The fruit grows at a vineyard on the west side of the Napa River, dry farmed and organically certified. Tracy and Jared Brandt ferment it in a beehive-shaped clay vat, including some whole clusters (20 percent); then they age it in used French oak barrels for 18 months. The initial aromas are clearly aligned with the natural-wine camp, a little volatile and cidery, like blackberries that have begun to ferment on the vine, as one taster suggested. Another, Daniel Osman of the *Dream Away Lodge* in Becket, Mass., countered that "it doesn't feel like an accident. It's bright and aggressive, and I like the way it grabs me." Think berries, peach pit, cigar smoke and wild mushrooms, then pour a glass for pasta tossed with fresh porcini. —J.G.

**92 | Taub** \$125  
**2015 Rutherford Napa Valley Morisoli-Borges Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon** Tom Hinde makes this wine from a vineyard south of Niebaum Lane in the benchlands

of western Rutherford. The terroir gives a wine that's not far off from its neighbor at Inglenook—fragrant cabernet with deep layers of earthy tannins, dark blueberry flavors, plump and polished. This is the kind of cabernet that may well develop grandeur with ten years of age. —J.G. (*W&S* 6/20; 56 cases)

**91 | Addendum** \$110  
**2017 Rutherford Napa Valley Skellenger Lane Cabernet Sauvignon** There's a warm, tannic rub to this wine, its rasp of thyme, rose petals and violets pumped up by alcohol, even as the flavors of dark, chocolate-covered cherries are substantial enough to enrich that warmth. Built for something meaty, like an herb-roasted leg of lamb. —J.G.



**91 | Rutherford Road** \$40  
**2018 Rutherford Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (Best Buy)** Michael Pozzan makes this wine in a plump, rich style. Oak aging has smoothed out the tannins, which have the juiciness of fresh-pressed cherry skins, but that time in wood has not diminished the violet scents or the tobacco notes of the fruit. Pour it with grilled sausages. —J.G.

**91 | Long Meadow Ranch** \$80  
**2015 Rutherford Napa Valley Estate Cabernet Sauvignon** Long Meadow's estate vineyard on the east side of Highway 29 grows this fragrant cranberry-and-cassis-scented wine. Its soft tannins have the gentleness of Rutherford, lending the vibrant fruit a luscious texture. It's smooth, approachable cabernet, built for the dinner table. —J.G.

**90 | Etude** \$145  
**2016 Rutherford Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon** Heady and spicy, this wine bursts with cherry and cranberry flavors, highlighted with notes of orange zest and basil. An earthy savor underneath grounds all that fruit and checks the volatility. Braised lamb will ground it further. —J.G.