



Napa 2023: New and Recent Releases

By [JOE CZERWINSKI](#)
Dec 29, 2023



The last two years have been a fascinating time to review Napa wines. Looking at the vintages from 2019 to the present, I've gotten to experience some terrific highs and dramatic lows. Some wineries—particularly those who give their wines more than two years in barrel—continue to release 2019s, so this latest round of reviews includes some of those. On the whole, **2019** is an excellent vintage, one whose wines largely reflect the warmth and generosity most readers have come to expect and enjoy from Napa.

Wineries that were fortunate enough to be able to make any wine at all from the fire-ravaged **2020** vintage also continue to release those wines. Producers who were able to pick ahead of the Glass Fire on September 27 without sacrificing physiological ripeness fared the best, typically in the valley's earliest-ripening sectors. Some portions of the valley were relatively less affected by smoke—generally more southern and eastern sectors, such as Coombsville. Readers will find several 2020s in this report, some of whose ratings I have appended question marks to—often this indicates some doubt on my part regarding the future evolution of the wine, either because of possible smoke taint or lack of full tannin maturity. Read the reviews to get a more complete picture of each individual wine.



The scars from the 2020 Glass Fire still linger, especially up in the hills.

As I wrote previously, **2021** is a bounce-back year for Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignons and blends. It was another dry year, so small berries and plentiful tannins are the rule, but the winemakers who were able to pick balanced grapes and manage those tannins were able to make some magnificent wines that should age long and well.

The naturally reduced yields and increased concentration has benefited many of the valley's entry-level cuvées, which now generally begin around \$50 and extend upward. Going forward, this appears unlikely to continue (see my comments below on the 2022 and 2023 vintages), so consumers who are seeking out Cabernets in the sub-\$100 category to buy for regular drinking over the next decade may want to pay special attention to the many values this special vintage provides.



A “secret garden” vineyard, deep in the mountain woods

Looking ahead, the **2022** vintage experienced a large-scale post-veraison heat wave that led to substantial shriveling and sunburn in certain vineyards, leading to both low yields and impacts on quality. The heat was nearly universal, but what will be key to quality are the knowledge and resources vineyard managers applied to deal with the weather in the vineyard and the winemakers in the winery. Quality is likely to vary substantially, and it seems unlikely that price pressure will ease, unless the economy struggles in 2024.



In mid-August 2023, veraison was just getting started in this valley-floor vineyard.

Even further down the road, my mid-November visit to Napa (those reviews will appear in a couple of weeks) saw some winemakers still digging out tanks after a very late harvest. Spring and summer were cooler and wetter than usual, with many vineyards harvested three or four weeks later than average. Thankfully, much of September and all of October were reasonably dry and warm, so most vineyards were finally able to ripen. I did hear reports of some vineyards going unpicked and others of shortened macerations as wineries struggled to deal with the volumes all coming in at once at the end of harvest. Nevertheless, the general feeling regarding quality seems bullish, with alcohol levels coming in lower than average.



Behind the curtain at Napa Valley Vintners: Samples waiting to be tasted.

The reviews in this report stem mainly from my tasting carried out in August 2023 at the Napa Valley Vintners, with additional wines tasted either during winery visits or at my home office. My November trip to Napa included several hundred more reviews. Those reviews will be published in January, followed by another trip in February; so, we'll have lots more Napa coverage coming soon.

2020 Paraduxx Red Wine X2

Rating:93

Release Price:\$110

Drink Date:2023 - 2035

The 2020 Red Wine X2 is 90% Cabernet Sauvignon, with 9% Zinfandel and 1% Petit Verdot. A selection of the winery's best lots, it's slightly leafy and herbal from the high proportion of Cabernet in the blend, but it delivers cherries, cassis and blackberries as well. Full-bodied, creamy and supple, it finishes long, with an attractive hint of licorice. It's a fine example of Calistoga Cabernet at a realistic price for the quality.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)

Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)

Published date:Dec 29, 2023

Producer:Red Wine X2

Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley

Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry

Variety:N/A

[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard Block 5

Rating:93

Release Price:\$88

Drink Date:2023 - 2033

The 2020 Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard Block 5 blends 58% Cabernet Franc with 37% Zinfandel and 5% Cabernet Sauvignon. One of my favorites of the several successful 2020 wines from Paraduxx, it's floral and attractively leafy, with hints of violets and shiso leaf on the nose, backed up by black cherries and blackberries. Full-bodied and concentrated, it's surprisingly rich, with a long, velvety finish tinged with dark chocolate.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)

Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)

Published date:Dec 29, 2023

Producer:Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard Block 5

Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley

Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry

Variety:N/A

[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Winemaker Series Co-Ferment Red Wine

Rating:92

Release Price:\$64

Drink Date:2023 - 2027

Another fine 2020 from Paraduxx is the 2020 Winemaker Series Co-Ferment Red Wine, a blend of 86% Syrah, 7% Grenache and 7% Viognier. Licorice notes are joined by hints of cracked pepper, supported by plenty of blackberry fruit. Full-bodied, creamy and supple, it's ripe and lusty in style, with just a slightly astringent finish.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)
Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)
Published date:Dec 29, 2023
Producer:Winemaker Series Co-Ferment Red Wine
Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley
Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry
Variety:N/A
[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard

Rating:92
Release Price:\$88
Drink Date:2023 - 2033

A single-vineyard blend of 59% Cabernet Sauvignon and 41% Zinfandel, the 2020 Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard evokes hints of licorice, cracked pepper, briary notes, blueberries and blackberries. It's full-bodied, ripe and concentrated without being overly tannic but sturdy, with a long, velvety finish.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)
Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)
Published date:Dec 29, 2023
Producer:Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard
Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley
Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry
Variety:N/A
[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Red Wine Candlestick

Rating:92
Release Price:\$64
Drink Date:2023 - 2033

A blend of 64% Syrah and 36% Grenache, the 2020 Red Wine Candlestick shows no sign of being smoke-affected. Mouthwatering aromas of licorice, cracked pepper, blackberries and blueberries appear on the nose, while the full-bodied palate is concentrated, delivering plenty of ripe, creamy-textured tannins that turn softly dusty on the finish.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)
Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)
Published date:Dec 29, 2023
Producer:Red Wine Candlestick
Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley
Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry
Variety:N/A
[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Pintail Red Wine

Rating:91

Release Price:\$55

Drink Date:2023 - 2030

Two-thirds Zinfandel and one-third Cabernet Sauvignon, the 2020 Pintail Red Wine is a lovely blend that offers up scents of violets, mint, blackberries and blueberries. It's full-bodied, supple—almost creamy in feel on the mid-palate—then long and silky on the finish.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)

Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)

Published date:Dec 29, 2023

Producer:Pintail Red Wine

Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley

Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry

Variety:N/A

[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard Block 4

Rating:90

Release Price:\$88

Drink Date:2023 - 2030

An unusual blend of 51% Petit Verdot and 49% Zinfandel, Paraduxx's 2020 Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard Block 4 reveals floral aromas, intense notes of black cherries and a hint of shoe polish on the nose. It's full-bodied but supple, smooth and polished, surprisingly elegant and refined.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)

Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)

Published date:Dec 29, 2023

Producer:Red Wine Rector Creek Vineyard Block 4

Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley

Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry

Variety:N/A

[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Proprietary Red Wine

Rating:88?

Release Price:\$56

Drink Date:2023 - 2027

In contrast to the Pintail bottling, the 2020 Proprietary Red Wine comes across as less silky and refined, even though the blend is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Petite Sirah, 10% Zinfandel, 8% Petit Verdot, 8% Syrah, 2% Grenache and 2% Malbec. Asphalt, cassis and plum feature on the nose, while the palate is full-bodied but not that rich or concentrated, finishing slightly astringent.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)

Source:[Issue 270 End of December 2023](#)

Published date:Dec 29, 2023

Producer:Proprietary Red Wine

Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley

Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry

Variety:N/A

[View wine](#)

2020 Paraduxx Proprietary White Wine

Rating:90

Release Price:\$34

Drink Date:2022 - 2024

A blend of 65% Viognier and 35% Chardonnay, the 2020 Proprietary White Wine offers up scents of ripe apricot and white peach on the nose, along with faintly floral notes. It's medium-bodied but plump and generous on the palate without being overly soft, then lingers nicely on the finish. I'd drink it on the young side.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)

Source:[September 2022 Week 2](#)

Published date:Sep 15, 2022

Producer:Proprietary White Wine

Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley

Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:White/Mature/Table/Dry

Variety:N/A

[View wine](#)

2019 Paraduxx Proprietary Red Wine

Rating:91

Release Price:\$54

Drink Date:2022 - 2030

A blend of 53% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Petite Sirah, 12% Zinfandel, 11% Petit Verdot, 7% Syrah and 5% Malbec, the 2019 Proprietary Red Wine delivers notes of cassis, blackberries and blueberries on the nose, backed by an underlay of mocha-tinged oak. It's medium to full-bodied, decently concentrated and nicely balanced, marrying silky tannins to a bright, vibrant finish.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)

Source:[September 2022 Week 2](#)

Published date:Sep 15, 2022

Producer:Proprietary Red Wine

Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley

Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry

Variety:N/A

[View wine](#)

2019 Paraduxx Pintail Red Wine

Rating:90

Release Price:\$54

Drink Date:2022 - 2027

The 2019 Pintail Red Wine is a blend of two-thirds Zinfandel with one-third Cabernet Sauvignon. The Zin dominates, with briary, berry-laden fruit on the nose, while the medium to full-bodied palate features a softly dusty feel and gentle tannins on the finish.

Reviewed by:[Joe Czerwinski](#)
Source:[September 2022 Week 2](#)
Published date:Sep 15, 2022
Producer:Pintail Red Wine
Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley
Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry
Variety:N/A
[View wine](#)

2019 Paraduxx Winemaker Series Co-Ferment Red Wine

Rating:89
Release Price:\$62
Drink Date:2022 - 2028

With 8% Grenache and 7% Viognier, the Syrah-based 2019 Winemaker Series Co-Ferment Red Wine shows the Viognier a bit obviously, offering up scents of apricot on the nose, along with more traditional red-wine aromas of cherries and Syrah-led notes of tar, espresso and black olives. It's medium to full-bodied, silky and supple, with that almost slippery feel that Viognier and Syrah can produce together. Expect this to turn more savory with age, if it behaves anything like Australian versions made along these lines.

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Source:[September 2022 Week 2](#)
Published date:Sep 15, 2022
Producer:Winemaker Series Co-Ferment Red Wine
Wine regions:California, North Coast, Napa Valley
Color/Maturity/Type/Sweetness:Red/Early/Table/Dry
Variety:N/A
[View wine](#)