



CLOS DU VAL

While the story of Clos du Val is rich in history, and follows the rise of Napa Valley as one of the world's preeminent winegrowing regions, it is also a living story that is still being written. Guided by an acclaimed team that includes Owner and Chairman of the Board Olav Goelet and Winemaker Ted Henry, Clos du Val has experienced a renaissance in every facet of the winery. This period of revitalization started with the 2012 vintage, when Clos du Val began a vibrant and vineyard-driven stylistic shift for its wines. It continued in the 2014 vintage, when Clos du Val began focusing almost exclusively on making estate-grown wines, with an emphasis on the exceptional Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignons that first catapulted Clos du Val to fame.

Clos du Val was founded by the Goelet family in 1972, an era that wine writer Hugh Johnson referred to as "the turning point in modern wine history." 1972 saw the founding of a who's who of California's most iconic wineries, and in the history of North American winemaking, the Cabernet producers of 1972 are legendary. It was a dynamic time, filled with energy and innovation that laid the foundation for Napa Valley's rise to global prominence. Two years before, the family tasked talented French-born winemaker Bernard Portet with finding vineyard land capable of producing a world-class Cabernet Sauvignon. After traveling to five continents, this search brought Bernard to the Stags Leap District in Napa Valley, where perfect day-time weather, cool nights and ideal soils yield Cabernet Sauvignons of uncommon power and elegance.

In 1972, Clos du Val acquired 150 acres of estate vineyards in the heart of the Stags Leap District, and made its first wines, including Clos du Val's legendary debut 1972 Cabernet Sauvignon—one of only six California Cabernets selected for the famous 1976 Judgment of Paris Tasting, where California defeated some of Bordeaux's finest. Ten years later, Clos du Val's reputation for creating some of Napa Valley's most gracefully age-worthy wines was solidified, when its 1972 Cabernet Sauvignon took first place in the Judgment of Paris rematch.

Today, Clos du Val's acclaimed estate program has evolved to include its 180-acre Grand Val Vineyard in the Carneros appellation of Napa Valley, and the 18-acre State Lane Vineyard in Yountville. These vineyards include more than 30 different blocks of Cabernet, with a variety of soil types and exposures, dozens of unique clone and rootstock combinations, and an array of vine ages. This provides Winemaker Ted Henry with a remarkable palette of estate fruit from which to make Clos du Val's wines. Taking advantage of this rich diversity, Ted ferments as many as 35 individual lots of Cabernet Sauvignon each vintage, with upwards of 70 total lots of Bordeaux red varieties—some as small as 1.5 tons.

Under Owner and Chairman of the Board Olav Goelet's direction, Clos du Val has also instituted numerous changes, all with the goal of achieving the utmost quality. This includes restoring and modernizing the winery, harvesting later to achieve optimal ripeness, reducing crop yields, increasing dappled sunlight in the vine canopy, enhancing soil fertility, adding cold soaks to the Cabernet program to increase color and aromatics, instituting earlier pumpovers to create greater tannin integration, utilizing new filtration methods to limit oxidation, and revamping the barrel program to focus on only the best coopers—all to preserve vineyard character, while adding nuance and silky textural elements.

“As a winery, our original roots were more in an Old World style,” says Ted. “We used to pick much earlier, at lower Brix. Now we are more fully embracing the ‘Napa Valley-ness’ of our wines. We are showing the natural strengths of our vineyards, and we are doing it in a way that still honors our heritage. While our wines are richer and more textural than in the past, they still have lovely acid and relatively modest alcohol levels. They are wines of purity and balance.”

Unlike many of the other pioneering Napa Valley wineries, Clos du Val has remained small and dedicated to making Napa Valley-designated wines—a focus that has become even clearer in recent vintages. In fact, as part of its transition to making almost exclusively estate-grown wines, Clos du Val made the bold decision to significantly reduce production, with overall Cabernet Sauvignon production cut almost in half.