



631 Healdsburg Ave, PO BOX 1639, Healdsburg, CA 95448, t: (707) 431-8277

The Conspirator

Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon and Napa Valley Red Blend



The Conspirator is a set of two wines embedded in the historic region of Oakville in Napa Valley. The impetus of this wine is to provide the best value Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon on the planet, and it is amazing at what we make it for. A “Conspiracy” requires you to pay more for Oakville. Check out this video to see where we are.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2efv5TFPCs&list=PLbAS2mG9pzZOQAKUFWTwDI4bNG5sglYIE&index=2>



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But the wine is more than that. We want to provide the best Cabernet Sauvignon from the best subregion of Oakville in the Napa Valley. We chose Oakville over Rutherford as I prefer the silky tannins you get from here, rather than the grainier ones in Rutherford. Oakville is also slightly cooler than Rutherford, and that matters to hang time.

The Vineyard is situated on the UC Davis property on Oakville Grade. Oakville Grade is a very steep, interesting road that takes you up over the Mayacamas Mountains to Sonoma County.



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There are a couple of exciting things about this location then. Firstly, it is east facing, therefore only receiving the morning sun. Secondly, the most famous place in all of Oakville, and you could say it is in all of Napa Valley, is To Kalon. The UC Davis properties sit right above To Kalon, west of To Kalon Creek.

The UC Davis vineyard sits right behind me in the photo





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Of the two wines we make, one is 100% Cabernet and the other is a blend of Cabernet and Merlot. Both varieties come from the same property. I love To Kalon, and I love the Left Bank in Bordeaux and, in particular, Château Margaux. It was my first-ever visit to Bordeaux in 1992, and I was fortunate enough to meet then with Paul Pontallier. I met him many times after that moment. Like him, the wines of Ch Margaux were just so full of grace and elegance. The closest I could get to that character was in Oakville due to the silkiness of the tannins and, in particular, anything a little cooler than the main valley.



The Location of the vineyard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrc0l5FFOE&list=PLbAS2mG9pzZOQAKUFWTwDI4bNG5sglYIE&index=4>

Organic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9epOoTro8k&list=PLbAS2mG9pzZOQAKUFWTwDI4bNG5sglYIE&index=2>

The Name

There are many “Conspiracies” in the wine industry. The first and most obvious, of course, is the price and value of this wine. The neighbors are Mondavi To Kalon, Beckstoffer To Kalon, Far Niente To Kalon, and



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Opus. I am not kidding. These vineyards are on the same fence line and sell for \$500 - \$ 1,000.

Looking south towards Far Niente



Looking east towards Beckstoffer in the background



The second Conspiracy is that we need to work with specific clones of Cabernet Sauvignon. There are no Cabernet Sauvignon clones here. Clones were selected for fast sugar accumulation and larger tonnages. These vineyards are “field selections” or “marcel,” as we say in Spanish.



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The plant material was collected back in the 60s and 70s. These vineyards are unique today, with more randomness in berry shape and more variable flavor. This increases complexity and, with lower yields, more concentration.

Another Conspiracy is that we need to make wine with additives. We add no yeast, acid, or even water when the sugar is too high. We do none of that. We just pick a little earlier to maintain the red fruit elements and tension in the mouth. Less alcohol.

Another Conspiracy involves concrete. I have been making wine in concrete since 1982. Today, we are told that we need to use eggs, crucibles, truncated tanks, etc. Wine is the liquid? It doesn't know what vessel it's in.

Organics, for me, could also fit as a Conspiracy. The world's most toxic insecticide is Organic. We love regenerative farming, and I feel it is so much better than organic farming. With organics, you till the soil; when you do that, you break down the humus profile and remove organic matter. This is where bacteria and fungi live and turn nutrients into compounds that vines can then take up. When there is no organic matter, nitrogen, potassium, or phosphorus, it needs to be sprayed on the canopy or put through drip irrigation because the plant cannot take it up from the soil.

This leads me to Terroir. If you irrigate, you have changed the terroir. You pick on a Thursday, and I pick on a Friday. Yes, we changed it again.

There are many "Conspiracies" in wine that I could go on about, but I think it is best to discuss these "conspiracies" with a good glass of The "Conspirator" Oakville Cabernet Sauvignon.



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The Vineyard

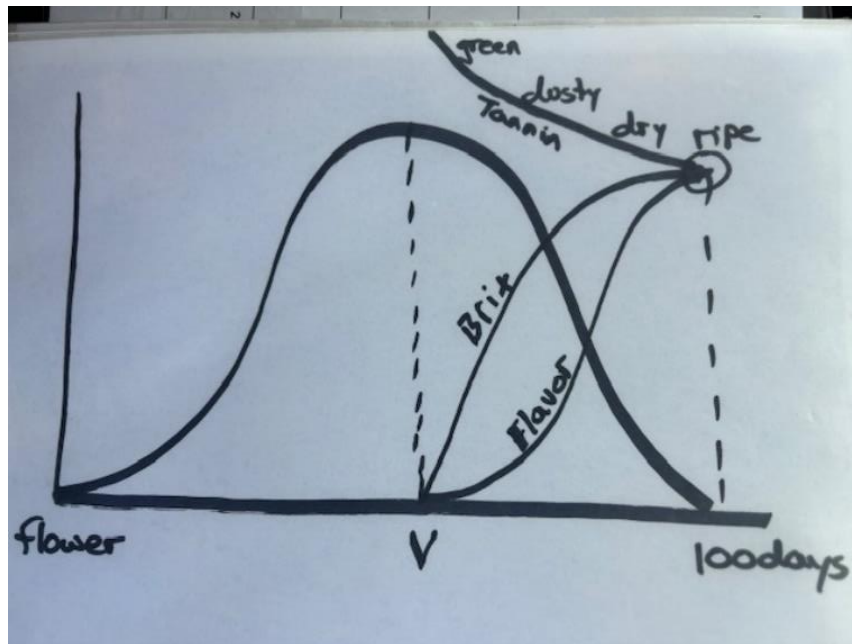
The first Cabernet comes from a vineyard that I have been working on since I was the winemaker at Simi Winery. Oakville is a true valley. The east slope and the west slope. To Kalon is on the west side of the valley but facing east. Therefore, has the cool morning sun and not the extreme heat of the afternoon. It is one of the coolest locations in the appellation. As a result, we have the longest hang time to get great ripeness of flavor and tannin along with the sugar. The soil is great because it is a gravel loam with some clay around 3 feet down. This clay holds humidity for the long dry summer season.





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The hang time for ripeness in Bordeaux is considered to be 100 days. In Napa Valley, we are at 130 days, but in Alexander Valley, we are the coolest at 140. So, in the Alexander Valley, we get great tannin and flavor without the high alcohols.



Again, we do not add yeast, acid, or water, so you have a completely natural wine—again, vegan.

Style of The Conspirator Red Blend and Cabernet

Oakville is known for black fruit aromatics, such as black cherry, blueberry, and maybe a bit of blackberry and Plum. You see that in the berry taste before harvest and, of course, in the wine later. The berries are tiny, so the skin-to-pulp ratio is very high, hence the color and concentration of the wine.

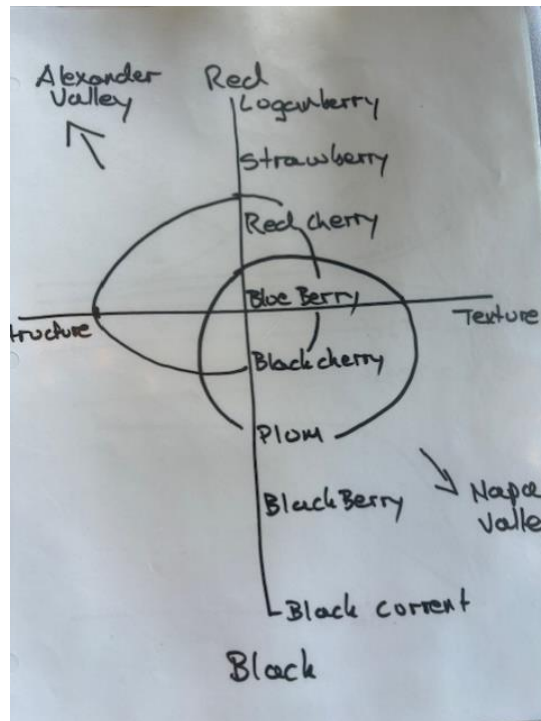


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Left to right, Merlot (on the clay soil), Cabernet and then Cabernet from Oakville vineyard.



Napa Valley is classic black fruit with good texture. Powerful and supple.



The Red Blend has that extra blueberry aroma dimension and a softer mid-pallet. If you love French Bordeaux, of course, you are often drinking Merlot, but you just don't know it



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Red Wine Style Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcA5FRLZ-F0&list=PLbAS2mG9pzZPBic1bvKtAtsPz6WcxUkr0&index=3>

Winemaking

Firstly, the Cabernet Sauvignon is made from two different blocks based on differences in vigor: one for the Cabernet Sauvignon and the other for the Red Blend.

Both are made in a classic Oakville style. As described, these vineyards have a natural elegance and refined tannin feel. My job in winemaking is to enhance the body in the middle palate and build a wine that will be stable in color for years to come. Silkiness is the end goal.

We leave the wine on skins for 30-40 days to do this. During this time, I can manipulate the cap by heating and cooling it, releasing more or less CO₂ into the wine. I raise and lower the cap based on how I feel the wine's body reacts.

At Drain and Press, we keep only around 10% of the press, with the other 15% going elsewhere. We rack three times for clarity, decreasing any turbidity, and pass directly into French oak for 16 months.

Merlot is made in a similar fashion, but I only leave this on skins for 21-30 days. Merlot has a sweeter middle body or “balance” naturally than Cabernet Sauvignon, but I am still focused on long-term tannin stability. Again, directly to barrel after racking.



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The Tasting

Conspirator Cabernet Sauvignon

Powerful and radiant purple color. The aromas of true Napa Valley are blueberry, black cherry, and plum. This follows in the mouth as well, but of course, being Oakville means that the tannins are extremely silky and evaporate in the mouth. This is quite different from Rutherford, where tannins are grainier for me. The stability is really good, and I can show you a Cabernet Sauvignon that I made from this vineyard in 1995 that still drinks true and remains red.

The Conspirator Red Blend

It includes Merlot, which increases the aroma and red berry flavors in the mouth. The wine is 85% Cabernet and 15% Merlot. Merlot also helps with the middle palate, emphasizing more of the blueberry slant.



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- **Cabernet** - Blueberry, Black cherry, and Plum aromas. Flavor of Blackberry and Black cherry. Tannins are very silky and polished.
- **Red Blend** - 85% Cabernet and 15% Merlot – Red Cherry, Blueberry and dark Plum aromas. Flavors of Blueberry and plum. Tannins are more explosive and mineral. Electric.

Tasting the two wines

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2q64eyPgaEE>

A stunning Morning looking directly west to Mayacamas





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