

August 03, 2011

The Best Gift you can Buy a Wine-lover!



It's the 2007 Stags Leap District Wine Box, a superb collection of 18 different wines from one of my favorite Napa Valley appellations.

The Stags Leap District winegrowers have produced a mixed case like this for many years, and I have often bought the collection as it's an easy way to get some of the top-favored, top-flavored, top-rated, wines in Napa Valley without having to careen from winery to winery.



A tremendous shot from Stags Leap District, taken by my friend, Steven Rothfeld

The 2007 collection is considered one of the best Stags Leap Wine Boxes ever assembled, according to Nancy Bialek, the association's executive director.

In her own words:

"The 2007 wines are generous in aromatics and texture. The vintage opened with cool weather and early growth. A mild April turned into a hot May and June, with grapevines blazing through bloom and the first phase of development.

Late summer heat punctuated the start of harvest. The 2007 vintage ... has unusual depth and complexity."

What all this means is: A superb vintage with bright, youthful, fleshy wines.

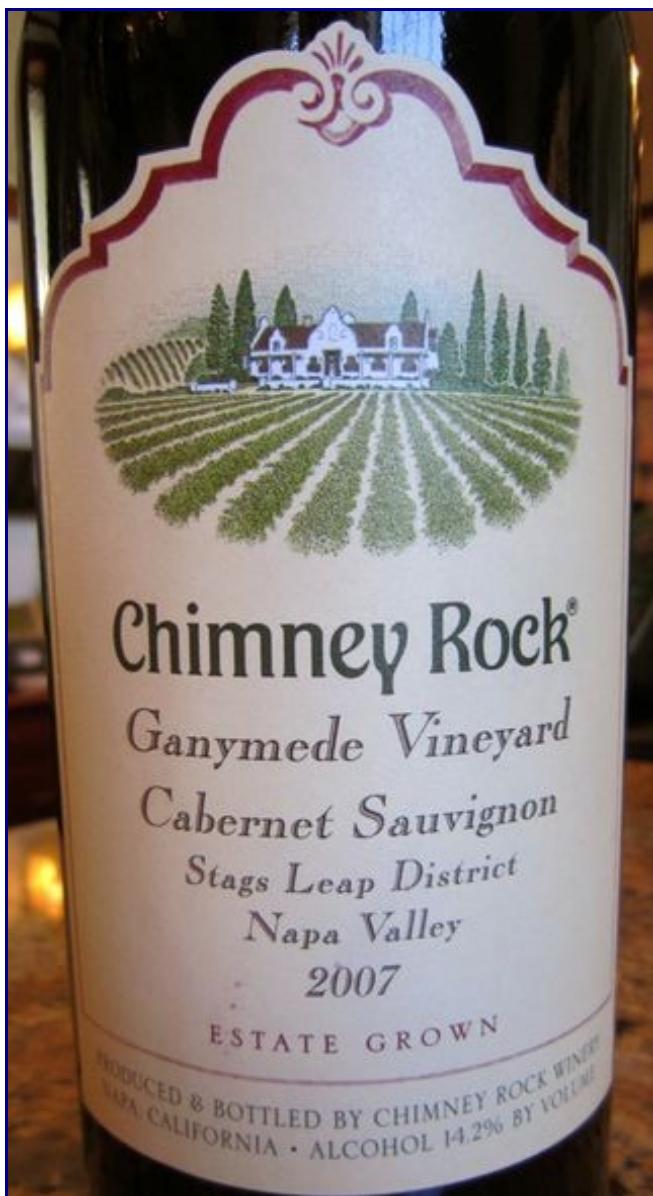


Another amazing shot in Stags Leap District, taken by Steven Rothfeld

Here's how Elizabeth Vianna, winemaker at Chimney Rock Winery and Vice President of SLDWA, sums up the vintage:

"The 2007 harvest will go down as one of the great harvests of the decade for Stags Leap District. The fruit concentration is amazing."

The Stags Leap District Winegrowers didn't provide napaman an easy, one-tasting-pours-all way to sample the 2007 wine collection to provide readers with detailed tasting notes on the 18 wines; the best that I could do was visit several Stags Leap District tasting rooms.



Chimney Rock Winery, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Ganymede Vineyard

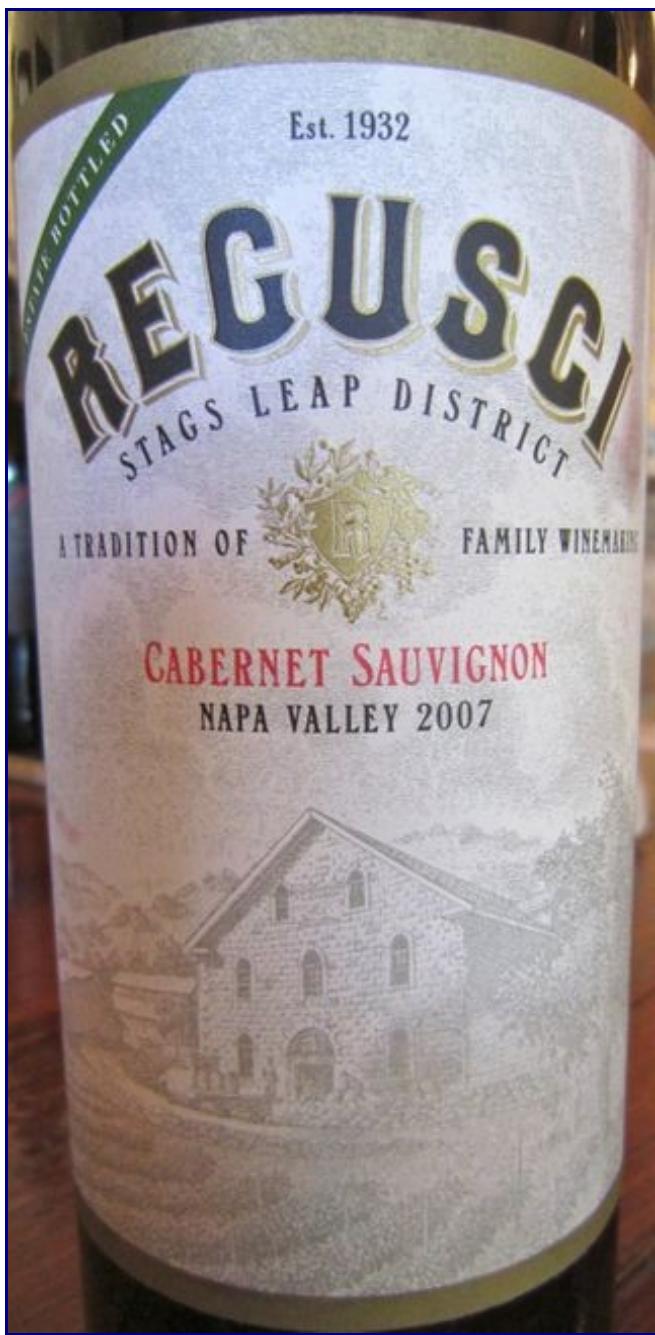
I like the way winemaker Elizabeth Vianna explains her 2007 effort:

"We experienced a dry spring, which is the first thing we need to grow great grapes. We like vines to stress early so that they focus their attention on the fruit. One of the parameters of quality is the size of the berry. Most of the color and flavors in wine come from the skins; the smaller the berries -- the greater the ratio of skin compounds to pulp - results in a better concentration of flavor and color."

"The average Cabernet Sauvignon berry in 2007 was nearly 30 percent smaller than in the previous two vintages," Elizabeth says. Which explains the concentrated flavors in her 2007 wine.

Only 500 cases of the estate Ganymede were made and they are all gone now, save for bottles in the 2007 Stags Leap District Wine Box.

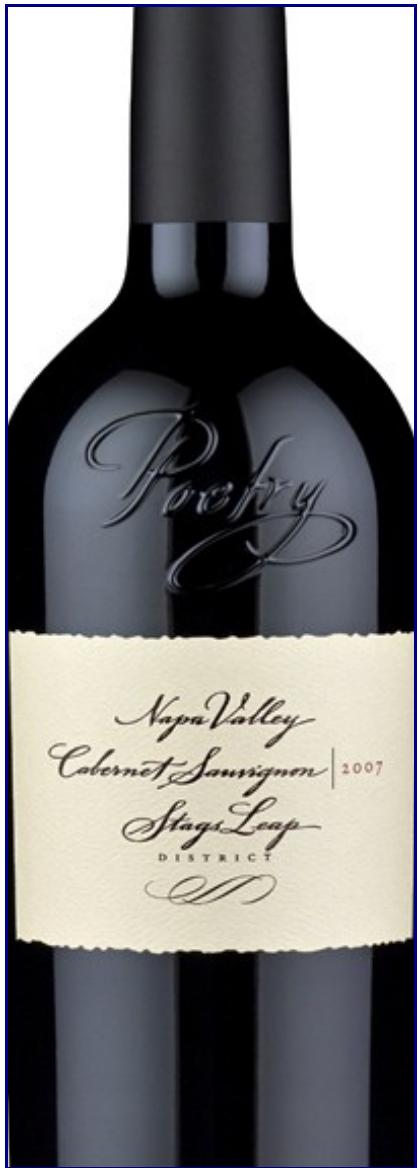
The wine is delicious, exhibiting gorgeous ripe fruit notes and flavors. This wine has a pedigree in balance and finish.



Regusci Winery, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Some 3,000 cases were made of this \$53 wine, a blend of Cabernet (92 percent), Merlot (6 percent) and Cab Franc (2 percent).

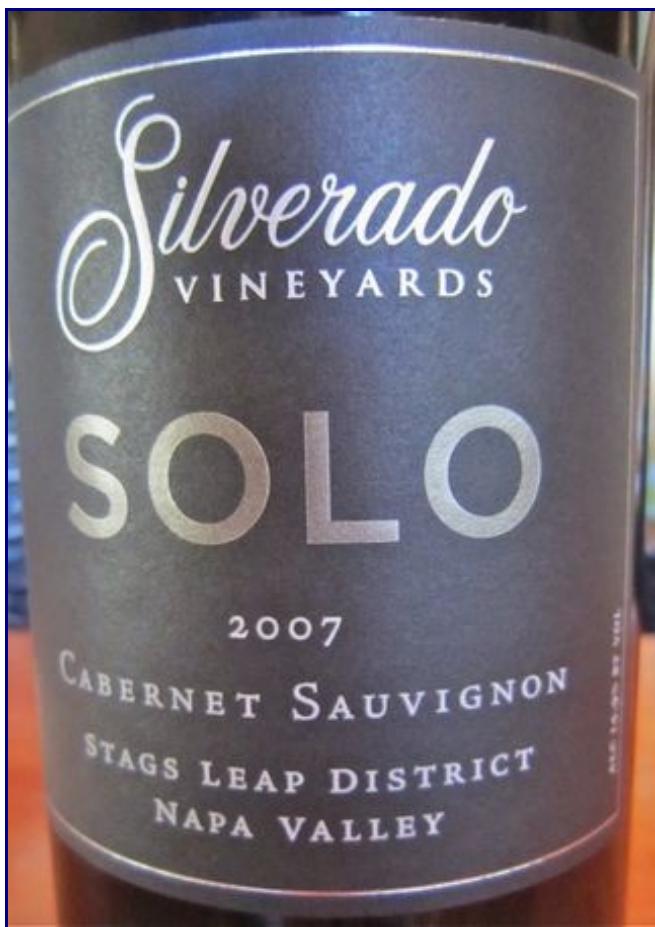
The Cab has a warm and inviting nose with scents, and flavors, of red currant-bordering-on-cranberry. Has attractive floral notes on the nose and exhibits medium length on the palate. Well structured. I like the alluring middle palate.



Cliff Lede Vineyards, 2007 Poetry

Probably the most expensive wine in the 2007 collection (\$150), though it definitely delivers; coffee, dark ripe fruits on the nose with a hint of animal and an identifiable green scent toward the end of the sniff.

On the palate, juicy notes, a l-o-n-g finish, flavors reminiscent of dark plums with a sunburn. Needs to be cellared - big time.



Silverado Vineyards, 2007 SOLO

In the old days, this wine at Silverado was simply labelled their Stag's Leap District offering, made exclusively from estate fruit. But the label was confusing with other house labels, so they created a new brand, Solo, to better register the essential elements of the beverage: made from one SOLO vineyard and made exclusively with one SOLO grape, Cabernet.

In 2007, Silverado made 1,400 cases of this exquisite wine which begs to be drunk now, but which will cellar for 10 years and then magnificently enthrall your palate.



At Silverado, I spoke with Jen Withrow, one of the extremely pleasant tasting room staffers; she encouraged me to try the 2000 Silverado Stag's Leap District Cabernet - the same wine offered in the 2007 collection, only seven years older, and now, fully aged 11 years.

Of all the wines I previewed for this Stag's Leap District Wine Box story, nothing approached the beauty, balance and majesty of this striking older wine. In fact, the 2000 Silverado Stag's Leap Cabernet is one of the best wines I've tasted in months. It's simply *gawjus*. Easily a 97-point wine.

Anyone who was smart enough to buy this upon release has a majestic wine in his, or her, cellar.

Come to think of it: the 2007 Solo Cab is \$90 at the winery today. For \$20 more you can buy the fully aged, 2000 Cab from the winery library - actually, a much better value!



Photo by -- who else? -- Steven Rothfeld

The Appellation Collection is the only offering in the country, comprised entirely of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon from a single appellation and a single vintage. Each of the Association's 18 member wineries is represented in the collection.

The Collection is limited to 200 cases. You can order it starting October 15th.



Photo by him again, Steven Rothfeld

The Collection contains one bottle each of the following Stags Leap District wines:

Baldacci Family Vineyards, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Chimney Rock Winery, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon, Ganymede Vineyard

Cliff Lede Vineyards, 2007 Poetry

Clos Du Val . 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Hartwell Vineyards, 2007 Estate Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

Ilsley Vineyards, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Lindstrom Wines, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Malk Family Vineyards, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Pine Ridge Vineyards, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Regusci Winery, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Robinson Family Vineyards, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Shafer Vineyards, 2007 One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon

Silverado Vineyards, 2007 Solo

Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, 2007 Fay Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

Stags' Leap Winery, 2007 The Leap Estate Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

Steltzner Vineyards, 2007 Estate Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon

Taylor Family Vineyards, 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

Terlato Family Vineyards. 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon

The 2007 Appellation Collection of 18 wines costs:

\$1,450.00 per case. 7.75% tax applies to California sales and various states by law.

To order:

Online as of October 15 at www.stagsleapdistrict.com/appellationcollection