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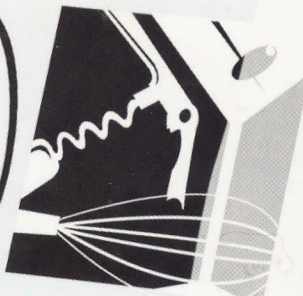
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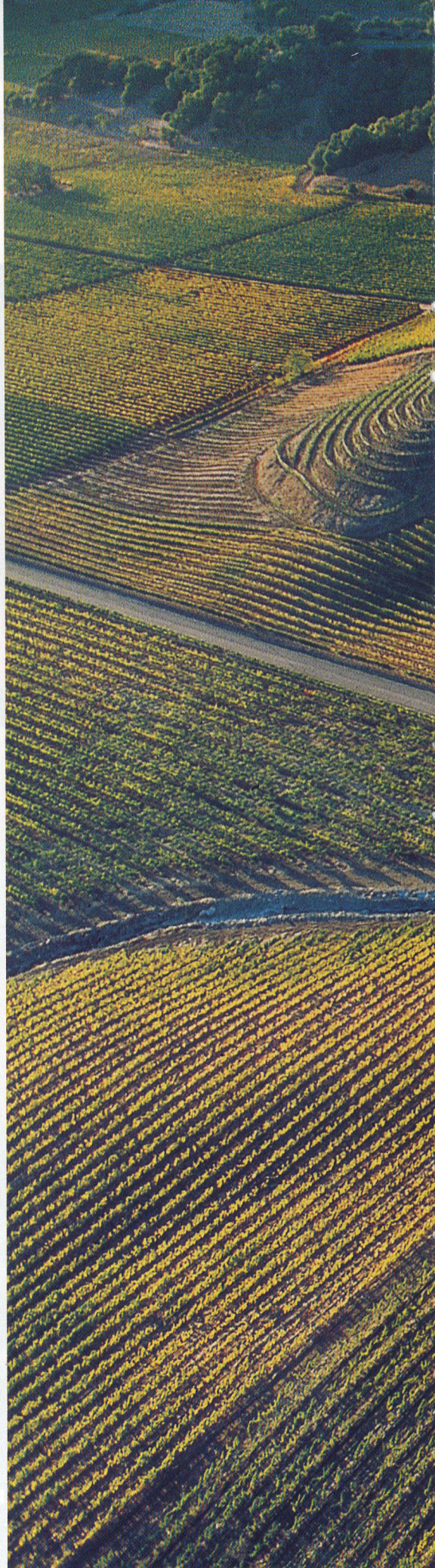
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SANTÉ
10th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

Cabernet's Stags *leap* *forward*

Among the most beautiful sights in the Napa Valley are the short-lived waterfalls tumbling down the Stags Leap palisades following an early April shower. Through the mist, you can almost visualize the **mythical stag** for which this area is named, leaping from one palisade to the next, eluding its equally mythical hunter. The beauty of the Stags Leap District extends well beyond these waterfalls; this appellation has produced some of Napa Valley's **most stunning and historic wines.**

Shafer Vineyards, established in 1972, occupies a choice spot on the east side of the Silverado Trail at the base of the Palisades.





What Is a Stags Leap District Wine?

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The classic descriptor of “an iron fist in a velvet glove” certainly highlights the soft tannins that are a prevalent characteristic of Stags Leap wines. Blackberry and plum are the usual markers for the Cabernet Sauvignon-dominated wines; dark cherry and raspberry dominate in the wines that have Merlot in the blend. *Balance* is a key word in describing these wines. They are not as ripe and hot as up-valley wines and not as tannic as Napa’s mountain-grown wines.

AGING

Despite the softer tannins, Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines from Stags Leap age remarkably well. At the same time, these wines show much better earlier in their development than do those from other regions of Napa. Besides the stars of the Judgment of Paris tastings, classics include the 1977 Clos du Val Reserve, 1991 Shafer Hillside Select, and 1999 Hartwell Estate.

RECENT VINTAGES

- 2005—Like 1999, wines will not be as exciting early on but promise great potential
- 2004—Wow. Almost like a combination of 2001 and 2002. Will be one of the greatest vintages ever in Stags Leap.
- 2003—Less consistent than 2002 but some excellent wines. A vintage that will drink well early on but seems stronger than 2000.
- 2002—Very strong across the board. These wines showed extremely well early on and yet seem to have great structure as well.
- 2001—Very similar to 2002 but less showy than the 2002s early on. Excellent structure for aging.
- 2000—Fruit forward, surprisingly concentrated, and balanced. A vintage to drink in the short term among the vintages listed here.
- 1999—A vintage that was an exercise in patience but may prove to be one of the best of the 1990s. Great structure.



Stags Leap District newcomer Baldacci Family Vineyards cultivates 20 acres of estate vineyards on the west side of the Silverado Trail.

Cab Country

The Stags Leap District represents one of the more legitimate appellations within Napa Valley. Not only is this a truly unique and homogeneous growing region in terms of geography and climate, but the wines of Stags Leap have historically demonstrated a consistent personality, something that many other Napa Valley appellations are still struggling to achieve and define.

Remarkably, this excellent reputation has developed over a very short time frame. Located to the east of the traditional thoroughfare through Napa Valley (now called Highway 29), Stags Leap was a region traditionally known for its walnuts, prunes, and figs. Wine production can be traced back to 1893 at Horace Chase’s Stags Leap Manor, where he made Golden Chasselas and Zinfandel. It wasn’t until 1961, however, that Cabernet Sauvignon was planted in the area by a brave farmer named Nathan Fay. Several years later, Fay’s homemade Cabernet Sauvignon from his young vineyard caught the attention of Joe Heitz. Fay’s wine also became the inspiration for Warren Winiarski, who bought land nearby and founded Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars. Furthermore, it proved the wine sages at UC Davis wrong: Stags Leap wasn’t too cold for Cabernet Sauvignon. Only a few years later, Cabernet Sauvignon from the Stags Leap District would bring international acclaim for Napa Valley at Steven Spurrier’s 1976 Judgment of Paris tasting.

Much has been made of the Paris tasting, the retasting ten years later, and the recent retasting of the wines in 2006. Each time the top French Bordeaux were trashed by their Napa Valley counterparts. Incredibly, the 1973 Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon that placed first in the 1976 tasting was produced from a vineyard only three years old. This landmark tasting may have been a coming of age for Napa Valley, but for the Stags Leap District, it was an explosion onto the world wine scene.

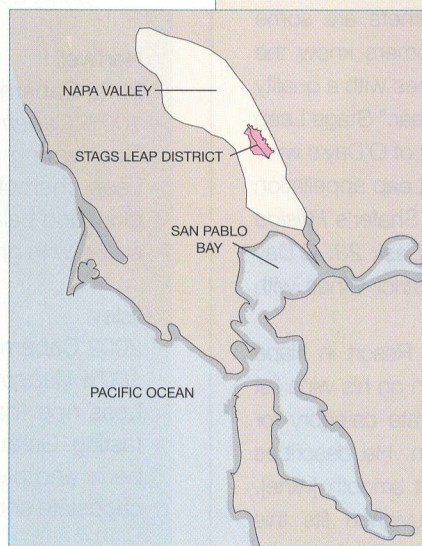
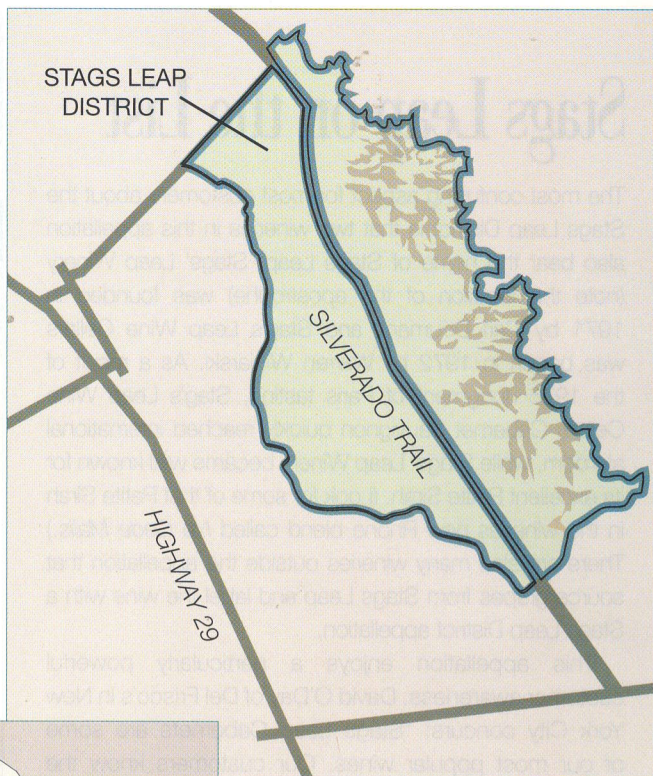
Stags Leap Terroir

Geographically, the Yountville Hills to the west and the Vaca Mountains to the east provide a perfect framing for this small valley within a valley located in the southeast corner of Napa Valley. Markedly narrower and hillier in the northern part of the appellation, the Stags Leap District is only 2,700 acres in size with roughly half of the appellation under vine and a staggering 90 percent planted to Bordeaux varietals. This appellation has full access to the cool winds and fog that flow into the valley from San Pablo Bay to the south, keeping the mornings and afternoons cool and ultimately lengthening the growing season. At night, the towering palisades on the eastern edge of the appellation gently radiate heat back into the district. Several million years ago, this area was a floodplain for the mighty Napa River that rushed from the north toward San Francisco Bay. The Napa River has shrunk considerably since then, but it left behind in Stags Leap a unique topsoil of well-drained gravel and bale loam. Two to 6 feet below this topsoil is a hard clay bedrock that naturally restricts root vigor and yields.

District Character

After an extensive search throughout the Napa Valley for a hillside vineyard, John Shafer stumbled upon a vineyard located next door to the original Stags Leap Manor. A humble John Shafer admits, "At the time, I didn't realize the incredible potential of this property." As it turns out, the limiting soils and western orientation of these hillsides have proved ideal for Cabernet Sauvignon. Hillside vineyards are rare in this appellation, but they have produced some of Stags Leap District's most intense wines, including Shafer's *Hillside Select* Cabernet Sauvignon and Hartwell's Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, which is made from grapes grown in nearby Yountville Hills. Both of these wines are 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon—surprisingly, given their dramatic concentration yet supple personality.

Whether 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon or a Bordeaux blend, the consistently concentrated yet supple personality of Stags Leap District wines seems to charm everyone, including the appellation's winemakers. Andy Erickson, winemaker at Hartwell Vineyards and Screaming Eagle, has worked with Cabernet Sauvignon grapes throughout Napa Valley. He describes Stags Leap District wines as "incredibly fresh and graceful with great color and balanced ripe tannins versus the riper, more powerful, tannic wines produced farther up valley." Doug Fletcher, winemaker at Chimney Rock Winery, goes a step further: "Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon is the best Cabernet in the world." Fletcher's assessment is based on 30 years of winemaking experience with Stags Leap District grapes. He is an advocate of blending other Bordeaux



varietals with his Cabernet Sauvignon, particularly Petit Verdot and Merlot. Ultimately, the quality and character of Bordeaux varietals grown in the appellation gives Stags Leap producers the tremendous flexibility of making 100 percent Cabernet Sauvignon or blending in other Bordeaux varietals.

Winegrowing Community

The Stags Leap District is an interesting combination of established wineries, growers turned wineries, and newcomers. The Ilsley and Taylor families, longtime growers in Stags Leap, have each launched their own wine label, joining another veteran grower-turned-vintner, Jim Regusci. Griffin Vineyards, Pillar Rock, and Baldacci Family Vineyards are newcomers, while Cliff Lede Vineyards is a reincarnation of the original S. Anderson property. The "old guard" is represented by Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, Stags' Leap Winery, Clos du Val, Shafer, Pine Ridge, and Steltzner, all founded in the 1970s. Hartwell, Robert Sinskey, Silverado, and Chimney Rock came into the picture in the 1980s. Robert Mondavi Winery also has significant holdings in the Stags Leap District, with a majority of its acreage planted to Sauvignon Blanc.

Bernard Portet of Clos du Val certainly had a sense of the potential of this special corner of Napa Valley as he drove down the Silverado Trail and through Stags Leap in the early 1970s, feeling a chill in the air. Frustrated by the heat of the warm Napa Valley days, Portet recalls, "I thought that if I could not change the day temperatures, at least I would benefit from the

Stags Leap on the List

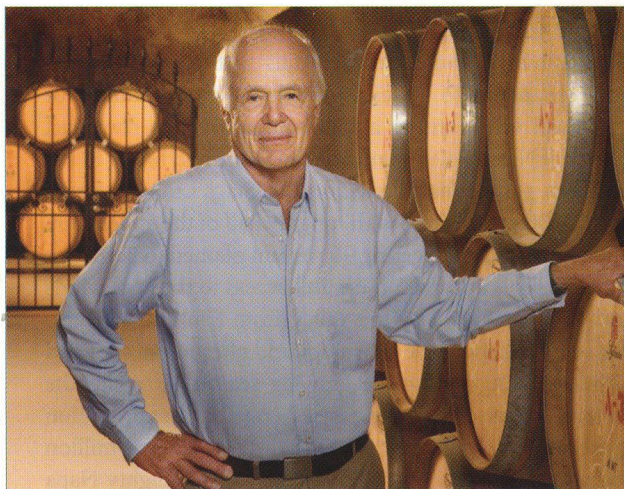
The most confusing aspect for most customers about the Stags Leap District is that two wineries in this appellation also bear the name of Stags Leap. Stags' Leap Winery (note the location of the apostrophe) was founded in 1971 by Carl Doumani, and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars was begun in 1972 by Warren Winiarski. As a result of the 1976 Judgment of Paris tasting, Stag's Leap Wine Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon quickly reached international stardom, while Stags' Leap Winery became well known for its excellent Petite Sirah. (Look for some of that Petite Sirah in the wineries new Rhône blend called *Ne Cede Malis*.) There are also many wineries outside the appellation that source grapes from Stags Leap and label the wine with a Stags Leap District appellation.

This appellation enjoys a particularly powerful customer awareness. David O'Day of Del Frisco's in New York City concurs: "Stags Leap Cabernets are some of our most popular wines. Our customers know the name. They are complex, ageworthy wines with a quality image, and the wines back it up every year." Stags Leap District wines represent a significant part of O'Day's wine list. He lists 37 selections with a Stags Leap appellation and, additionally, vertical collections of Shafer's *Hillside Select* and Stag's Leap Wine Cellars' *Cask 23*. O'Day particularly likes pairing Stags Leap District wines with Del Frisco's bone-in Kobe beef rib eye.

Kris Margerum of Auberge du Soleil Resort in Napa Valley breaks out his Cabernet Sauvignon on his wine list by subappellations, so there is a separate category for Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon. He describes his customers as "wanting powerful, yet smooth [wine], and Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon fits this description—the polish coming from this slightly cooler zone for Cabernet Sauvignon." Margerum feels that the Stags Leap style also makes the appellation's wines extremely versatile when guests order a variety of dishes for their main course.

cooler nights and get more fresh fruit. As a result, the wines from this appellation have a very strong personality." More than 30 years later, Bernard Portet's intuitions have taken on world-class status when it comes to Cabernet Sauvignon.

► Bob Bath, a third-generation Californian, has been in the restaurant and wine business for over 25 years. He passed the Master Sommelier exam in 1993 and continues to teach classes in the Master Sommelier program, in addition to teaching at the CIA at Greystone and the Professional Culinary Institute. He and his wife, Julie, also run Robert Bath Imports, a specialized portfolio of artisan New Zealand wines.



Shafer Vineyards Founder John Shafer was one of a small group of area winegrowers who helped establish Stags Leap District as an appellation.

Reviewer's Choice

By Robert Bath, MS, and Kris Margerum

Hartwell

2003 Cabernet Sauvignon

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

Captivating in many ways with classic Stags Leap character; ripe blackberry with touches of plum and balanced tannins. Full bodied, rich, and suave with great concentration. Rack of lamb.

Ilseley

2002 Cabernet Sauvignon

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

Less ripe than some Stags Leap wines in this tasting. Great concentration with interesting blackberry and plum flavors along with notes of dark chocolate and relatively firm tannins. Filet Mignon.

Regusci

2003 Cabernet Sauvignon

90% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Merlot,
4% Cabernet

Wonderfully ripe and rich with an interesting mix of blackberry, cassis, and red currant with excellent structure. Think chocolate-covered raspberries. Roasted Duck.

Shafer Vineyards

2002 Cabernet Sauvignon Hillside Select

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

Framboise, porcini, tobacco leaf, cocoa, and cedar on nose and palate. From its opaque color and incredible number of layers on the palate to its dramatically long finish, this wine is intense in every way. Mushroom risotto with rosemary.