



**The Daily Meal**<sup>®</sup>  
*All Things Food & Drink*

# The Stags Leap District 2012 Appellation Collection Is Remarkable

Some of the world's best cabernets come from Stags Leap

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Napa Valley is known first and foremost as one of the premier places in the world to grow **cabernet sauvignon** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>). If you spend almost any amount of time visiting wineries there, that point will be driven home pretty fast. Almost as quickly, if you love cabernet, you'll dial in a bit closer. The realization will hit that there are certain styles of cabernet you prefer over others. Focus in still closer and you'll realize that there are one or more sub appellations within the large scope of Napa that you prefer.

Each of the great Sub-AVA's has distinct qualities about it and some are better than others.

There is no question that when it comes to Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon the Stags Leap area is as good as any area in Napa for growing premium Cabernet Sauvignon. The wineries there have been putting together a collection of wines each year to showcase just what they do.

Each producer puts one of their cabernets, made of course from Stags Leap fruit, in the collection, 19 in all. This limited edition set (only 200 made) is **available directly through Stags Leap District Winegrowers** ([http://www.stagsleapdistrict.com/store/index.php?main\\_page=shopping\\_cart](http://www.stagsleapdistrict.com/store/index.php?main_page=shopping_cart)). I just tasted the entire collection and here are my thoughts on the individual wines, some of which are extremely limited and not available to the general public outside of this set.

## **Stags Leap District 2012 Appellation Collection (\$1,899.00)**

### **Baldacci Family Vineyards 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

This offering is 100 percent **cabernet sauvignon**. (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/variatal/cabernet-sauvignon>) 1,200 cases were produced. Black raspberry aromas jump from the nose. The gloriously layered palate is loaded with black fruits tinged with bits of red. Dusty dark chocolate, black tear, chicory, bits of savory herbs, and a host of minerals are all present on the long, persistent finish. Fantastic acid and firm but approachable tannins mark the structure. This will age well for 20 years.

### **Chimney Rock 2012 Stags Leap District Ganymede Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon**

Composed of entirely cabernet from the namesake vineyard; 953 cases were produced. Hints of pencil lead and bay leaf emerge on the nose along with plum, blueberry, and bramble. The thick, ponderous palate is layered with deep, dark, rich, but **proportionate flavors** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>). Black currant and cassis are of note. Earth, dark fruit, wisps of chocolate, and more carry through the impossibly long finish which stays dark, dense, and brooding throughout. If you're going to drink it now decant it for a few hours, in a perfect scenario lay it down for a dozen years and drink it in the decade that follows.

### **Cliff Lede Vineyards 2012 Beautiful Generation Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

This offering is composed of **cabernet sauvignon** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>)(90 percent), merlot (nine percent), and petit verdot (one percent). 1,197 cases were produced. The nose here is immense and remarkably appealing. A bit of Mexican vanilla bean pops out followed by an explosion of dark fruit aromas such as blackberry and raspberry. The palate is studded with black raspberry, boysenberry, and blackberry, as well as copious spice and mineral notes. A potpourri of rich, dark brooding fruit and sweet dark chocolate are all part of the substantial finish. This wine is a big mouthful of Napa cabernet and all the deliciousness that represents. Drink it in the next 15 years.

### **Clos Du Val 2012 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

Cabernet sauvignon (78 percent), merlot (16 percent), **cabernet** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/variatal/cabernet-sauvignon>)franc (four percent), and petit verdot (two percent) came together to form this wine. 4,200 cases were produced. A hint of eucalyptus emerges first on the nose followed by big, dark berry aromas such as black raspberry. Hints of violet are present as well. The palate is studded with flavors of those fruits as well as blueberry and plum. Minerals and subtle bits of roasted espresso mark the above average finish. This focused example of cabernet is stuffed with flavors that are refreshing and supported by great acid. This wine is delicious now; it'll be better in 7-9 years and drink well for a decade more.

### **Hartwell Estate Vineyards 2012 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

Largely cabernet sauvignon with small amounts of **cabernet** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/variatal/cabernet-sauvignon>)franc (nine percent), merlot (six percent), and petit verdot (three percent). 600 cases were produced. Rich, dark, somewhat jam laden berry aromas lead the nose. The palate is intense, fruity and loaded with eager fruit flavors such as rich blackberry and loads of black cherry. Earth kirsch liqueur, chocolate sauce, and more emerge on the long, lusty finish. This is perhaps the boldest wine in this set, but it has the structure, acid and balance, so it'll age well.

### **Isley Vineyards 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

This offering is a blend of **cabernet sauvignon** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>) (90 percent), malbec (nine percent) and cabernet franc (one percent). A mere 283 cases were produced. Black raspberry and black tea characteristics punctuate the lovely nose. Hints of black tea punctuate the more dominant black raspberry aromas. Leather, cherry, and hints of mission fig are all in evidence on the remarkably proportionate palate. Sour red and black fruits, spices in droves, oodles of earth, and mineral elements are all in play on the prodigiously long finish. This is a classic Napa cabernet that combines new world fruit and old world intent into a great wine. Drink it over the next 14-18 years.

### **Lindstrom 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

This is entirely **cabernet** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/variatal/cabernet-sauvignon>) sauvignon from a single hilltop, estate vineyard. Bits of dust and black fruit waft from the nose. Cherry and blackberry flavors sit at the core of this fabulously rich wine's palate. Dusty baker's chocolate, earth, and wisps of roasted espresso are part of the extremely long finish. This is a big, mouth-filling wine, but it's also balanced and marked by solid acid.

### **Malk Family Vineyards 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

Composed of 100 percent **cabernet sauvignon** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>), a scant 450 cases were produced. A wide ranging mix of red and black berry aromas fills the nose along with a hint of cigar. The juicy palate is concentrated and loaded with red cherry and jam laden berry flavors. Chicory, leather, cinnamon, and pepper are all in evidence on the above average finish. Firm, gripping tannins and zippy acid provide structure. Drink this over the next dozen years.

### **Odette 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

Composed of cabernet sauvignon (75 percent), merlot (14 percent), and cabernet franc (11 percent), Approximately 4,500 cases were produced. Violets, leather, bay leaf, earth, and blue fruit aromas mark the nose. From the first whiff to the last sip there is an inherent earthiness that tells the overarching story of this wine. Along the way blackberry and cassis play a role through the palate. Chocolate notes, cherry, and minerals all join in on the super long finish. This is an outstanding collection of wines, but if I had to pick a single favorite, this would be it; the earth notes just win the day for me.

### **Pine Ridge Vineyard 2012 Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon**

This offering is composed of **cabernet** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/variatal/cabernet-sauvignon>) sauvignon (77 percent), cabernet franc (20 percent), and malbec (three percent). A plethora of pleasing savory herbs are present on the nose including sage and thyme. Eucalyptus and raspberry aromas are in evidence as well. Black cherry and raspberry dominate the palate along with bits of white pepper. Tons of refreshing black fruits continue through the finish along a bit of cocoa, more spices, and herb notes.

### **Regusci 2012 Stags Leap District Cabernet Sauvignon**

Composed of cabernet sauvignon (95 percent), and merlot (five percent); 3,000 cases were produced. Blackberry aromas are punctuated by hints of sage. Black cherry and bits of red earth dot the lovely, layered palate. Pencil lead, dark chocolate notes, and a final wallop of earth emerge on the persistent finish. Firm tannins and acid provide a solid backbone. This really opened up after about 45 minutes. This is a classic old school Napa cabernet, rugged and solid in every way.

### **Robinson Family Vineyards 2012 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

100 percent cabernet sauvignon from their estate vineyard, just 144 cases were produced. Hints of kirsch liqueur and big black fruit aromas dominate the inviting nose. A bit of bay leaf emerges on the palate along with lots of blackberry and raspberry. A solid mineral component leads the finish which also shows off black tea and dark

chocolate notes. Firm tannins and zippy acid provide excellent framework. Drink this beauty over the next 15 years.

### **Shafer Vineyards 2012 One Point Five Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

Composed of **cabernet sauvignon** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>)(95 percent), malbec (four percent), and petit verdot (one percent); 9,000 cases were produced. Pencil lead, black raspberry, and savory herbs fill the nose. The beefy palate is strewn with red and black cherry characteristics as well as bits of thyme. Cocoa and spice elements are part of the long finish. Firm tannins and racy acid inform the fine structure. This wine is delicious today, but will age well over the next 12 to 15 years.

### **Silverado Vineyards 2012 Solo Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

As the name indicates, this is 100 percent cabernet sauvignon, 2,458 cases were produced. Black raspberry, toast, and vanilla bean aromas dot the nose. The palate is layered, intense and direct; black cherry flavors lead the charge. Pie crust, spices, bits of espresso, and sweet chocolate emerge on the beautiful finish. Great acid and fresh fruit flavors are notable features here. This cabernet will age effortlessly for at least 20 years.

### **Stags' Leap Winery 2012 The Leap Estate Cabernet Sauvignon**

100 percent cabernet sauvignon, this is a barrel select each year of the top estate lots. Blackberry and vanilla present on the nose. The palate is incredibly fresh with red and black cherry flavors dominating. Spice, leather, earth, and chicory are all present on noticeably long finish. There is a freshness and beautiful softness to this **cabernet** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>)that makes it hard to resist or put down.

### **Stag's Leap Wine Cellars 2012 Fay Cabernet Sauvignon**

This is entirely cabernet sauvignon sourced from the namesake vineyard. Savory herbs and violet aromas dot the nose. Cherry and raspberry characteristics dominate the full, sumptuous palate. Bits of blackberry and blueberry lead the finish which also shows off pencil lead and minerals. Firm tannins yield with some air. This delicious cabernet is just a baby. Lay it down for a decade and enjoy it in the decade that follows.

### **Steltzner Vineyards 2012 Martini Clone Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

Entirely cabernet sauvignon from a small part of their vineyard; specific vines have been field selected for over 40 years. Raspberry and red plum aromas leap from the nose. The palate is stuffed with fruit flavors that are both fresh and refreshing; raspberry leads the charge. Minerals, plum pudding spices, and roasted espresso are all present on the above average finish. The thick chewy tannins and firm acid provide great framework for a long shelf life.

### **Taylor Family 2012 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

This offering is composed of 100 percent **cabernet sauvignon** (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/top-5-cabernet-sauvignon-wines>). When you pour this wine, you'll be struck by the gorgeous color which is as dark as night. Blackberry aromas supported by subtler bits of vanilla and toast inform the nose. The palate is refined, fresh, and lean with fresh cherry and raspberry stealing the show. A hint of kirsch leads the long finish which also features

sour black fruits, chicory and graphite. This wine is incredibly delicious right now, but it'll improve for five to seven years and drink well for five after that.

### **Terlato Family Vineyards 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon, Stags Leap District**

This wine is composed of **cabernet sauvignon (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/variatal/cabernet-sauvignon>)** (80 percent), merlot (15 percent), and cabernet franc (five percent). Cherry and spice aromas explode from the nose. The balanced and refines palate is full of cherry and raspberry flavors. Black tea, minerals, and dusty cocoa are all present on the long, lush, and refreshing finish. Drink this over the next decade.

If you want to take the equivalent of a master class in Stags Leap Cabernet Sauvignon this collection is the perfect start. It's the perfect gift for the **cabernet (<http://www.thedailymeal.com/variatal/cabernet-sauvignon>)**-loving friend who has "everything." If you're interested, jump on it quick, there are only 200 sets and they'll be gone before long. To add to the overall appeal of this collection, 2012 was a remarkable vintage year in Napa Valley. The quality of each of these wines reflects that.

