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12 Impressive Napa Cabernets

New reviews of outstanding bottlings from the 2010 vintage

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Tasting Highlights bring the best wines from our editors' most recent tastings to WineSpectator.com members.

The strength of the 2010 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon vintage is evident again with this group of new releases, moderately priced and produced in sizable quantities.

Honig, based in Rutherford, has been on a hot streak for years, but the 2010 bottling is one of its finest. There's no better Napa Cabernet for \$45.

Ric Forman has 40-plus vintages in Napa under his belt, and a treasure trove of exceptional wines. Etude is yet another consistently strong performer. And Mt. Brave comes from the former Chateau Potelle vineyard atop Mt. Veeder.

HONIG Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2010 Score: 93 | \$45

Graceful and elegant, featuring lively red and dark berry flavors, with touches of black licorice and mocha-laced espresso, showing focus on the long, tapered finish. Drink now through 2023. 15,000 cases made. —J.L.

ETUDE Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2010 Score: 92 | \$85

Pure and deftly balanced, exhibiting a complex mix of fresh-turned earth, dark berry, spice, cedar and mocha. Most interesting on the finish where the flavors weave together. Ends with grippy, fine-grained tannins. Best from 2014 through 2024. 1,283 cases made. —J.L.

FORMAN Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2010 Score: 92 | \$85

Pure and direct, this rich, potent mix of red and black fruit offers touches of currant, spice, dried herb, tobacco leaf, black licorice and cedar, ending with a pleasing road tar and loamy earth aftertaste, and tannins that caress and grip. Drink now through 2026. 2,100 cases made. —J.L.

MT. BRAVE Cabernet Sauvignon Mount Veeder 2010 Score: 92 | \$75

Deceptively complex, this succeeds with a supple texture and a graceful mix of currant, blueberry, spice, crushed rock and subtle licorice notes, gliding along on the finish. Best from 2014 through 2025. 2,500 cases made. —J.L.

NEWTON Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Unfiltered 2010 Score: 91 | \$60

A classy style, showing measured density and restraint, with a tight mix of loamy earth, dark berry, mocha, cedar and dried herb, finishing with a dry, cleansing aftertaste. Best from 2014 through 2024. 2,848 cases made. —J.L.

SWITCHBACK RIDGE Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Peterson Family Vineyard 2010 Score: 91 | \$85

Deftly balanced, with an enticing mix of light, mocha-laced oak and a core of dark berry. Supple-textured, featuring notes of dusty earth, cedar and crushed rock, this ends with a long, sustained finish. Drink now through 2022. 1,096 cases made. —J.L.



Evan Gray/D&E Imagery

Honig's 2010 Napa Cabernet shows unbeatable quality for its price.

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BEAULIEU VINEYARD Tapestry Reserve Napa Valley 2010 Score: 90 | \$60

Glides along, offering an alluring mix of dense, dark blueberry, melted black licorice, grippy loamy earth and tannins that give the flavors traction. Impressive on the finish. Will appeal to those who like to chew on their reds. Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. Drink now through 2022. 18,500 cases made. —*J.L.*

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

Making Pinot on the Edge

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

Six to Watch

DUCKHORN Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2010 Score: 90 | \$70

Well-made and structured, with a charming core of currant, blackberry, cedar and spice. The tannins are firm and give the flavors traction on the finish. Drink now through 2021. 26,153 cases made. —*J.L.*

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

California Pinot Noir Cools Off in 2011

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MONTAGNA Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Tre Vigneti 2010

Score: 90 | \$55

A rustic style, with raw, chewy tannins around a core of tight, dense dark berry, plum and cherry fruit, focused and persistent, ending with a crushed rock aftertaste. Needs time. Best from 2014 through 2026. 1,182 cases made. —*J.L.*

SEAVEY Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Caravina Seavey Vineyard 2010 Score: 90 | \$55

Supple-textured, with ripe, fleshy red berry fruit and touches of raspberry, cranberry and currant. Well-proportioned, this ends with a smooth, tapered finish. Drink now through 2021. 975 cases made. —*J.L.*

ST. CLEMENT Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2010 Score: 90 | \$36

Firm and spicy, revealing an attractive red berry and red candy edge to the flavors. Finishes with a tight, focused beam of fruit. The fine-grained tannins give the flavors grip. Drink now through 2022. 5,273 cases made. —*J.L.*

ST. CLEMENT Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley Oroppas 2010 Score: 90 | \$55

Tight and Bordeaux-like in its structure and midpalate austerity, offering loamy earth, currant and dark berry flavors shaded by anise and cedar details. Needs time. Best from 2014 through 2025. 2,131 cases made. —*J.L.*