

BLIND

TASTING

with Deborah Parker Wong

Northern California Editor Deborah Parker Wong's innovative new series will feature blind tasting reviews from designated wine regions around the world. Tasting notes focus on flavor profiles, wine style and suggested retail price, while Deb's top picks from the flight are discovered in the reveal key at the end of the column.

RUTHERFORD DUST SOCIETY

NAPA VALLEY

That Rutherford Dust: Napa Cabernet's Home Turf

For this inaugural Blind Tasting, I delved into my notebook for highlights of ten wines that came out on top during an August 2012 presentation of Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignons from Napa Valley's Rutherford AVA.

The Rutherford Dust Society tasting presented 27 wines from the 2009 vintage—in reverse order from tastings held in prior years. Three flights of nine wines began with those from Rutherford's most southwesterly sites and moved north and across the AVA, concluding with wines from the most southeasterly sites.

1. Savory roasted nuts, cinnamon and black plum notes with dark berry flavors and silky, medium-weight tannins. \$100
2. Earth and charred oak notes with bright, focused red fruit that deepens towards the finish. \$65
3. Ripe, jammy blackberry complemented by toast and sweet vanilla with a generous structure that closes softly. \$185
4. Floral, high-toned notes of lavender and blue fruit with bright plum and a savory, granular texture. \$65
5. Anise and complex umami aromas; lean, intense dark fruit and leather finishing with notes of toasty caramel. \$45
6. Bright, lifted red fruit that intensifies on the palate supported by supple tannins and restrained oak. \$145
7. Appealing aromas of berry and plum skin; earthy fruit enriched by green spice and round, sweet tannins. \$80
8. Graphite-driven aromas, complex, spicy tannins and bright, savory fruit on the mid-palate. \$115
9. Rich, dark coffee aromas, bold, extracted black fruit mid palate with a tightly-knit structure and graphite finish. \$55
10. High-toned citrus and orange zest, a mélange of red and black plum flavors with a balanced, pleasing structure. \$85 ■■

The Reveal

1. Freemark Abbey Sycamore Vineyard; 2. Sequoia Grove Rutherford Bench Reserve; 3. Staglin Family Estate; 4. Sullivan Vineyards; 5. Rutherford Grove Estate; 6. Quintessa; 7. Lief Wines Auberge Road; 8. D. R. Stephens Wather River Block; 9. McGah Family Cellars; 10. Pina Napa Valley Firehouse Vineyard