Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard

Schrader Cellars

2012 Schrader Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard

96-100 Points

Wine Advocate - October 2013

The riveting 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard boasts an opaque purple color along with aromas of smoky barbecue, vanillin, crème de cassis, blueberries, black raspberries, graphite and licorice. There are 370 cases of this huge, rich and thick, but oh, so pure 2012.

Year-in and year-out this is one of the most interesting as well as fascinating group of wines and projects in Napa Valley. First, Schrader has two committed owners, secondly a brilliant winemaker in Thomas Brown, and thirdly, one of the true first-growth vineyard sites in all of Napa Valley, the famed Beckstoffer-owned To Kalon Vineyard in Oakville. There is also a new Beckstoffer vineyard in Oakville called Las Piedras. Additionally, they source grapes from the Beckstoffer Georges III Vineyard in Rutherford, several miles north of Oakville. In top vintages, Schrader's Beckstoffer Cabernet Sauvignon-based wines can be as good as money can buy ... anywhere in the world. The Schraders are essentially giving consumers a microscopic, intense study of the differences between clones from one particular vineyard. Production levels range from 100-200 cases to as high as 400 cases. The total production is well under 1,800 cases of wine, even in such generous vintages as 2012. These offerings, which are aged 18-20 months in a majority of Darnajou French barrels with some Taransaud, are much more similar than dissimilar, but I think long-term aging will begin to reveal differences, and that's the objective with these separate cuvees. All of these wines will keep for a minimum of 25-40 years. This is probably an overload of information for

the casual drinker who just wants a great Napa Cabernet Sauvignon, but for the wine geeks, this kind of clonal study is fascinating. The cooler than normal 2010 vintage produced a group of wines with small production levels. The 2011s came from a small yielding vintage as well. Winemaker Thomas Brown and the Schraders had to deal with two large rainy scenarios that were followed by foggy conditions in early to mid-October that resulted in the formation of botrytis in the grape bunches. They seem to have come through this with flying colors in several of their cuvees, which are candidates for the wines of the vintage. The 2012s enjoyed an incredibly long hang time, and although the year was warm, there was only one serious heat spike that came at a time (in July where the temperature hit 105 degrees) that was not threatening to the vineyards. Thomas Brown thought the number of days between flowering and the veraison (when the color of the grapes changes from green to dark purple) was around 65-70 days, an unusually long time that bodes well for flavor and tannin development in the grape bunches. The 2012s are all huge, richly fruity wines that were primary when I tasted them. For that reason, I will keep my notes short, but there appears to be at least three candidates for perfect scores after another 8-9 months in new oak. -*RP*