

KOEPPEL ON WINE



Nickel & Nickel

Vogt Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

Cabernet Sauvignon

Howell Mountain, Napa Valley

Excellent

Grapes for this massive but well-balanced wine came from a 14-acre vineyard high on Howell Mountain, north of the town of St. Helena and east of Calistoga. The first impression is clean lead pencil and minerals swathed in concentrated black currant; then come dusty, plummy floral notes. Oak imparts a solid but smartly resonant structure; tannin, and lots of it, is fine-grained and plush. Gradually, the wine gains depth and gravity, seeming to partake of the strata that underlies the mountain itself: 964 cases were made. Try from 2008 to 2012.



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John C. Sullenger Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

Cabernet Sauvignon

Oakville, Napa Valley

Exceptional

Wow, the bright and dark berry fruit here is like jam from the jar, but, boy, is this dense and chewy and weighty. Interestingly, at first it smells like minerals but not like cedar, a factor that comes later, along with touches of black olive and dried Provencal herbs and dust. It's even a bit resinous, what with the full complement of barksy, branchy elements that lends austerity from mid-palate back. All of this sounds a bit haphazard, but the case is the opposite; despite the size and presence and depth, this is a beautifully balanced wine, drinkable now with a grilled rib-eye or strip steak or for trying from 2006 to 2010. Sullenger is the home vineyard to Nickel & Nickel.



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Rock Cairn Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

Cabernet Sauvignon

Oakville, Napa Valley

Excellent

Made from grapes drawn from a vineyard at the southern edge of the Oakville appellation, this majestic cabernet is the hardest of the quartet, so mineral and earthy that it seems a composite of earth, minerals, oak, and tannin. Still, it offers fleshy, roasted black currant and black cherry flavors that need time to resolve themselves with the wine's mighty structure. Try from 2008 to 2015.



Nickel & Nickel

Stelling Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

Cabernet Sauvignon

Oakville, Napa Valley

Exceptional

Of these four Nickel & Nickel cabernets, the Stelling receives more new oak, 65 percent, a sign that the ripeness and quality of the grapes could absorb that much new wood. My first notes are "delightfully noble." This is indeed a patrician wine, a bit self-absorbed but with a long, generous gaze toward the future. Despite its aloofness, it manages to be not only delicious but luscious, while grounding itself in the earthy details of roots, tea, moss and bark. 701 cases were made. Try 2010 to 2015.