

## WINE SCHOOL

# California Cabernet Sauvignon, From Beyond Napa Valley

Its reputation may dominate public perceptions, but a lot of places in the state produce good, distinctive cabernet wines.



Credit...Tony Cenicola/The New York Times



By **Eric Asimov**

Nov. 18, 2021

If Americans know one thing about wine, they know this: Napa Valley makes cabernet sauvignon.

They know it so well that many Americans simply assume that all cabernet sauvignon comes from Napa Valley. [Paul Draper](#), the longtime head of [Ridge Vineyards](#), which makes Monte Bello, perhaps the greatest American cabernet, once joked to me that people were surprised to learn that Monte Bello was not from Napa. It comes from the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Actually, a lot of California cabernet sauvignons don't come from Napa Valley. Many supermarket cabernets come from the Central Valley, where industrialized farming has been scaled up to produce wine very cheaply. Much better cabernets come from elsewhere in the state. Of the roughly 95,000 acres of cabernet in California, according to the [United States Agriculture Department](#), only about 22,000 acres are in Napa.

That's a sizable percentage, but it means an awful lot of cabernet is farmed elsewhere, including almost 13,000 acres in Sonoma.

This month, we're going to try three cabernet sauvignons from outside of Napa Valley. The three bottles I suggest are:

**[Broadside](#) Paso Robles Margarita Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 \$18**

**[Camp](#) Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon 2019 \$22**

**[Domaine Eden](#) Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon 2017 \$51**

Two of the bottles, the Broadside and the Camp, are rather inexpensive. They are made to be drunk young and are easygoing. The third, Domaine Eden from the excellent and historic [Mount Eden Vineyards](#), is a little more expensive and serious.

If you can swing it, I urge you to try the Eden along with the others if only to understand a more age-worthy bottle as well.

These producers should not be too hard to find. But other reasonably priced options to look for include [Bedrock](#) in Sonoma County, [Foxglove](#) in Paso Robles and [Ground Effect](#) in Santa Barbara.

Of course, if you don't mind spending a little more money don't hesitate to select from myriad producers in Sonoma, the [Santa Cruz Mountains](#) and other California regions beyond Napa.

I don't eat a lot of red meat, but that's what I'm going to cook with these wines, whether [steaks](#), [lamb](#) or [burgers](#). But I'm not doctrinaire. I'd drink these wines with a [roast chicken](#), with [pork chops](#), with the Thanksgiving [turkey](#). If you're not a meat eater, these might go well with hearty [mushroom](#) dishes.

I'll issue my usual reminder. It's often said that red wines should be consumed at room temperature, but which room? Whoever first said that probably had a drafty manor house that was always chilly. Better to think of cellar temperature, which translated means slightly cool.