

# Robb Report

## Best of the Best 2015 | Leisure: Domestic Red Wines

By Brett Anderson



*Odette Estate 2012 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon*

A hedonistic Cabernet—uncorked.

Firsts, though invariably interesting, are also frequently dubious. Ivan the Terrible, for instance, was the first Tsar of All the Russias. William Blount, a U.S. senator for Tennessee, was the first person that Congress impeached—in his case for plotting to assist England in conquering the Spanish-held Florida territory. And Theodore Roosevelt, one of his generation's most assiduous saber rattlers, was the first U.S. citizen to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. On occasion, however, new trails may be blazed without reservation. Such is the case with the Odette Estate 2012 Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, the first red wine with a screw-cap closure to be honored as our choice for Best of the Best.

This first is apt, considering the provenance of the Napa Valley estate where the wine is produced. Located along Silverado Trail on the former site of the Steltzner Winery, the property belongs to three individuals who, decades ago, set out to transform the way wine is made: Gordon Getty, Gavin Newsom, and John Conover. When this trio developed Plumpjack Winery in the 1990s, they sought to craft wines of the highest quality using sustainable practices. This philosophy assumed even greater importance in the design of their second estate winery, Cade, which was the first LEED Gold–certified facility of its kind.

Similar environmentally responsible standards informed the partners' plans for the 45-acre Steltzner parcel, which embraces traditional and non-traditional elements. From the road, the barnlike structure that serves as a tasting room stands in stark contrast to the new winery, a semicircular edifice embedded in the hillside and shielded by a plant-covered roof and a series of 12 perforated, curved

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metal screens. Within this architectural anomaly, the winemaker Jeff Owens—who left his position as assistant winemaker at Cade to join the new label—works oenological wonders.

The timing of Owens's move could not have been more fortuitous. The 2012 vintage yielded rich fruit with substantial tannins, and he coaxed from these berries two remarkably fine reds. The Estate Cabernet Sauvignon tends toward the voluptuous, but the star of the vintage is the purple-black Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon (\$300)—a wine offered only to the label's allocation list. The Reserve's heady perfume of blackberry, violets, coffee, and dried sage does not quite prepare the imbiber for the sensory explosion that the first sip ignites. The liqueur-like blackberry and black-plum essences seem to shoot up the brain stem and blossom in the mind, suffusing the senses with aromas and flavors of sun-warmed black fruits of summer, sweet cured tobacco, and tanned leather. The spartan notes of wet granite and basalt on the epic finish provide a pleasing counterpoint to the wine's hypnotic hedonism.

Indeed, the only element lacking in this resplendent red is the ceremonial uncorking, a ritual associated most closely with the great wines of France. Yet perhaps the more efficient screw cap is, like the name of the property, a subtle commentary on Gallic pretension: Odette Kahn was the judge at the famous 1976 Paris tasting who, after unwittingly choosing a Napa red over a blend from Bordeaux, demanded the return of her ballot.

Odette Estate, [odetteestate.com](http://odetteestate.com)