

Down in the Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley 2012

Story:

I have spent a lot of time in the valleys of the wine world. I started in the Walla Walla Valley, working at Tamarack Cellars while attending the Enology and Viticulture program in town. It was great. I was working with an amazing crew and having the time of my life. When my instructors wanted me to move to Napa for the coming harvest, I politely declined, citing the need to “pay back” my current employers with a full-on, drag-out vintage without having to go to class in the middle of the day. Then I researched who they wanted me to work for, and asked Tamarack’s advice on what to do.

From there is was the Napa and Sonoma Valleys, then the Wairau and Gibbston Valleys in New Zealand, Margaret River Valley in Australia, and, finally, some slight permanence in Paso Robles nestled in the Salinas River Valley of California. After three countries, five years, and numerous wine appellations, it had finally dawned on me that the Walla Walla Valley was where I wanted to be. Right back to where I started.

The wine:

To be honest, I got really burnt out on Cabernet. Three years in Napa will have that effect on some. The thing about it is, when it comes to wines that reward patience and cellaring, Cabernet is king. What I like about Cab in this state is its balance. Not only do you get the dark red bordering on purple fruit characteristics, but with the extended sunlight you get a natural decrease in the really vegetal aromas and flavors and get them to move more toward savory spices like rosemary and thyme as opposed to bell pepper and asparagus. Take that and the cooler temperatures during the night, and you get more natural acidity which makes it stand up a little taller to food, ageing, or just drinking to enjoy.

Elephant Mountain is a warm site in a cool valley, so the acidity and ripeness balance out perfectly. We destem into small fermenters that fit under the machinery so it’s all gravity fed. I like punchdowns for their simplicity and the control offered. You get to stand and move the grapes as forcefully or gently as needed, all the while getting a complete feel for the fermentation kinetics and aromas on offer. Fermentation lasted two weeks and was pressed into a brand new Saint Martin Grande Réserve barrel and another French oak barrel that had only been filled once before. Blended with 10% Syrah and aged on lees for 20 months, this wine is integrated, silky, and shows great potential down the line.

Harvest Date:	October 27th, 2012	Alcohol:	14.5% ABV
Vineyard:	Elephant Mountain	TA:	3.33g/l
Brix at harvest:	25.5	pH:	3.75