



## 2001 – 2009 HL Cabernet Sauvignon Retrospective



In a recent tasting over lunch, Jennifer and Herb were joined by winemaker Michael Trujillo and 3 other winemakers to analyze the last 9 vintages of HL Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon. These wines are very indicative of the cool-climate Herb Lamb Vineyard and expressive of the exposure and hillside conditions. None are fat and jammy wines, but show a decided leanness and great structure, with a reflection to the growing conditions. With time in the glass and time in the bottle they become more complex and very interesting.

Michael is thrilled with the outcome. "I am amazed how similar and well-structured these wines from Herb Lamb Vineyards are. None of these older vintages will implode; all have good structure and will age well. There is no weak wine in the bunch; they all shout out "we're still here"!" The sleeper of them all, and favorite of the tasting, is the much maligned 2003 vintage - who would have thought?

### Tasting Notes – August 2012

**2001 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - This wine is still totally alive in nose and there's a little more going on there besides primary fruit; there's shaved chocolate, licorice, roasted nuts, pencil lead, leather and char. There's a gorgeous bottle bouquet of cedar, tobacco and tea leaf. In the mouth, the wine at first appears soft and simple with juicy red raspberry

and bright cherry flavors. Then you get the spice; molasses, cinnamon, clove, anise, soy, tamari and ginger. This is a good, rich, complex wine with lots of depth, showing finely woven acids and tightly knit tannins. There's a great evolution in the glass as it opens up then it jumps out at you. It would be fun to taste this vintage in a few years and see where it's going. The 2001 HL Cabernet Sauvignon is the kind of wine that you want to have a glass of every 15 minutes. It should last another 4-8 years, or you can drink it now with decanting.

**2002 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - This was a warmer and a little weaker vintage, but the color is still black and dense. In the nose you find sweet currant, raspberry and musty forest floor essence. It's followed by ripe plum, pencil lead, licorice, anise, carob, toffee and cedar. There's a meaty character of soy, carpaccio and iron. In the mouth there's more tar and ink and big tannins. This is a big and bold wine, a bit more focused and forward, yet lean with big, drying tannins and still inky on the palate. You can decant and drink now or hold until 2014. Serve with big fatty meats like rib eye, bacon wrapped roasts or prime rib.

**2003 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - Upon opening, the slight funk in nose blows off to reveal a creamy nougat and exotic berry nose of red fruits with a briary, wild nature. Essence of lavender and violets are offset by meaty notes of tamari, soy and brine. In the mouth, the warm fruit flavors get brighter with air and the youthful, blackberry and blueberry mix keeps coming back to you. The carpaccio flavors are offset by luscious fruits and coffee notes. This wine is shy to unfold, but relaxes with air and became the surprising favorite of the flight! This is a lush, great food pairing wine; open and decant and watch the layers evolve as you enjoy with food - pair with rich meals such as osso bucco, cassoulet, oxtail stew, braised lamb or rich sausage. Open and decant now, or wait 2-3 years.

**2004 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - The 2004 HL Cabernet Sauvignon continues with similar notes of other vintages, including creme brulee, sweet, dusty tobacco and pencil lead. In the nose, the sweet red fruits and ripe plums are highlighted by bright spice and vanilla. 2004 was a hot vintage and everything got fully ripe, which shows in the palate. There are bigger tannins and fully ripe, spicy red and blue fruit flavors. The sweet cedar flavors are highlighted by dusty oak with floral and vanilla bean flavors. Drink now to 2015.

**2005 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - This wine has finally shed its adolescence and is becoming mature. The nose is initially musty, but shows notes of tobacco, pink peppercorn, red fruits, coconut and mocha. In the mouth, the wine tastes a little fat and sluttish but still has great structure and a good acid profile. This wine is more Rubenesque and mature in nature, showing lush medium red fruits, sweet coconut, cedar, tamari and soy. While this wine is starting to show its age, it is still clean and lively with classic Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon characteristics of cherry cola, silky tannins, chocolate and mocha on the finish. Age the 2005 vintage 3-4 years, or decant and drink now. Should be delicious paired with a well-seasoned rabbit or lamb dish.

**2006 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - Perhaps a whiff of Brett in the nose, but it blows off with aeration, and the wine shows ripe red and blue fruits. The color appears more purple and points to one of the most youthful tasting wines in the flight. In the mouth, the flavors range from rich raspberry to soy, tar, smoked meats, dried herbs and tea leaves. It's a clean wine with good acid, fruit and oak balance that's going to live forever. "Like the CD you hear and don't like the first time, then you hear it again and like it a bit more, then you are humming it all the time!" It is a well balanced wine, still big, with lower tannin levels and plenty of years left. This is an elegant, pretty wine that will stand up well to food. The 2006 is a youthful wine - be patient and hold 5+ years.

**2007 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - The 2007 HL Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon has a fruity nose of fresh, red raspberry and currants, and floral notes of violets and lavender. More complex notes of sweet bacon and pencil lead, cedar and fresh oak come with aeration. In the mouth, it has a big entry paired with a spicy tartness highlighting sweet cocoa, blackberry and raspberry. There's a nice blend of bright fruits like red raspberry and lots of depth from the dark fruits like berry pie filling in mouth. This is a big, rich wine with good depth, great length and long finish. It was a monster in its youth and at bottling, but now it's finally coming around showing a softer, well structured and seamless wine. Don't save it forever. Pair it with a big, juicy rib-eye with blue cheese or prime rib with lots of fat. Drink or hold 2-4 years.

**2008 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - In the nose, it shows the typical sweet floral and red fruit characteristics of this vineyard. It has a subtle, not explosive, nose of red raspberry and ripe plum notes. In the mouth it shows tons of mouth-

filling red fruit, with black cherry, plum and raspberry jam paired with big, rich, briary, dried flowers and herbs. The 2008 vintage is not as explosive as the 2007, but is a great representation of the vineyard. There is a plush mid-palate with dusty, chewy notes. Flavors range from rich, blackberry pie to meaty flavors with notes of sandalwood, cedar and well-integrated oak. Because we waited to pick later in the season, this wine is well-balanced and has great structure with good acidity and depth. Drink or hold 2-3 years.

**2009 HL Cabernet Sauvignon** - This youthful wine has so much potential, but is not yet fully integrated. The 2009 is a big wine, yet still tight in nose and shy on the palate. In the nose, there are black and red fruits, cherry, currant and raspberry, with fresh wood notes of vanilla, oak and cedar. There are also nice gamey notes highlighted by soy and tamarind with peppercorns. The rich black cherry and red fruit are well integrated with the oak. In the mouth, the wine shows big, upfront red fruits with nice chalky tannins. Although young and not forthcoming yet, this wine is well integrated and oak forward with a sweet, bright pencil lead finish; it's going to be big wine. "This tastes like a big name Bordeaux wine that you opened 5 years too early and wish you had waited". Hold 6-8 years. The best comment was: "Smells like Mel Knox" (Taransaud barrel salesman).