

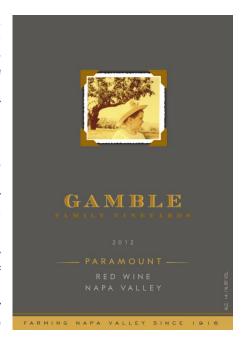
GAMBLE FAMILY VINEYARDS

By Mark Spivak | August 2016

There has always been a profound divide in the Napa Valley between growers---multi-generational families with deep roots in the land---and vintners, who in some cases are newly arrived dot-com billionaires. And while there are stories of growers who have made the leap into producing their own wine, those families are the exception rather than the rule.

Launcelot Gamble arrived in Napa County in 1916, and made his living by farming and cattle ranching. His sons Launce and George succeeded him, and George's son Tom purchased his first vineyard in 1981. He took over management of the Gamble Family Home Vineyard in 1997.

It took him more than ten years to morph into a winery owner. Although he viewed it as a "natural progression of history," it was a move he approached cautiously. He still views himself as a farmer, and hopes to pass that legacy on to the next generation, but by putting his name on the label he has emerged from the vineyard into the spotlight.



Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc can be a hard wine to find: the land best suited for it is also prime turf for growing Cabernet, and most vintners would prefer to double or triple their money. The 2015 Gamble Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc (\$25) exudes whiffs of grapefruit and melon on the nose, along with evidence of good acidity. That acidity sparkles on the palate, along with a profusion of citrus flavors and a firm mineral backbone. The finish is lush and charming. This is a wine for a summer's day, a perfect match for sunshine and shellfish.

The 2013 Napa Cabernet (\$50) is sourced from a 3.5-acre site in Oakville. New oak, crushed blackberries and cracked black pepper perfume the nose. Nicely compact at 13.9% alcohol, the wine yields flavors of ripe black fruits, anise, minerals and fresh herbs. It is far more graceful than many Napa Cabernets, a seamless companion to everything from game fish to grilled meats.

On the upper end of the scale, Gamble's 2012 Paramount Red Wine (\$80) is a blend of 33% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Cabernet Franc, 30% Merlot and 5% Petit Verdot. A plummy, seductive nose is followed by flavors of dark berries, red plums and raspberry jam in a ripe, balanced package. The use of oak is judicious, and the wine is a gentle giant---like all the Gamble wines, a pleasure to drink.

Mark Spivak is the author of *Iconic Spirits: An Intoxicating History* (Lyons Press, 2012) and *Moonshine Nation* (Lyons Press, 2014); his first novel, *Friend of the Devil*, is now available from Black Opal Books. For more information, go to amazon.com