



Diamond Series



D.R. Stephens Estate

For a number of years, real estate executive D. R. Stephens lived in the Napa Valley and made many friends. A number of these friends were in the wine business and conversations often included new releases and honors garnered by his friends' wines.

In 1995, Stephens, now 75, decided it was time to venture into the wine business himself and purchased a 35-acre site that included an old olive orchard. He set about to grow his own grapes and produce his own wines. The company's first release of only 140 cases of Chardonnay occurred in 2001 and was immediately recognized as really top quality by both the wine industry and consumers alike.

Fast forward to today. The D.R. Stevens Estate is a proven entity with numerous accolades, a bevy of highly rated wines and top scores from the wine industry's assortment of periodicals. D.R. Stephens Estate has ascended into the rarified air of highest quality producers within Napa Valley.

"My father decided that he would do whatever was needed to make the best possible wines," informed Justin Stephens, the winery's managing partner. "Everything we have done at D. R. Stephens Estate was planned with the long term in mind. We intended that our wines be able to compete with any wine in the entire world."

The younger Stephens has put together a world-class winery team to accomplish those ends. "Our management team is something of a cliché," Justin Stephens continued. "They do all the work, they really do. They provide us with great tools and the result is a fine portfolio of wines."

The team includes two Michaels. First, there is Winemaker Michael Hirby, an early associate of Les Behrens (Berhens and Hitchcock) and formerly winemaker at Realm Cellars. Also included is Michael Wolf who serves as vineyard manager. Wolf's composite includes the likes of Bond Estates, Duckhorn Vineyards, Harlan Estate, Lewis Cellars, Vineyard 29 and Scarecrow Winery to name a few industry icons.

The original winery label was designed by D.R. Stephens and remains in use to this day. It is an old style label with the original Stephens home serving as the background. D.R. Stephens is less active in today's winery business and has taken a *laissez faire* approach to his Napa Valley gem. As the winery has evolved into its present status he has chosen to leave it in the hands of his son and employees.

"I worked with my father for several years until he was sure that his goals and mine were properly aligned," Justin Stephens added. "Once he was satisfied, he let me take care of the day to day details. I am proud to say that he now sits back and enjoys the foundations he has built and what our winery has become."

Justin Stephens also heads his own winery, the successful Hunnicutt Winery where all of D.R. Stephens Estate wines are produced. A plan has been formulated to begin construction on a new winery for D.R. Stephens Estate on the family's Napa Valley property in 2014.

Currently, around 2000 cases of wines are produced annually by D.R. Stephens Estate. In addition to the company's fabled Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are apart of the estate's portfolio.

Is there a chance of expansion in the future for D. R. Stephens Estate?

"I think we are both active and passive in that regard," responded Justin Stephens. "There are really few sweet deals available around Napa Valley, and the prices asked make the decision to buy very difficult. You simply cannot put money into property that will at best break even in the process."

Stephens is quite upbeat with the fact that one of his family's closest friends and Cabernet Sauvignon suppliers has recently acquired some additional contingent acreage. This plot had already been cleared and will present usable fruit in 2016.

"It all about measured growth," Stephens explained. "And we are quite happy with what we have now."



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Justin Stephens – Proprietor & Managing Partner

We just finished tasting our 2012 Chardonnay lots and are amazed at the quality. We still have some culling out to do, but the fact remains that we will have some marvelous wines to work with. It is safe to say that our 2012 Chardonnay will be a great addition to our winery.”

So goes it at the top of the proverbial heap, the lofty location that D.R. Stephens Estate currently enjoys. This current *Diamond Series* selection is a joy to behold and will remain within your memory for some time to come. As always, enjoy!

Accolades and Tasting Notes

D.R. Stephens 2009 Walther River Block Cabernet Sauvignon

93-Points, *Stephen Tanzer’s International Wine Cellar* — “Good deep ruby-red. Pungent aromas of brambly blackberry, blueberry, loam and rocks. Dense and sweet, with terrific black fruit intensity. The lovely vibrant, rising finish features a boatload of tannins and excellent breadth. An impressive showing.”

92-Points, *Wine Enthusiast* — “This is very rich, with flavors of melted milk chocolate, black cherry pie, black currant, toasted almond, brown butter and smoky oak. Tastes like a granola candy bar, but a very expansive one, with gorgeous tannins and a long, sweet, mind-blowing finish.”

Winemaker Michael Hirby’s Notes — “Aromatically full of deep, rich, dark fruit and dark chocolate notes, and it is similarly dense in the mouth, with intense flavors enrobed in sweet tannins. The finish is huge, with great depth of dark fruits and exotic spice flavors. As always, this wine should age well for a long time.”

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