



PLATINUM SERIES



Select, Ultra Premium, Collectable Wines from California's Best Winemakers

Justin Hunnicutt Stephens prefers to use the word *accessible* whenever describing his emerging Napa Valley wine operation. He feels that such a descriptor adequately describes his ingenious winery that has been turning wine industry heads for the past few years.

"We want Hunnicutt (not *Hunnicutt Winery* or *Hunnicutt Vineyards*, but simply *Hunnicutt*) to provide a special interaction between a winery and its customers," he explained. "We do everything we can to involve our customers and friends in all aspects of our operation. We feel it is simply a means of communicating our sincerity and dedication to produce the finest wines possible in the best possible setting."

That setting is a smallish sylvan location in Napa Valley, just off the Silverado Trail on the valley's Eastern side. Large pine and fir trees highlight Hunnicutt, which is just down the road and on the other side of the highway from its nearest neighbor, Rombauer Vineyards. From the inset, it is evident that Hunnicutt is indeed a labor of love.

For Justin Stephens, his wine odyssey began in his early twenties. "I grew up in and around Napa Valley and there were two types of people; those in the wine business and those not. One night a friend brought a special bottle of Zinfandel and described what it took to make it come out like it did. That friend was Kirk Venge and we had been friends since we were four. I listened and became fascinated with the whole process. I started buying wines and even collecting them. I guess you could say I became hooked. In the back of my mind I guess I intended to do something like this after I retired. Then I realized I just couldn't wait that long to take on something I loved."

Stephens had worked in the commercial real estate field until the call of the grape drew him into the wine industry. Thus began the process that would evolve into the modern day Hunnicutt.

"Our first release of 231 cases came in 2004," Stephens continued. "I was able to talk Kirk (Venge, the son of legendary Napa Valley winemaker Nils Venge and an acclaimed winemaker in his own right) into making our wines, and the rest is history. We have

managed to do all right for ourselves and will produce around 2,500 cases this year."

Justin Stephens feels that the company's decision in 2008 to build a new winery facility lent the credibility needed for the project's ultimate success.

"A sense of place is critically important to the overall success of the winery," he added. "We were blessed with a nearly primeval location, a location that required a great deal of planning and innovation. We decided to bore out some caves into the mountainside that was mostly unleveled, and, from a topography standpoint, practically useless. When we were finished, we decided the caves made sense and we bored even more caves. Now we have almost 15,000 square feet of caverns that allow us to produce our wines in the manner we wanted to in the first place."

While Stephens gained experience as a cellar rat early in his career, he was also fortunate to glean marketing expertise from another of his jobs.

"In my mind, I am still something of a neophyte in the wine business," he declared modestly. "I never expected for things to turn out like they did. I am extremely pleased with our success but I am also aware that I have had some excellent help along the way."

While Hunnicutt is distributed in California and several other states, Justin Stephens is equally proud of his brand's efforts in Europe. A Swiss distributor offers Hunnicutt in both Switzerland and Austria, giving the brand international exposure.

Will this successful run for Hunnicutt continue well into the future?

"We are still an extremely small brand," Stephens replied. "Our inventory seems to always be absorbed and that's a plus for any winery. When the time comes that I have to start making deals to sell our wines, it will be a signal to me that I have produced too much wine. Also, whenever I can plainly see that our size has begun to compromise our quality, well, that will be an important red flag to all of us."

Justin Hunnicutt Stephens seems to have his feet squarely on the ground and his prospects seem endless. His winery's wines are in high demand and their quality has produced numerous accolades.



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TASTING NOTES

**95 POINTS
+ CELLAR SELECTION
+ GOLD MEDAL**

-Beverage Testing Institute

90 POINTS

-Robert Parker

625 Cases Produced

2012 was an excellent vintage in Napa Valley and this Cabernet Sauvignon from Hunnicutt certainly shows it. A blend of fruit from vineyards in Calistoga, Rutherford, Oakville, Coombsville, and Howell Mountain AVAs, this Napa Valley wine is comprised of 91% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, and 2% Petit Verdot. Voluptuous and elegant from the very start, the Hunnicutt 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon opens with mounds of boysenberry, blackberry and black cherry aromas with just a touch of floral nuances in the background. The palate is explosive and dense with flavors of crème de cassis, velvety nutella, blueberry pie and blackberry jam, all framed by fine grain tannins and notes of warm, toasty vanilla from the aging in French Oak (22 months). Enjoy now until 2022.

HUNNICUTT

Dear *Platinum Series* Members,

I suspect most of you are not familiar with HUNNICUTT so I'll give you a bit of background about the project followed by information about this specific wine. I started HUNNICUTT in 2001 after a short, two-and-a-half year stint in the real estate business when I realized I was working a job in anticipation of retiring and doing something in the wine business. I was barely 25 at the time, so that runway was dauntingly long, which made the job even more of a job! July 15, 2001 I moved up to St. Helena and began my career as a cellar rat at Miner Family Winery in Oakville. Shortly thereafter, working at other wineries and taking viticulture and enology classes at night, I partnered with Kirk Vinge, our consulting winemaker, and started the project with some Cab and Zin. In the years since, we've added vineyard sources and now make anywhere from seven to ten different bottlings each year with a size range of fifty to eight hundred cases – all but two under three hundred cases.

The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon that is included in this Gold Medal Wine Club shipment is 91% Cabernet Sauvignon, 7% Merlot, 2% Petit Verdot. Five Cabernet vineyards spotted throughout Oakville, Rutherford and Calistoga contributed to its final blend, while the Merlot and Petit Verdot are from Coombsville in the southern portion of Napa Valley and Howell Mountain respectively. We age the wine for 22 months in approximately 50% new French oak. While we, of course, enjoy and appreciate the ripeness we can attain in Napa Valley, balancing that potential with structure and acid is paramount for our winemaking style. There is no right or wrong way to make wine, but we strive to make wines that are powerful and plush on their own, but really compliment and can be complimented by food.

2012 as a vintage is without a doubt one of the best we've seen in Napa and I believe this is the best example of our Napa Valley cuvée we've released to date, with its closest rival being the 2009 vintage.

Please enjoy and feel free to contact us if you have any questions and/or would like to visit the winery.

Best Regards,

Justin Hunnicutt Stephens

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REORDERS

Hunnicutt 2012 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

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