

Diamond Series



Robert Keenan Winery

The story of the Robert Keenan Winery has been well documented throughout the past three decades and with good reason. Under the vision and guidance of its late namesake founder, the St. Helena winery has been considered one of Napa Valley's premier wineries for a number of years.

Robert Keenan was a Stanford graduate who made a great deal of money in the insurance business and became interested in French Bordeaux wines over thirty years ago. Around 1974, he discovered the old Conradi Winery property on Spring Mountain that dated to the 1890s but which had been abandoned sometime during the 1930s.

Robert Keenan set about restoring the old property and actually rebuilt a charming, two-story winery with stones from the original Conradi stone buildings. The structure was completed in time for the harvest of 1977, but the vines were young still, so Chardonnay and Cabernet grapes were purchased to make the wines for the first vintage. The physical winery has changed only slightly over the past decades. New stainless steel tanks, and 60-gallon French oak barrels fill the cellar. A unique, antique-filled, 60-seat dining room is suspended above the winery floor, allowing guests to observe the tanks and smell the tantalizing scent of freshly crushed fruit or aging wines.

Keenan originally planted Chardonnay vines in 1975 and a year later an impressive Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard was planted. Several years later a small amount of Merlot was added to give the mountainside vineyard its full compliment of varietals.

Robert Keenan Winery produced wines of monstrous proportions; huge, assertive wines that were rewarded by bountiful accolades and incredible press. By the middle to late '80s, Robert Keenan Winery was literally at the top of the mountain.

But something happened during that period and by 1990, most of the tributes and praise were but memories of the past. For several years, the winery teetered and barely held its own.

In 1995, after his son Michael visited the winery for the first time in years, a decision was made the following year by Robert Keenan to afford his son complete control of the winery's kismet, a move that resulted in a drastic change of fortunes for the Napa Valley institution.



"When I took control, I realized we needed to make some radical changes around the place," Michael Keenan candidly remarked. "I was fortunate my father had the vision to talk Nils Venge into joining Keenan as our consultant winemaker. Nils' expertise at Groth, Villa Mt. Eden and other places made him perfect for our operation."

Venge is the prototype of new wave winemakers who offers his services in the role of consultant to premiere wineries throughout California. Sometimes the

consultant helps a new winery get its wines on the charts and sometimes, as in the case of Keenan, Nils Venge helps resurrect an industry icon.

Venge's first vintage for Keenan was in 1994, and once released, Keenan's new wines were immediately bolstered by the wine trade press.

"It was absolutely amazing to see the change in many people's attitudes," Michael Keenan, a general contractor for over 20 years, added with a smile.

Continued on page 2



Diamond Series

Michael Keenan



Michael C. Keenan

“He was able to revitalize the wines in one fell swoop. Writers that hadn’t paid any attention to us in years suddenly were calling for interviews and comments. It was certainly most gratifying to everyone concerned.”

The decision to plow forward in the face of existing adversity was not easy for Keenan but the fledgling 45-year-old owner stuck by his guns. He admits that the hardest


fact for him to personally admit was that something was indeed painfully wrong with the operation. After all, Michael Keenan grew up in an environment where Keenan was king of all it surveyed, and from its perch on Spring Mountain, Robert Keenan Winery admittedly had a most remarkable view.

The younger Keenan is determined to keep his winery at its new echelon and feels that the revitalized Keenan is six to eight years from reaching its peak. He is replanting 40 of the 50 existing acres and has changed labels to make the winery’s wines more accessible.

“We made some serious mistakes last time around, and we were lucky to be able to come back,” he confided. “I’m not willing to let that happen again.”

I have a terrific team in place here and we are producing at a level that I feel we can normally duplicate. The rest is up to me to see that it all gets done.”

Accolades and Tasting Notes



94+ Points, *Robert Parker Jr.’s The Wine Advocate* publication — “A beautiful wine, the 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve boasts classic crème de cassis, cedar, tobacco leaf, spice box, and pain grille aromas and flavors. This impeccably made, full-bodied, super-concentrated Cabernet reveals good delineation and freshness as well as surprising definition and elegance for a wine of such power and intensity. If you haven’t discovered the wines of Robert Keenan, it’s time to jump on the bandwagon as quality appears to go from strength to strength.”

5 out of 5 Stars, *Decanter* magazine.

Reorder

A wine of this pedigree doesn’t come around often, and much of the credit must go to the tireless efforts of Michael Keenan who has truly resurrected one of the legendary Cabernet producers of Napa Valley. Keenan’s 2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve provides tremendously rich fruit, depth, and complexity that marks it as one of the winery’s best accomplishments to date.

Winery Direct: \$100.00 / bottle

Diamond Series Price:

2-Bottle members.....\$85.00 / bottle

4-Bottle Members &
Multi-Series Members...\$82.00 / bottle

(Plus shipping)

Call: 1-800-266-8888 • Fax: 1-800-266-8889
Reorder Web Site: www.goldmedalwine.com/member
E-mail: orders@goldmedalwine.com

