



# Diamond Series



## Lail Vineyards

This month's *Diamond Series* selection, Lail Vineyards, is a winery that can literally trace its roots back to the very beginning of wine history in Napa Valley, the area in Northern California that most experts consider the finest wine-producing locale in this country.

To elucidate further, Lail Vineyards traces directly back to legendary winemaker Gustave Niebaum, the Finnish sea captain turned fur trader who founded the original Inglenook Winery back in 1879. Niebaum built his Rutherford property into one of the finest wineries in the world and produced the highest caliber wines to critical worldwide acclaim.

When Niebaum died, Inglenook eventually fell to his great nephew John Daniel, Jr., who continued Niebaum's impeccable tradition of producing great wines, and in particular great Cabernets. With the repeal of Prohibition in the early 1930s, Daniel produced a string of world-class Cabernets that ended in 1964, and has seldom been equaled thereafter. Circumstances forced the sale of Inglenook and a series of corporate decisions by the new owner to utilize the scope and power of the Inglenook name soon became the downfall of the once proud winery.

Three decades later, John Daniel, Jr.'s youngest daughter, Robin Daniel Lail, who had grown up at Inglenook and had watched in disbelief as the property changed hands, decided to reenter the wine world. Robin recalled the splendid long-lived wines her father had once produced and vowed to recreate a new winery in his memory.

"Getting back in the wine business was not something I had to do," Robin Lail confessed. "I literally grew up in the wine business as part of its pulse. My ancestors left such a beautiful legacy and made such substantial contributions. I want, if at all possible, to be able to pass on some of the greatness they left."

It's not that Robin Lail is now without great practical experience of her own. In 1982, she co-founded (along with Christian Moueix of Chateau Petrus) the marvelous Dominus Estate that she held until 1995.

That same year, Robin Lail took the step she had always yearned for. Along with her now famous architect/husband Jon, she founded Lail Vineyards, a tiny producer of extraordinary quality wines that utilized the fruit from two vineyards she had personally selected. The first was a small vineyard in Yountville that was originally part of her family's famous Napanook Vineyard that has produced superlative wines for many decades. She also planted a smallish 3-acre vineyard on prestigious Howell Mountain, generally considered the Mecca of Napa Valley vineyard sites.

Lail Vineyards' first release came in 1998 and was only 450 cases.

"We started small and have kept our production limited," Lail added. Since the first release, the winery's production has only grown to 4,000 cases. The team is very specific about which lots go into the final blends, and to make the best wines possible, keeping the production small is completely necessary.

Winemaking is overseen by Philippe Melka. With degrees in geology, agronomy and enology, and fifteen years of experience in France, Australia, Italy, and the Napa Valley, Melka brings consummate knowledge of vineyards and winemaking to Lail Vineyards. He also consults for a few other notable cult wineries, including Dana Estates, Gemstone, Parallel, and Seavey Vineyard, with past clients including Quintessa, Dalla Valle, and Bryant Family. Melka was recently named **One of the Top 9 Wine**

**Consultants in the World** by *Robert Parker*, which is among the most prestigious honors a winemaker can receive.

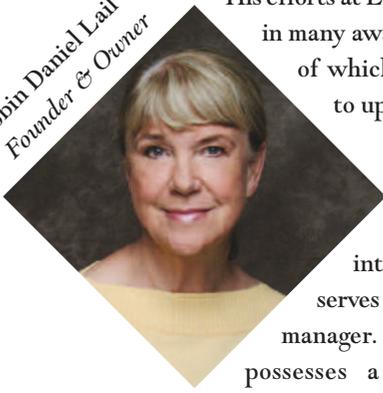


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Robin Daniel Lail –  
Founder & Owner



His efforts at Lail Vineyards have resulted in many award-winning wines, many of which with ratings in the mid to upper 90s.

Robin is pleased that her daughter, Erin Lail Dixon, has followed her into the business and now serves as Lail Vineyards' general manager. Like her mother, Erin possesses a true passion for the wine business.

“Any person in the wine business is in it for the pure passion it offers,” Robin added flatly. “You don't do it because it is expected of you.”

Sage words from a wonderful lady with an incredible upbringing and fervor for her life's work.

The four diamonds on the foil topping Lail's wine bottles also give a noteworthy double meaning, commemorating the diamonds on Inglenook's greatest wines and representing the four partners of Lail Vineyards (Robin, Jon, and daughters Erin and Shannon). We find it incredibly fitting to feature Lail Vineyards as this month's *Diamond Series* selection.

## Accolades and Tasting Notes

### Lail Vineyards 2011 J. Daniel Cuvee

**94+ Points**, *Robert Parker's Wine Advocate* — “Lail's flagship wine, the 2011 Cabernet Sauvignon J. Daniel Cuvee, is another rich, extroverted offering. Mocha, plums, chocolate, cloves, licorice and spices all emerge from a surprisingly big, full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2011 is explosive, rich and intense, with equally imposing tannins that are going to need at least a few years to settle down. This is an impressive showing from Lail. The J. Daniel Cuvee is built on a core of fruit from Heimark, plus Mole Hill and Vine Hill Ranch.”

*Philippe Melka's Winemaker Notes* — “The JDC 2011 begins with a seductive nose, exploding with aromas of clove, anise and mocha. The palate is very refined with rich flavors of lavish black cherry, fresh blue and black fruits and well-structured tannins. The wine shows intensity and a flowing progression that leads to a finish of lush sweet oak intermingled with various red fruit notes.” Just 643 cases produced.

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## Reorder

### Lail Vineyards 2011 J. Daniel Cuvee

Retail Price at the Winery: \$150.00 per bottle.

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