



# Platinum Wine Club

90+ Rated, Ultra Premium, Collectable Wines from California's Best Winemakers.

## Blackbird Vineyards | Oak Knoll District, Napa Valley

At an early age, Michael Polenske realized his future would one day involve wine or the wine business. The owner of one of the newest stars of Napa Valley's jeweled crown called Blackbird Vineyards says he started being interested in wines during his college days at the University of California, Chico. "In fact," Polenske recently recalled, "I took about the same number of finance and wine courses while in school. Something about wine intrigued me and I needed to know more about it."

Polenske's business career involved a number of varied businesses centering on his financial expertise. He has owned a variety of restaurants, art galleries and private clubs among others. Polenske had thrived on the concept that he brought a flair for combining individual talents into a successful team to many of these investments.

Fast forward to 2003, and Michael Polenske is searching throughout Napa Valley for a house with a pool that is located on a hill. "What I eventually found was a house without a hill surrounded by an incredible vineyard planted in Merlot," Polenske continued. "Yes, it did have a pool, but the vineyard was already producing fruit that was being used in world class wines. I did some real due diligence on the vineyard and felt it could become even better with the right kind of resources at its disposal. It's not often that you come upon a piece of land that has such a great pedigree."

The rest, it is easy to say, is history. Blackbird Vineyards (Merlot actually means little blackbird in French patois) became a reality and its first release of only 100 cases (using grapes that weren't already sold to existing wineries) was awarded a 98 score by a top industry periodical. That was in 2005, and the accolades haven't stopped for the rocket-propelled winery.

Michael Polenske modestly credits his "team" for the winery's success. His winemaker, Aaron Pott brings a world class resume to the proverbial table. Pott began his career in Napa Valley with Newton Vineyard and later moved his winemaking talents abroad. In France, Pott settled in Bordeaux as a veteran of the Bordeaux winemaking scene and

holds the distinction of being the only American winemaker to hold the winemaker title at a Premier Grand Cru level Bordeaux property.

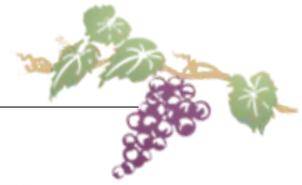
Among Pott's duty stations were Château Troplong Mondot and Château La Tour Figeac, both highly respected entities in the Saint-Émilion sector of Bordeaux. More recently, Aaron Pott has been named the top honor of 2012 Winemaker of the Year by *Food & Wine* magazine. Production levels at Blackbird Vineyards have grown significantly and around 5,500 cases will be released this year. It is significant to note that Napa Valley's current relatively soft business climate hasn't affected its newest star.

"We have been fortunate to always be behind the demand curve," Polenske added. "Even though we have expanded rapidly, there has always been more of a demand. My planning is that we will continue to grow as long as the consumer demand is there." Polenske also admits that the style of Blackbird Vineyards' wines hasn't hurt their chances. He said it was always his intention to produce wines that mirrored the "right bank style of Bordeaux" that features mostly Merlot and Cabernet Franc as its main varietals. These wines are unusually rich in flavor with acidic balance and are perfectly attuned to the whims of an international palate. Michael Polenske considered all these aspects when designing his first Blackbird Vineyards release.

An inspiring wine label was another factor in the winery's instant success. "I interviewed a number of creative designers for the project," Polenske again recalled. "I stopped when I found David Hughes. He was a local and that was one of my requirements. I wanted someone who understood wine culture and really cared. He had already designed Thomas Keller's French Laundry logo and Bouchon Bakery menus and was also the creator of Robert Redford's logo for the Sundance Film Festival. His work jumped out at me and what he did for Blackbird Vineyards speaks for itself." Although just over a decade old, Blackbird Vineyards must be regarded as a celebrity winery due to its immediate success.



# Blackbird Vineyards | 2014 Arise, Proprietary Red Wine



**93 POINTS**  
— *Connoisseur's Guide*

**90 POINTS**  
— *Wine Enthusiast*

Blackbird Vineyards' 2014 'Arise' Proprietary Red Wine captures the charismatic essence of Napa Valley's unique terroir, produced from the Blackbird Estate Vineyard in Napa's Oak Knoll District. The 2014 Arise reveals beautiful aromas of black currant, freshly-picked summer blackberries, cedar stick, and roasted clove. With flavors of licorice, Bing cherry, and nutty fig, this wine has a richly layered mid-palate that is complimented by soft texture, good density, and a long, lingering finish. *Wine Enthusiast* review reads, "This blends 38% Merlot with 32% Cabernet Sauvignon and 30% Cabernet Franc. Together these find a healthy companionship of wood, cedar, currant and dried herb, allowing the two Cabernets to speak loudest. Lightly spicy nutmeg and clove linger around well-defined layers of cherry and vanilla." Aged 21 months in French Oak barrels (50% New, 50% Seasoned). Enjoy now until 2024.

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**This month's Platinum *Plus!*  
Featured Wine:**

**ACORN 2013 Zinfandel, RRV**

92 Points – *Zinfandel Chronicles*

91 Points – *Robert Parker*

90 Points – *Wine Enthusiast*

**548 cases produced**



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