

Decanter

10 CALIFORNIANS WHO ARE GETTING IT RIGHT

A 30-YEAR LOVE AFFAIR

STEPHEN BROOK has been enamoured of California wines since the 1970s. But as styles change, is he slowly falling out of love?

It's quite simple. Bordeaux appeals to my intellectual side, California to my hedonistic side. Although the two regions are very different, one is permitted to admire and enjoy both. It is a view endorsed by none other than Robert Parker, who also has a passion for both areas, both styles. ...

Ten years ago, in my book on California wine, I wrote that what appealed to me about its wines was, above all else, their generosity. Not a very precise word, but it conjures up the wonderful fruit-filled wines I was tasting and drinking. They may not have been subtle (although many were), they may not have been elegant (although many were), but they were lush and seductive without seeming excessive. They simply gave a great deal of immediate pleasure, which clarets from current vintages such as 1975, 1978 and 1979 were not guaranteed to provide. ...

I lived in New York for three months in 1982 and drank mostly California wines. ...

Decades later, my enthusiasm for California wines is undiminished. I have certainly become more critical of the trend to produce ever more voluminous and alcoholic wines, but beautifully balanced wines are not hard to find. ...

CALIFORNIANS WHO ARE GETTING IT RIGHT: BROOK'S FAVOURITE PRODUCERS

Araujo

The Eisele Vineyard in northern Napa already had a stellar reputation when the Araujo family bought it. Less brawny than Diamond Creek, less airy than Spottswoode, this is another interpretation of great Cabernet.

Cabernet Sauvignon 2004 ★★★★★

Discreet black cherry nose. Voluptuous and highly concentrated, this has polish and energy, a palate suffused in black fruits, and a very long, toasty finish.