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## **New Cabernets from Napa**

When I was a kid, I wanted to be an archaeologist or an exploratory marine biologist. I had dreams of discovering lost civilizations or new species in the oceans or jungles. I never quite managed to fulfill that dream, but I have managed to channel some of that passion into the discovery of new wines.

In the past few years, there has been an explosion of new wineries in Napa. Other than the market forces that made making Napa wine pretty attractive, and therefore something people wanted to try, I'm not entirely sure what might be responsible for this serious uptick in new labels appearing. I suspect that it has something to do with more vineyard owners being willing to sell off small portions of their production to an increasingly hungry market for such grapes, as well as a cyclical turnover of vineyard ownership. There are a lot of people in Napa Valley that have owned vineyards for a long time, and they're now getting ready to retire and want to turn their land holdings to a slightly more liquid form of capital, if you'll excuse the pun.

Regardless, there are lots of new wine labels in the valley, and I set out the other day to try a lot of their Cabernets. The results were both encouraging and disheartening. I found a number of fantastic wines that I was really excited about, and I also found some wines that were over-oaked and heavy handed. While I think there is a general trend in the industry of dialing back towards slightly less exaggerated flavors and signatures of wood, the big oaked Cabernet continues to be alive and well in Napa, no doubt because it still sells like hotcakes (the current economic climate notwithstanding).

These new wines are mostly from brand new producers, though a couple of them represent brand new projects for existing brands, namely the wines from Hourglass, HALL, Outpost, and Meyer Family Vineyards. The rest are brand spanking new (on their first or second vintage) and worthy of your patronage and attention.

### WINES SCORING BETWEEN 8.5 AND 9

#### **2005 Hunter III Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa**

Dark garnet in the glass, this wine smells of black cherry and black licorice. In the mouth it is well structured, with brawny tannins that have a hint of greenness to them. They wrap around a core of ripe black cherry fruit, with hints of vanilla and oak that linger in the moderate finish. \$50