



The Wine Advocate

RP 96

Reviewed by
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Drink Date
2026 – 2040

Brand's 2022 Proprietary Blend is a 61-39 mix of Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon. Hints of violets and crushed stone appear first, followed by notes of tomato leaf and menthol, all backed by a solid base of black plums. It's medium- to full-bodied and supple on the palate, adding mocha and dark chocolate on the long, velvety finish.

Brand, located on Pritchard Hill with vineyards abutting Colgin's IX Estate, has dropped Philippe Melka—who had been with the project since its inception—and brought in Graeme MacDonald as its consultant. MacDonald's influence is felt beginning with the 2022s, for which he did the blending and bottling, and the 2023s. The 2022s here show the supple, hedonistic Melka-level ripeness he aimed for, abetted by the certified-organic vineyard's misters, fortuitously installed in 2021.

As MacDonald hadn't yet blended the 2023s, I've not written formal reviews for each of the bottlings but will instead include some general comments here based on the three barrels we tasted from. Block 4 Cabernet Franc was floral and red-fruited, full-bodied and supple, with fine-grained tannins and a long, mouthwatering finish (96 - 98). Block 9 Cabernet Sauvignon (Clone 169) was less floral, with hints of crushed stone and savory hints of black olives adding nuance to mixed cherries and ground sage. Medium to full-bodied, supple and creamy-textured, it's more sensuous than complex but still hugely impressive (95 - 97). Block 10 Cabernet Sauvignon (See Clone) was more aromatic, with subtle herb and floral underpinnings to the black cherry fruit. Full-bodied and velvety, it's complex and layered without any excess weight but with plenty of flavor (96 - 98). "Mother Nature didn't close the curtains," said MacDonald. "Wines that have gravitas come from long, cool vintages—I'm a big optimist on 2023."

Co-proprietors Jim Bean and Christine O'Sullivan are former Apple execs who owned vineyards in Saint Helena and Oak Knoll before selling those to go all-in on Brand and Pritchard Hill. "The future is about making the best wine possible and the level of precision and dedication that requires," said Bean. "To keep everyone amazing, we need to push them, and that's what we came here to do."

Although there are plans to expand production, for the immediate future, availability is constrained by the current vineyard, which totals approximately 10 acres. Pricing is competitive given the small volumes, high quality and exclusive neighborhood, but the wines are by no means inexpensive.

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