

ROBERT CRAIG WINERY

FALL | WINTER 2017



## A note from Elton...



Dear Craig family,

Each time I sit down to write the intro letter to our fall newsletter, I am struck by how much of our mountain winery experience I want to share and how little space with which I have to do it. Summer has flown by so quickly that I feel I barely got a breath of mountain trails, and flowers, and flip flops, and dinners outdoors with friends, and crisp white wine from somewhere in Europe, when, suddenly, we are receiving fruit on the crush pad on Howell Mountain, invoices are rolling in, distributors are complaining about their Howell Mountain cabernet allocations, and I'm back in socks while drinking my morning coffee (don't get me started on the Blue Bottle sale).

In a previous newsletter I mentioned that summertime is a time for putting off everything important and simply giving way to the sway of the breeze and the rhythm of the warm weather and the waves. Well, this summer has been one for the ages. In June, after 50 years of the single life, I married Shelly on the summit of Howell Mountain at our winery. It was a perfect day up on top, and I was unprepared for how happy that has made me as a person. As for the vasectomy, and thanks to all of you who are continuing to inquire, it remains on the to-do list. More on that front in the Spring edition hopefully. Our summer at Robert Craig

Winery has been a likewise eventful one, and as we head into the fall, I have never been more thrilled at what we have in store for our inner circle in the Cabernet Club.

In last year's fall release we ran short on our Howell Mountain Cabernet as well as critically short on our Spring Mountain Cabernet. Rachel still sees someone each week to help her "work through it." With the 2014 we not only were able to receive more fruit, we now hold rights to the best section of Joan Crowley's beautiful vineyard at the summit of Spring Mountain. You will notice the wine possesses even more depth and complexity than the 2013 vintage release.

2014 is also the first vintage for us on our Howell Mountain estate vineyard to be farmed by Towle Merritt and his crew from Walsh Vineyard management. If you are a Caymus, or Duckhorn, or Cakebread, or Silver Oak, and you are farming top notch valley floor vineyards, you would be spending the exorbitant amount of \$6,500 per acre each year to do it. On Howell Mountain, we spend about \$18,000 per acre each year to farm. All of the hand work, the shoot positioning, the nutrition management, the irrigation, the pruning take three times the effort on our



stony, steep soils. The rewards are in the glass. More intensity, more complexity, and a greater expression of site are the result. Mountain wine, there is no substitute.

As a guy from small town Indiana, I never forget how lucky I am to be a proprietor of one of the great Cabernet Sauvignon producers in the world. After many fruitful years of partnership with Bob and Lynn, before they stepped back from their investment in 2012, the mission at Robert Craig Winery, and the joy in small production cabernet from mountain vineyards, continues forward with the Craigs' original three partners and yours truly. In my 13.8 years with the company, I have overseen a move to wines which are more classic stylistically, featuring higher acid and tannin, lower brix levels at harvest and freedom from fining or filtration while maintaining the beautiful depth and mouthfeel, the "Craig polish", that is the signature of our wines. It is a blessing to have Bob and Lynn with us in Napa while they enjoy the fruits of their labors from many vintages past. With the 2014 offerings,

Stephen Tebb has hit a home run with these classic, cellar worthy cabernets.

Thank you for being a part of our intimate circle of people who appreciate what we are doing here at our small winery on Howell Mountain. There are wines that are more expensive than ours to purchase from the Napa Valley, but no one spends more to produce them. As we run out of room for more club members with a price reduction benefit, we will work to grandfather in our people who have been with us so far in our journey. As fall hits the air, and red wine season begins officially, I look forward to hearing back from you as you experience our 2014 wines. They are truly something to behold.

Love and peace,

Elton Slone  
President/CEO/Partner



## 2014 HOWELL MOUNTAIN CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Our 9-acre estate vineyard on the summit of Howell Mountain is a special place. The exposure is south facing, the soils are extremely shallow, and deeply red colored from high iron content. The vineyard is always difficult to manage because of the varying degrees of large stones just beneath the surface. (Without naming names, we never used dynamite to blast our soils deeper.) The vines just have to make do, and the yields are typically two tons to the acre or less, about a third of the Napa Valley average.

In 2014 the major change for us is that Towle Merritt and his crew at Walsh Vineyard Management assumed farming responsibility for our property. With additional attention to soil variances, cane pruning to determine the crop load for each individual vine, and carefully monitored stress levels in the vineyard, our Summit Lake Estate Vineyard yielded fruit that was uniform and perfect in the 2014 vintage.

Our 2014 wines have the beauty and density of the 2013 wines, but they also have a class and balance that indicates tremendous aging potential. Starting in 2015, we will add fruit from our spectacular Candlestick Ridge Vineyard close by, so this is the final time that this vineyard will be a solo expression.

BLEND: 92% Cabernet Sauvignon, 4% Malbec, 2% Cabernet Franc, 2% Petite Verdot  
 AVERAGE SUGAR: 26.1° Brix | TA: 6.2g/L | PH: 3.64 | ALCOHOL: 14.9%  
 CASES PRODUCED: 1087

## 95 POINTS

“...the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain comes from an elevation of nearly 2,300 feet, from a vineyard planted in red volcanic, rocky soils. Rich, full-bodied and possibly the star of an impressive line-up of wines, this is a blend of 88% Cabernet Sauvignon and 12% Merlot. Strikingly rich, opaque purple in color, with mulberry, boysenberry, blackberry, graphite and flowers, the wine is rich, chewy, full-bodied, multilayered, and just a sensational example of Howell Mountain. Sadly, most Napa Howell Mountain Cabernets of this quality sell for \$200-plus, but this one is available for under \$100, which is to the credit of the folks at Robert Craig. This is 25- to 30-year wine, although there’s no harm in drinking it sooner.”

– Robert M. Parker Jr., *The Wine Advocate*, December 29, 2016



## 2014 SPRING MOUNTAIN CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Joan Crowley’s beautiful vineyard at 2000’ along the summit of Spring Mountain has produced special wines since our first release in 2005. With the 2014 vintage, however, we enter a new chapter in our relationship. At long last, we were able to obtain the best section of the vineyard (another terrific producer has changed to their own property that came on line). Our Spring Mountain District Cabernet might be half the price of theirs, but the wine is second fiddle to none. As Robert Parker Jr. noted in his review, “...sensational purity and texture found in this full-bodied wine are classic Spring Mountain characteristics.” For our winery, site expression is our number one goal.

In 2014 you will find the wine to be darker and denser than in previous vintages, and the wine has a tremendous perfume that leaps from the glass. The 2014 vintage was exceptional in and of itself, and when you add the fact that we received the heart of the vineyard for this wine, the combination has yielded amazing results. Pull your socks up tight when you get your first sip of this dark beauty, we don’t want you to lose them.

BLEND: 80% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Cabernet Franc  
 AVERAGE SUGAR: 25° Brix | TA: 5.5g/L | PH: 3.7 | ALCOHOL: 14.5%  
 CASES PRODUCED: 1312

## 94 POINTS

“The 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon from Spring Mountain actually comes from the Crowley Vineyard on the steep slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains, planted at nearly 2,000 feet. The beautiful blueberry and black raspberry fruit, a cool, almost floral note, medium to full body and sensational purity and texture found in this full-bodied wine are classic Spring Mountain characteristics. This is a beauty of finesse and restraint, yet intensity. Drink it over the next 25 years.”

– Robert M. Parker Jr., *The Wine Advocate*, December 29, 2016



## 2014 HOWELL MOUNTAIN ZINFANDEL BLACK SEARS VINEYARD

Black Sears Vineyard is located just past the gate of our Howell Mountain estate, sandwiched between our two Howell Mountain estate vineyard properties. As always, Black Sears produced something quite spectacular in 2014. Though it was yet another drought year, 2014 was marked by being somewhat unremarkable, in that everything happened like clockwork—budbreak, flowering, fruit set, shoot growth and veraison—all right on time. The 2014 shows what Zin can do on Howell Mountain; it's extremely dense, with great power and depth. Incidentally—this wine really starts to shine with 7+ years of bottle age.

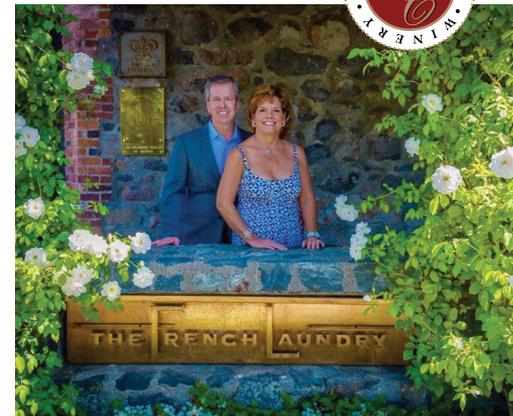
BLEND: 78% Zinfandel, 22% Petit Sirah  
 AVERAGE SUGAR: 24.8° Brix | PH: 3.59 | TA: 6.3g/L | ALCOHOL: 14.4%  
 CASES PRODUCED: 390

### YEAR'S BEST U.S. ZINFANDEL

**95** POINTS

"Joyce Black and Jerre Sears moved to Howell Mountain in 1979, settling at a ranch on a northeast-facing ridge where zinfandel had been planted in 1975. Robert Craig established a neighboring winery on the ridge in 1998, where Elton Slone and his team began making a Black Sears Zinfandel in 2006. Presented with the dense extract and rich new oak to parallel the ambitions of a Napa Valley cabernet, this succeeds in a grand and powerful style. The fruit is expansive enough that it subsumes the oak influence into its volcanic minerality, bringing to mind obsidian as the grape-skin tannins add a glint of tension to the finish. Scents of roses and bay laurel provide detail within the wine's depths. This has a decade of development ahead. (375 cases)"

– Luke Sykora, *Wine & Spirits*. February 1, 2017



### EVENT RECAP

Bottom left & right  
 ALPINE SOCIETY | AUGUST 26

Top left & right  
 ANNUAL HARVEST PARTY | SEPTEMBER 9

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Check our website for upcoming events throughout the year.





## CRAIG FOR THE HOLIDAYS

There are many options to choose from, whether it's for an office party, corporate giving, or for that special someone on your list.

Choose a Mountain Vertical, or the Robert Craig Trio, or how about the very limited, exclusive Robert's Block? And, you can include the very first vintage of the new 2015 Côte de Craig! From magnums to three-liter bottles, to trio sets, The Craig has everything to suit each person on your Holiday gift giving list.

If you're entertaining, need client gifts, or it's time to stock the cellar, now is the time to purchase Robert Craig wines!

Gift packs below include \$10 shipping and a wood box.

<b>THE PERFECT GIFT   \$115</b>	1 bottle 2014 Affinity Estate Cabernet Sauvignon
<b>CRAIG ESTATE   \$285</b>	2 bottles 2014 Affinity Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 1 bottle 2014 Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon
<b>CRAIG TRIO   \$215</b>	2014 Gap's Crown Chardonnay 2014 Affinity Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon
<b>MOUNTAIN GOLD TRIO   \$325</b>	2014 Mount Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon
<b>AFFINITY MAGNUM GIFT   \$215</b>	2014 Affinity Cabernet Sauvignon Magnum

Look for these fantastic wine gifts online or call us directly to order by phone.  
(707) 252-2250 extension 1 or 2



## ROBERT CRAIG WINE LIST

FALL RELEASES	
2014 Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$95
2014 Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$90
2014 Howell Mountain Zinfandel	\$55
CURRENT RELEASES	
2014 Gap's Crown Chardonnay	\$50
2014 Affinity Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	\$70
2014 Mount Veeder Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	\$90
2014 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	\$52
2015 Côte de Craig	\$90
2016 La Fleur Craig Rosé	<b>Sold Out</b>
375ML BOTTLES	
2013 Affinity Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	\$35 – <b>Last Vintage</b>
1.5 LITER MAGNUMS	
2014 Gap's Crown Vineyard Chardonnay	\$115
2014 Affinity Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	\$165
2014 Mount Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon	<b>Sold Out</b>
2014 Diamond Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$205
2014 Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$205
2014 Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$215
3 LITERS	
2014 Affinity Estate Cabernet Sauvignon	\$395
2014 Mount Veeder Cabernet Sauvignon	\$450
2014 Diamond Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$450
2014 Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$450
2014 Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon	\$465
MEMBERS ONLY DISCOUNTS	
12-Bottle Members	20% off
6-Bottle Members	15% off
3-Bottle & A La Mode Members	10% off

**HOW TO ORDER**  
Visit our online wine shop at [robertcraigwine.com](http://robertcraigwine.com)

Stop by our Napa Valley Tasting Salon:  
625 Imperial Way  
Suite 1, Napa, CA.

Contact us by phone at 707.252.2250 ext.2

**VISIT OUR DOWNTOWN NAPA TASTING SALON**  
Tastings available by appointment at Bar Craig  
Mon-Sat 10am – 4pm;  
Sun 11am – 4pm  
Call 707.252.2250 ext.1 or email [lori@robertcraigwine.com](mailto:lori@robertcraigwine.com)

Tasting Fee \$25 pp  
Complimentary for Cabernet Club members.

To inquire about membership, or to upgrade your membership level, please contact us directly at 707.252.2250 ext.2



## WINERY EXCLUSIVE LIMITED RELEASES

### 2015 CÔTE DE CRAIG SYRAH/GRENACHE

*Available online now—less than 70 cases remain*

Introduced in the late summer, the 2015 Côte de Craig Syrah/Grenache was the first release sourced from our new Candlestick Ridge vineyard. An homage to the tremendous Rhône Valley wines in the South of France, this release is powerful, deep, perfumed and structured. To acquire what little remains, log in to the Club Only section at [www.robertcraigwinery.com](http://www.robertcraigwinery.com) or give us a call at 707.252.-2250 x1 or 2.

### 2015 DIAMOND MOUNTAIN CABERNET SAUVIGNON

*January 2018 Release*

The 2014 release of this wine knocked our socks off, and we expect great things from the 2015 vintage as well. Sourced from the Andrew Geoffrey extraordinary 13-acre vineyard at 1850', near the summit of Diamond Mountain, where soils of pure white volcanic ash yield a wine of amazing color and depth. Just 225 cases made.

### 2015 HOWELL MOUNTAIN MERLOT

*January 2018 Release*

The Merlot grown on our Howell Mountain Candlestick Ridge vineyard is a fierce testament to what is possible for one of the great grapes in the world of wine. This gorgeous, up-front fruit merges with tremendous flesh and powerful structure.

### 2014 ROBERT'S BLOCK CABERNET SAUVIGNON

*Summer 2018*

The Robert's Block release is sourced from the highest section of our Winery Estate Vineyard, where fruit is particularly sparse and intense, even by Howell Mountain standards. This block is difficult and expensive and, frankly, a bit of pain in the ass. But the wine ... oh the wine! Don't lag when this notice goes out: just 55 cases were made and it will sell quickly.



## VINEYARD MUSINGS

I don't know if the expression "Fortune favors the brave" is adequate to describe our experience with the purchase and development of our Candlestick Ridge Vineyard on the Northern summit of Howell Mountain. I feel like it might be better expressed as "The brave no longer have their fortunes" now that we have completed the replant on half of the 26-acre vineyard on our 80-acre property. I'll use another financial example here to illustrate why mountain wines tend to be so expensive and difficult to produce. If one were to replant a valley floor vineyard in the Napa Valley, one would budget for roughly \$25K to \$35K per acre depending on the slope and soil composition. The giant tufa boulders (see photo above) just beneath the surface at "The Stick," along with the remote location and the steep slope of the vineyard, led to a breathtaking toll of \$96K per acre to replant the 13 acres of virus-afflicted zinfandel vines that Duckhorn had planted in 1997.

Just writing this makes my underwear seem about three sizes too small. It required my life savings as well as a substantial financial commitment from my three partners—the same three who helped Bob and Lynn found the winery: Michael Adams, Derek Ruston and Michael Nugent—to acquire and replant half of this magnificent vineyard in 2015 and 2016. Candlestick Ridge Vineyard is on a plateau that looks over Pope Valley, with views that extend from Mount St. Helena and the Palisades all the way north to Mount Konocti. The heat rolls up Pope Valley to the lower slopes of Howell Mountain where our 2300' elevation mitigates the effects. Even so, Candlestick tends to ripen about a week earlier than our Winery Estate Vineyard, and the fruit expression is black, intense and profound. When many of our best customers in our Alpine Society arrived at the overlook in August, mouths hung open in amazement (and in anticipation of more chilled Rosé).

Our Côte de Craig—an homage to the great Côte Rôtie Syrahs from the Northern Rhône valley in France—was our first red wine release from Candlestick and, in just over a month, it is nearly sold out. The 2015 Merlot and Howell Mountain Cabernet are both sourced here with stunning results. For our little company, this has been a Herculean undertaking in order to deliver our customers the world's finest wines without having to bend to inflated grape values that are driving Napa Valley Cabernet prices into the stratosphere. I hope we have a chance to show you this vineyard at some point as it is truly one of the most significant vineyards in all of Napa Valley.

*Elan June*





ROBERT CRAIG WINERY  
625 Imperial Way, Suite One  
Napa, California 94559  
[robertcraigwinery.com](http://robertcraigwinery.com)