



Wine Advocate December 2014 Reviews

2012 Donelan Family Wines Syrah Cuvee Keltie

A Syrah Dry Red Table wine from USA , North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 99

Drink 2014 - 2039

The 2012 Syrah Cuvée Keltie is a selection of choice blocks of vineyards they work, such as the Obsidian, Walker Vine Hill, Richard's, Steiner Ranch. It's meant to be their crème de la crème offering, and this wine's score suggests that they succeeded. 100% Syrah aged 20 months in neutral French oak, it tips the scales at 14.7% natural alcohol. An opaque purple color offers up notes of pen ink, white chocolate, charcuterie, lavender, blackberry and pepper aromas. Very full-bodied with a multidimensional mouthfeel, layers of fruit, glycerin and intensity, this is stunning stuff and a candidate for perfection with more bottle age. Drink this remarkable, prodigious Syrah over the next 20-25 years. By the way, this is 100% whole cluster, and indigenous yeasts were used for both alcohol and malolactic fermentation.

2012 Donelan Family Wines Syrah Obsidian Vineyard

A Syrah Dry Red Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 97

Drink 2014 - 2034

My two favorite wines included the 2012 Syrah Obsidian Vineyard from Knights Valley. Aged 20 months in 43% new French oak for 20 months, this is a bigger wine at 14.7% alcohol that comes from rather remarkable volcanic soils with shiny, black obsidian rock looking like marble. There is severe stress in these vineyards and the roots force deep into the volcanic soils for nourishment. This wine, from a vineyard planted in 1970s, shows notes of gunflint, camphor, scorched earth and an almost primordial, brooding richness and intensity. Blackberry and cassis are the fruit flavors, there's some smokiness and lots of thickness and richness. This is a massive, very intense, full-throttle Syrah that should age effortlessly for 20 or more years.



2013 Donelan Family Wines Syrah Obsidian Vineyard

A Syrah Dry Red Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: (96-100)

Drink 2014 - 2044

The 2013 Syrah Obsidian may even eclipse the 2012. The crop size for Donelan was seven tons of Syrah fruit from 7.5 acres, which is virtually nothing. Magnificent blackberry fruit with a hint of subtle chocolate, scorched earth, volcanic and a barbecued, smokey component followed by an unmistakable minerality, great opulence and richness and a full-bodied finish of close to 50-plus seconds. Both these cuvées represent about 320 cases of wine, I expect the 2013 to drink well for two to three decades as well.

2012 Donelan Family Wines Syrah Kobler Vineyard

A Syrah Dry Red Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 96

Drink 2014 - 2025

Another cool-climate Syrah from the Green Valley in Russian River is the 2012 Syrah Kobler Family Vineyard. This is cofermented with 10% Viognier and definitely has a Chinese black tea character. It came in at 13.5% alcohol and 9% new oak was used in the aging, which took place over 20 months. The wine comes across like a Guigal single-vineyard Côte-Rôtie, with notes of lychee nuts, honeysuckle, apricot, marmalade intermixed with cassis, kirsch and blacker fruits. Velvety textured, opulent and voluptuous, this full-bodied, lush, sexy style Syrah should drink beautifully for another decade or more.



2013 Donelan Family Wines Chardonnay Genevieve's Block

A Chardonnay Dry White Table wine from USA , Sonoma Coast, Sonoma, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 94

Drink 2014 - 2019

The 2013 Chardonnay Genevieve's Block, which comes from a west-facing hillside vineyard near Sebastopol, is a more limited cuvée at 346 cases. About 38% new oak was used. The wine tips the scales at 14.5% alcohol. This wine has naturally high acidity, a rather stunning nose of wet rocks, honeyed citrus, peach blossom, with leesy brioche notes, an intense medium to full-bodied mouthfeel, good structure and a hint of tangerine oil. This is a stunner that comes across like a great Corton-Charlemagne from Burgundy.

2013 Donelan Family Wines Chardonnay Nancie

A Chardonnay Dry White Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 94

Drink 2014 - 2019

The 2013 Chardonnay Nancie (1,620 cases) is aged in 18% new oak for ten months and is slightly lower in alcohol at 14.1%. Crisp pear notes along with citrus blossom and wet rocks are followed by a medium to full-bodied, singular style with notes of white currants and apple skin. This is a medium to full-bodied, fresh, concentrated, locked-and-loaded style of wine. The terrific acidity and modest alcohol (for a Chardonnay these days) give it wonderful uplift and vibrancy. Drink it over the next 4-5 years.



2013 Donelan Family Wines Venus

A Proprietary Blend Dry White Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 93

Drink 2014 - 2017

Joe Donelan's very successful white is the Roussanne-Viognier blend called Venus. The 2013 Venus, which comes from three vineyards: the Dry Stack Vineyard, which I love for Sauvignon Blanc as well; the Vivio Vineyard and Kobler Vineyard all in Green Valley. The blend is 98% Roussanne and 2% Viognier. The 2013 is a beauty with lots of rose petals, lychee, honeysuckle are followed by a crisp, medium-bodied very stylish wine that seems to have much more minerality than most Roussannes tend to offer as they frequently can get quite oily and rich, but an interesting in that style as well. Nice tropical note of mandarin oranges also makes an appearance in this zesty blend, which was barrel-aged ten months in , I assume, relatively neutral oak puncheons, so as not to interfere with the fruit character. Drink over the next several years.

2012 Donelan Family Wines Syrah Cuvee Christine

A Syrah Dry Red Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 93

Drink 2014 - 2025

Syrahs have always been the benchmark wines from Donelan, since the early days when he was using winemaker Pax Mahle. The 2012 Syrah Cuvee Christine, which is fermented with a 30% whole clusters and aged in 80% neutral oak, comes from four separate vineyards in the Russian River Valley at Sonoma Mountain. This is 100% Syrah, aged 20 months in 33% new French oak and represents nearly 900 cases of wine. Deep purple in color with lots of roast beef, blackberry, bouquet garni, licorice and charcuterie spices, the wine is rich, beautifully pure, full-bodied and showing well already, which is of course a hallmark of 2012. It should drink well for at least a decade or more.



2012 Donelan Family Wines Syrah Walker Vine Hill

A Syrah Dry Red Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 92+

Drink 2014 - 2029

The single-vineyard Syrah, the 2012 Syrah Walker Vine Hill comes from the heart of Pinot Noir and Chardonnay country in Russian River, just up the street from the Kistler and Dehlinger wineries. Relatively modest in alcohol by certain California Syrah standards (13.7%), it was aged 20 months in 23% new French Oak. The wine, which they've been producing since 2001, has a deep ruby purple color, a big sweet kiss of roasted meats, herbs, pepper and spice, blackberry fruit that unfolds gracefully in a full-bodied but elegant, stylish nose, with a hint of pepper and spice box. The last vintage will be 2013, as they will no longer have access to this vineyard. This wine should drink well for 10-15 years.

2012 Donelan Family Wines Chardonnay Nancie

A Chardonnay Dry White Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 91

Drink 2014 - 2019

A larger cuvée, the 2012 Chardonnay Nancie (1,350 cases) spent time in 3% new oak for ten months. This is a much more restrained style of Chardonnay, coming from 30-year-old vines on Sonoma Mountain. This wine moves in the direction of poached pear, lemon blossom, a touch of nectarine and quince, wet stones – making it Chablis-like. This is another medium-bodied, but beautifully intense, Chardonnay with great acidity and freshness. Drink it over the next 4-5 years.



2012 Donelan Family Wines Cuvée Moriah

A Proprietary Blend Dry Red Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 90

Drink 2014 - 2020

Their Rhône Ranger cuvées include five Syrah selections and a Grenache/Mourvèdre/Syrah blend, Cuvée Moriah. The 2012 Cuvée Moriah, which is 64% Grenache, 23% Mourvèdre and 12% Syrah, represents 600 cases, tipping the scales at 14.8% alcohol. It was fermented with indigenous yeasts and includes 80% whole clusters, only 17% new oak was used. This is a lovely, sexy wine with lots of kirsch liqueur, lavender, bouquet garni, licorice and pepper. It's medium-bodied, velvety textured, lush and is meant to be a balanced interpretation of a California version of Châteauneuf du Pape. Drink it over the next 5-6 years.

2012 Donelan Family Wines Pinot Noir Two Brothers

A Pinot Noir Dry Red Table wine from USA , Sonoma, North Coast, California

Review by Robert Parker

eRobertParker.com #216 (Dec 2014)

Rating: 89

Drink 2014 - 2018

Forty-one percent of this comes from the Snyder Ranch on Sonoma Mountain, 28% from the Mendocino Vineyard, 21% from the Western Sonoma Coast, with 10% from the Russian River. This is a big cuvée of 1,900 cases, which is a lot of wine for any cuvée from Joe Donelan. It was aged 18 months in about 30% new oak. The vineyards sourced are planted with Dijon Clones 115, 667 and 777 and a Calera selection. This is a very red-fruity, spicy, earthy style of Pinot Noir with forest floor, pomegranate, red cherry and redcurrant, lots of spice in a medium-bodied, tart style. It tastes as if some stems are involved in the fermentation (whole clusters). Drink it over the next 4-8 years.
