



THE NEW PLANTINGS AT THE JORDAN ESTATE COVER A PATCHWORK OF KNOLLS BELOW THE MAYACAMAS.



CALIFORNIA | SONOMA COUNTY

Jordan

Alexander Valley cabernets that define an elegant, long-lived style of California wine.

WHEN JOHN JORDAN TOOK OVER FROM HIS PARENTS, TOM and Sally, in 2005, he hoped to advance his family's signature style of California cabernet. Jordan was known for cabernets with fit structures and lithe fruit, wines that put food first. He worked with Rob Davis, Jordan's winemaker from the start in 1976, to reconsider all the tools they were using. And he challenged Davis to make his ideal wine. Holding to the Jordan style, Davis bottled a super blend, a reserve selection of top parcels that presented a quandary: They had, in the past, followed a Bordeaux philosophy, blending their best lots into their primary wine. Jordan recalls Davis saying, "I can make it all like this." He just needed the resources. Davis and his young associate Maggie Kruse set out to develop their network of benchland and hillside vineyards in Alexander Valley, which led, eventually, to Jordan's selling off the original valley-floor vineyard. And they transitioned to French oak barrels—for 100 percent of the cabernet by 2015, the top Jordan wine we tasted this year.

Then, in 2016, the team began replanting the Jordan Estate, more than 1,000 acres of rolling hills surrounding the winery at the foot of the Mayacamas. Brent Young, Jordan's director of agricultural operations, worked from

electrical resistivity maps of the soil to determine where to plant, what rootstocks to use and when to harvest. He now farms 90 acres of vines at the estate, and will have 125 in total planted next year.

Since Davis's retirement in 2019, Kruse now heads up winemaking. Along with Young and Dana Grande, Jordan's grower relations manager, she's been taking breaks from harvest, driving to a nursery in the Sierra Foothills to taste a range of clones as the fruit ripens. "We'll leave at 3 am, we'll taste the clones and we'll head back," Young reports. They are looking for fruit to give wines that have "the depth, the softness and the roundness," he says, to complement the Jordan style. —J.G.

Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon in magnum (2015, \$199, 95 points; 2016, \$215, 94 points)

Jordan's 2015 comes in at 13.8 percent alcohol, the fruit of small berries and reduced yields due to cool temperatures through a long flowering. Davis and Kruse played the vintage for subtlety, using the amplitude of that ripe fruit to fill out the wine's cedary, tobacco-scented tannins with delicate plummy depths. It's a high point of Jordan's magnum releases—from a library that goes back to 1977. The 2016, also in magnum, earned 94 points for its cool blackcurrant fruit framed by the sage and chaparral scents of the tannins. Fresh and delicious.

2018 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$60, 93 points)

There's a sleek and fragrant richness to this easy-going cabernet, its depth of fruit lightened by a lean structure—what Patrick Comiskey described as "a classic Alexander Valley leafiness." A mountain blueberry scent lasts in the end, the wine sturdy and set to open over the next four years.

FOUNDED:
1972

WINEMAKER:
Maggie Kruse
VITICULTURIST:
Brent Young

OWNER:
John Jordan

ACRES OWNED:
1,200; 90 planted
ANNUAL PRODUCTION:
100,000 cases