

## Top tastes from Premiere 2010

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Prior to the three-hour-plus auction, I tasted a number of the wines on the block. Here are impressions of some that got my attention:

The wine that I enjoyed most came from Piero Antinori's local wine project, Antica Napa Valley. It's a lush, beautifully balanced 2008 cabernet sauvignon with lots of aging potential. A rich, concentrated cab from Foss Valley, it provided a mouthful of blackberries and juicy plums with hints of cherry and cassis on both mid-palate and long finish. If I want to taste it again, I guess I'll have to go to Japan.

Another candidate for the category "Can I have another glass of that, please?" was Tor Kenward's bewitchingly lush mouthful of black cherries and cassis — a 2008 cab from Beckstoffer To Kalon Vineyard. Yum!

From the third vintage at the new family operation, Boeschen Vineyards, was a lip-smacking cabernet sauvignon from St. Helena. It was a marriage of ripe fruit, bright acid and mature tannins — a cab with great promise, combining spice from petit verdot and cab franc for a finish that lingers and lingers, delivering oodles of black fruit.

The fruit for the 2008 Roy Estate Voix Basse melted on the tongue. Assistant winemaker Aaron Buoncristiani said this offering is 100 percent cabernet sauvignon from the Soda Canyon estate of Shirley and the late Charles Roy. A small crop produced a ripe, highly concentrated cabernet that you wish you could enjoy at every meal — and twice on Sundays.

The lush offering from Ovid Napa Valley, from a 1-acre block of cabernet sauvignon on Pritchard Hill, also demonstrated the best of vintage 2008. A wine with plenty of finesse, it displayed ripe fruit, namely blackberries and currants lingering and lingering on a delicious finish.

The taste of blueberries stays on the finish of Hourglass 2008 cabernet sauvignon, with 5 percent of the fruit (cabernet franc) coming from the new Blueline Vineyard of Jeff Smith. It's a rich, concentrated wine with plenty of aging potential.

Another wine that should drink well

in years to come was offered by Bill Hill and Dick Wollack. The 2008 Tetra was a blend of cabernet sauvignon (75 percent), cabernet franc (5 percent) and merlot and petit verdot (both 10 percent), according to winemaker Richard Sowalsky. It's a big, bold concentrated red that would make any cab collector happy.

Other wines that piqued my interest included:

Krupp Brothers Estates 2008 Two Bald Heads Cuvée, 100 percent cabernet sauvignon from Stagecoach Vineyards, a big, ripe red with a mouthful of black fruit.

Kristof Anderson put together a meritage of Oakville cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, petit verdot and merlot for Gargiulo Vineyards. It's a keeper — a balance of ripe, lush fruit, acid and mature tannins.

Caldwell Vineyards in Coombsville supplied the fruit for the inaugural Premiere release of Moone-Tsai Vineyards cabernet sauvignon. This is a gorgeous cool climate cab, with a haunting, velvety finish of blackberries. A winner right out of the chute you'd expect from veteran wineman Mike Moone.

Relative high prices were paid as well for a couple of white wines, both of which would make great additions to one's cellar.

Lail Vineyards 2008 Henry I sauvignon blanc (5 cases sold for \$7,000): The fruit for this outstanding sauvignon blanc were sourced from the Lail family's remaining dry-farmed segment of the legendary Inglenook Vineyard in Yountville. Fermented and aged in new French oak barrels, this had all the classic markers of sauvignon blanc with lots of bracing acidity. This is a super-duper reserve addition to the Lail sauvignon blanc lineup, named, by the way, for a young sixth generation member of this noted Napa Valley winemaking family.

Arietta winemaker Andy Erickson took some of the fruit that generally goes into the sauvignon blanc/semillon blend, On the White Keys, from a half-acre block of Hyde Vineyard, for this exceptional old vines semillon. Absolutely delicious, the incredible depth of flavor of this wine finished with lots of quince and pear. The five case lot sold for \$7,500.