



Dominus and Napanook 2008 Vintage En Primeur

The name Christian Moueix resonates in the wine world, principally as a result of his achievements as head of the Libourne-based company Etablissements J-P Moueix, founded by his entrepreneurial father, the late Jean-Pierre Moueix. The business combines the role of a traditional *négociant* house with the ownership and management of many stellar properties, including Châteaux Trotanoy, La Fleur Pétrus, Magdelaine, Hosanna and most recently Belair-Monange, amongst others.

The Right Bank of Bordeaux is not however the only region in Christian's sights. Whilst studying in the late 1960s at UC Davis, he fell in love with the Napa Valley and with the particularly classical style of wine produced there. It took time to find the right property but in 1981 Christian came across the historic vineyard Napanook, at the foot of the Mayacamas Mountains. This was part of the old Inglenook Estate, the wines from which had originally attracted Christian's attention and admiration.

It was by no means plain sailing in the early years and critical onlookers allowed very little slack, despite Christian battling with a vertical learning curve and knowing little about either the vineyard or the Cabernet grape. There was not even a winery. Faced with this dilemma, Christian turned to his tried and tested philosophy, founded on the fact that wherever wine is made, the vineyard assumes supreme importance and the quality of the grapes is paramount. In the Napa the vines are assiduously cosseted. Crop-thinning is standard, either once or twice each year, depending on the growing season. This is to ensure balance and to concentrate the remaining fruit. Between 20% and 30% is generally removed. The grape clusters are separated to facilitate the circulation of air and *nettoyage* is exercised before harvest, that is, removing fruit which does not meet the Moueix's exacting standards. Canopy management and leaf plucking are also the norm and given the rain-free, dry summers, the grapes are even given a gentle wash before harvest to remove any summer dust and to aid the final maturation process.

No effort is spared to produce the very best quality crop possible and this approach soon began to convert the sceptics, with the wines attaining worldwide acclaim.

In 1996, Christian released a proprietary blend, made from blocks of vines which produce more accessible, earlier maturing wines, exuberant fruit supported by soft tannins. This was to become Napanook, a wine created to be enjoyed in its youth. Napanook has developed its own trajectory, enjoying an elevated reputation in its own right. Both wines have a hugely faithful following – well-deserved.

Alison Buchanan
Associate Director, Buying
January 2012

2008 Vintage Notes

2008 is another very fine vintage, as translated by Christian Moueix and his team at Dominus – quite a feat after what had been a challenging and varied year.

Exceptionally dry conditions prevailed during winter and spring, the months when generally the vineyards replenish their reserves. This had an effect later in the season in terms of potential quantities. Cold mornings and frost then threatened the younger vines from mid-March to late April and then, having gone through frost and cold, heat spikes hampered the vines' flowering. This resulted in very few grapes per cluster. Not only were the numbers of grapes down but they were, in addition, very small, due to the lack of water. Quantity is not however the main goal and although the prevailing conditions made for a severely reduced crop, what was left was of an exceptional quality and intensity.

The summer was then warm, at times hot, with six days over 39°C and one day 40°C and although the crop was small, it was characterised by even, full ripening. It was harvested between the 19th of September and the 3rd of October – a beautiful if limited crop.

2008 Tasting Notes

Napanook 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 18 - 18+

This year's Napanook blend is 93% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot and 1% Cabernet Franc, aged for 15 months in oak barrels, 20% of which were new. 2600 cases were produced. Deep plum-ruby in colour and velvet-textured this provides an intriguing nose, a combination of concentrated ripe red and black fruit, mocha and spice, lifted by background hints of citrus. The palate is intense, dense and richly-textured with dark chocolate cherry liqueur, gently spiced. This is a really impressive Napanook, accessible and fragrant; underlying opulence is complemented by fine acidity and persistent minerality through to a protracted, poised finish. 20% new oak adds a certain richness and complexity in the mid-palate. Napanook always shows well in youth, particularly if decanted but, equally, will age well in the mid-term – very, very fine.

Recommended drinking from 2013 - 2021+

£345/case of 12, in bond UK

Dominus 2008

Corney & Barrow Score 18.5+

The blend is 83% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc and 4% Petit Verdot, aged for 18 months in barrel, with 40% new oak. Dominus 2008 is a real *tour de force* – an exceptional meeting between the classical and a wine which is nonetheless true to place. The product of reduced yields, this is exceptionally intense in both colour and aromatics. Plum-shot cherry, it clings languidly to the side of the glass, richly-textured. The nose provides both a plethora of berried fruit, candied cherry and blackberries and a rather adroit sense of focus and definition - ripe fleshy fruit, with backbone. Rounded and accessible on the palate, with silky well-integrated tannins, this maintains a sense of direction throughout, innate opulence complemented by fine mineral definition – a wonderfully pure translation of both the vineyard and the vintage. As ever, Dominus can, with decanting, be drunk in its youth, but it really warrants a little patience.

Recommended drinking from 2016 - 2026+

£525/case of 6, in bond UK

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

14-16 A very good to excellent wine.

16-18 An excellent to outstanding wine.

18-20 An outstanding to legendary wine.

- Wines are judged within their peer group.
- A definitive score of a young wine is almost always impossible. We usually offer a 'spread' (e.g. 14 - 16) which relates to the potential to achieve a higher mark. A 'plus' adds further to that potential.
- A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes.

**To order, please call 020 7265 2430 (London), 01638 600 000 (East Anglia)
01875 321 921 (Edinburgh) or 01748 828 640 (North of England)**

For more information about this producer, visit our website www.corneyandbarrow.com