

643 *Blankiet Estate 2007 (Napa Valley)*

Having tasted this wine for first time, there was only one word to describe it: immaculate. The wine charmed with its precision of flavours, depth of fruit and fine-grained tannin structure. Although the wine is still very young, the balance it displays is remarkable. Furthermore, the taste reflects the great passion of its producers, as well as their vision of not compromising on anything in order to create the perfect wine.

When walking on the well-manicured vineyards belonging to Claude and Katherine Blankiet while listening to their passionate description about the terroir of the Blankiet Estate, one cannot help but conclude that this winery truly is one of the top estates in Napa Valley.

The couple established a 16-acre Blankiet Paradise Hills in 1996 after finding a dream spot just behind Dominus Estate in Yountville, in the steep foothills of the Mayacamas Mountains. They followed the pattern that some of the top wine estates had used and asked the most famous viticulturist in Napa Valley, David Abreu, to develop the vineyards, while superstar winemaker Helen Turley was hired to make the wines.

The recipe worked well. Abreu planted the vineyards with four different varietals and specific clones according to the different microclimates that he discovered on the property. The alluvial clay sites were planted with Merlot, while the volcanic and rocky parts were chosen to host Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

The perfectly manicured vines are cultivated using sustainable farming, with a great deal of effort put into protecting the grapes from excess heat and sunlight. In order to achieve this, the Blankiets use an extensive misting system and shade cloth strips to protect the fruiting zone of the south and western rows of the vineyards.

"As much I love the sun of Napa Valley and the ripe fruit that our climate is capable of producing, we sometimes need to protect the vibrancy and freshness of the fruit. Power and elegance is what defines our wines," Claude Blankiet explains.

The first seven vintages of Blankiet Estate wines were made by Helen Turley. After her, respected oenologist Martha McClellan Levy took charge. She was assisted by the famous wine consultant Michel Rolland. Rolland was hired to create the flagship blends of Blankiet Estate. He introduced the practice of fermenting each micro harvest individually and ageing each lot separately for one year before blending them.

Following Rolland's recommendation, and starting with the 2006 vintage, Blankiet released two flagship wines: The Estate Proprietary Red Wine is a blend of predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot, while the Rive Droite proprietary Red is a St-Emilion/Pomerol style wine and is based on the finest barrels selection of Merlot and Cabernet Franc. The oenologist behind Blankiet wines for the past three years is Denis Malbec, Château Latour's former cellar master.

"After sixteen years we are still learning and discovering the intricacy of our vineyard. It is a complex site but the vines have matured, and we know where the sweet spots are located. We are confident that we are finally harnessing the full potential of the estate," adds Claude.

Taking that into account, this wine should be a sweet spot wine for Claude Blankiet – it certainly is for us.



94p

Blankiet Estate 2007

AVERAGE AUCTION PRICE: €243

BOTTLE CONDITION: A1

COLOUR: Deep, purple

NOSE: Refined, seductive, spicy, ripe black currants, dark chocolate

PALATE: Full-bodied, elegant, intensive fruit, vivid acidity, polished tannins

FINISH: Lingering, long, opulent

IN A NUTSHELL: Wine like a taylor made shoe

BUY OR NOT: Yes!

TASTED: 5 times, last time in 2011

DECANTING TIME: 8 hours

GLASS TIME: 4 hours

WHEN TO DRINK: 2020–2025

FOOD PAIRING: Grilled Venison Fillet

FAKE FACTOR: None

INSIDE INFORMATION: Claude Blankiet's pristine estate lies behind Dominus Napanook vineyard on a beautiful foothills of Mt Veeder mountain range in Yountville. The estate produces only 900 cases of this wine that is a blend of two thirds Cabernet Sauvignon and the rest Cabernet Franc and Merlot. The smooth texture of the wine is the result of the pre-fermentation activities like a week cold soaking period and approximately 1.5 months extended maceration period.

OR TRY THIS: 2003 Château La Mission Haut-Brion

FINAL VERDICT: A wine to watch – and drink too!

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