

# 2014 Caymus Special Selection Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

*In 1993, my Dad -- Charlie Wagner Sr. -- and I were interviewed as part of an oral history project at the University of California, Berkeley. Here's some of what he said about our family history and life as a winemaker.*



I was born in 1912 on the farm that my parents bought in 1906. My father planted grapes. They had cows, a hog or two, and chickens, so they had their own eggs, butter and cheese. My father didn't feel that he was getting what the grapes were worth, so he started his own winery in 1915. As soon as I was able to do some chores, keeping the wood box full was my job. It was rough times. My father got stuck with 25,000 to 30,000 gallons of wine when Prohibition hit. So that was the end of the little winery at that time.

In 1934, after I was out of high school for four years, I married my sweetheart, Lorna. I did custom spraying and tractor work. There was one farm that we ultimately bought. We had about forty acres in prunes, about twenty acres in walnuts, and a few almond trees up in back. We planted our first grapes in '43.

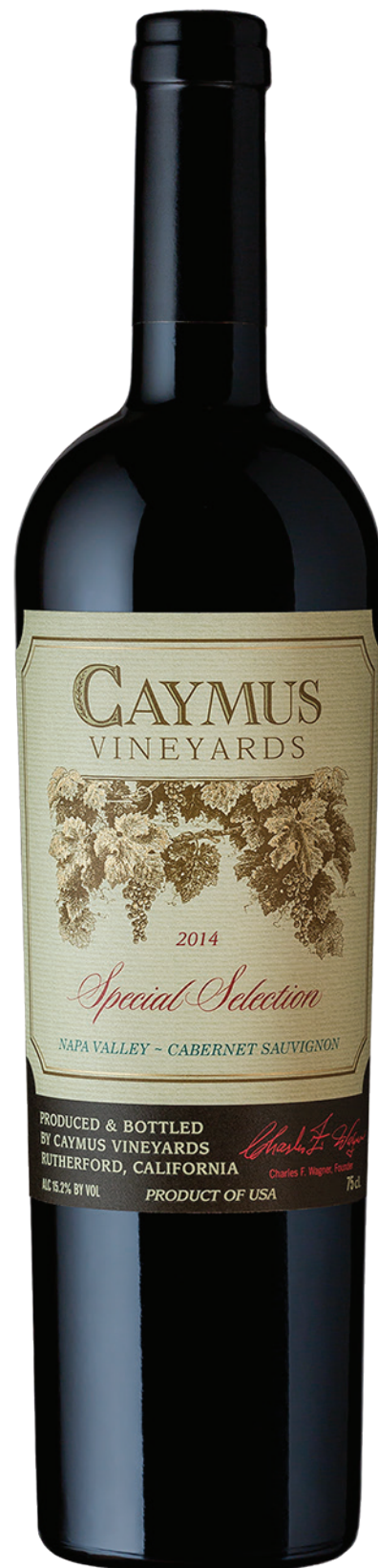
We got to talking about a winery here, and I was rather undecided. I said, "Well, why do I want to do it alone?" Chuck was just out of school then. I said, "If we start a winery, do you want in on it? If you don't, we'll consider selling the property." Chuck said, "I think I'd like to go for it." At that time, frankly, I don't think Chuck knew a good glass of wine from a glass of water.



We started the winery in '72. We didn't fool with an architect. We just put one small building up, and it's still there. Four or five years later we had need for another building, and we put that up. We put a warehouse across the way.

Farming is a way of life. It's not a formula that you can go by. Every year is different. It's all in the laps of the gods. Mother Nature is the guiding light of the whole procedure. There's no teacher for it. You do your own experimentation, and you find what best suits your needs.

Acquiring the ability to taste -- that's something that you could almost call self-education. You taste, and you taste again. I tell many people the same thing: you as an individual are your own wine expert. If you like what it is, then it's the wine you like, regardless of what anybody tells you or what you read. It is as personal as your choice of friends.



## RATINGS WS / RP

1975 – 92 / 98  
1976 – 90 / 98  
1977 – n.p.\*  
1978 – 98 / 98  
1979 – 97 / 92  
1980 – 96 / 93  
1981 – 94 / 91  
1982 – 92 / 88  
1983 – 91 / 89  
1984 – 98 / 94  
1985 – 99 / 91  
1986 – 98 / 94  
1987 – 98 / 89  
1988 – 94 / 85  
1989 – 93 / n.s.  
1990 – 98 / 94  
1991 – 99 / n.s.  
1992 – 92 / 94  
1993 – n.p.\*  
1994 – 95 / 97  
1995 – 97 / 90  
1996 – n.p.\*  
1997 – 95 / n.s.  
1998 – 91 / n.s.  
1999 – 95 / 90  
2000 – 92 / n.s.  
2001 – 95 / 96  
2002 – 93 / 96  
2003 – 93 / 94  
2004 – 94 / 96  
2005 – 94 / 94  
2006 – 94 / n.s.  
2007 – 96 / 93  
2008 – 94 / 94  
2009 – 93 / n.s.  
2010 – 96 / 98  
2011 – 94 / 95  
2012 – 94 / 96  
2013 – 95 / n.s.  
2014 – 91 / n.s.

n.s. = no score  
\*We chose not to  
produce Special  
Selection in 1977,  
1993 or 1996

Wine stands on three things: acid, tannin, and fruit – but that's only my opinion. These have to be together in the proper sequence, just like a proper marriage is at least three elements. If a wine is too tannic, it takes away the fruit. It takes acid to balance those, because if wine doesn't have sufficient acid, down the road it will be blah. It's a balanced product.

We aim for consistency. I think that's the bottom line, in order to keep the public happy with you. The grapes from different areas that we put in our Napa Valley Cab – we blend different quantities of them with the grapes from another farm, and we maintain consistency on that basis.

When we first started it was all hand bottling. Then the bottles had to be hand-corked, and the foil had to be put on by hand. The label had to be put on by hand. Then we went to a labeler that we bought used. We bought a mechanical corker that answered the purpose for a little while. There was a lot of handwork attached to it, but it would take a series of bottles at one time and ram the corks in. Finally we went for the big bottling line that we have today.

As far as the Special Selection is concerned, we choose the very best of our lots. After it is in barrels, we go over the barrels and make up our minds how many cases of Special Selection we want for that particular year, and we set that many barrels aside. The wine has to measure up, or it doesn't get marked for such.

The high acclaim that wine gets starts out in the vineyard with the grapes you crush. Then with the clean and proper vinification you develop a wine, and it either ages well and flies, or it doesn't. We were just lucky in that respect. We had a good combination, and it was a stroke of luck.

Charles F. Wagner Sr., interviewed by Carol Hicke in 1993. Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Copyright 1994. <http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/libraries/bancroft-library/oral-history-center>

### Tasting and serving notes

A dark plum red, with aromas of melting dark chocolate, ripe cherries, violets, wisps of smoke and bakery spice. The palate is intense, layered and lingering, featuring dark currants, cocoa and roasted coffee. Tannins are super-fine and soft, alternating between serious and playful. Rich Cabernet flavors last long after entry. Drink now until 2024, although this wine should remain interesting until 2034 and beyond. Best temperature for long-term storage is 50°F – 60°F. If warmer storage conditions exist, then age wine for shorter periods. Serve at 60°F. Decanting is not necessary.

- *Chuck Wagner, Owner and Winemaker*

