

Tasting the Wines of Hourglass Vineyard, 2014 Releases

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I recently had the opportunity to attend a live event with Napa-based Hourglass Vineyard's owner Jeff Smith and its new winemaker Tony Biagi. Before tasting through four of the winery's current releases, the duo discussed the changes involved with switching winemakers, including their new approach to winemaking and their return to higher-acidity, more elegant winemaking as they retreat from the traditional opulence of Napa. As well, the winery has a new focus on blending (and seemingly a love affair with Petit Verdot). Thoughts on all four wines follow.



2013 Hourglass Sauvignon Blanc Estate – Quite acidic, with pineapple and lemon balanced by touches of ammonia. Fresh, with lots of mineral notes, and touches of peach rising on the finish. There's a bit of coconut in there, too. Solid. B+ / \$40

2012 Hourglass Blueline Estate Merlot Napa Valley - 91% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Sauvignon, 2% Petit Verdot. Mint, chocolate, and a layering of raspberry, blackberry, and dried raisin character. Not as racy or acidic as I'd hoped for, the mint character really overpowering things on the back end. The finish goes out with more of a whimper than a bang. B / \$75

2012 Hourglass Blueline Estate Malbec Napa Valley - 75% Malbec, 25% Petit Verdot. Again, heavy on the mint character, which plays well with the heavy chocolate and strawberry notes in this wine. Again the body isn't as racy or as acidic as I'd expected, but here the flavors complement one another more completely. Give this one time to open up and some violet character emerges. Not exactly the Malbec you might be expecting, but worthwhile. B+ / \$75

2012 Hourglass Blueline Estate Cabernet Franc Napa Valley - 83% Cabernet Franc, 11% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Petit Verdot. Easily the darkest of these wines, both in color and in body. Dark chocolate, licorice, floral notes, and strawberry jam all come together in one powerhouse of a whole. This is the most "old school" (meaning: late-'90s) wine from this collection, a more dense and chewy wine with a lengthy finish – that mint returning for an encore. Probably my favorite wine of the bunch, but you'll pay for the privilege, to be sure! A- / \$135

hourglasswines.com