

Hyde de Villaine

Belle Cousine 2019 is a sophisticated expression of California with a Burgundian sensibility, where structure, freshness, and savoury mineral detail unfold in seamless harmony.

Belle Cousine 2019

California, USA

96 James Suckling



Region and Vineyards

Belle Cousine comes from Hyde Vineyard in Carneros, a celebrated cool-climate area at the southern end of Napa Valley, influenced by winds and fog from San Pablo Bay. Carneros is known for freshness and acidity, and while Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are emblematic here, warmer pockets can ripen Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, and Cabernet Sauvignon with poise rather than excess. The AVA sits between Napa and Sonoma, with low elevations rising inland to around 200 m.

Hyde Vineyard is one of California's most respected sites, associated with Larry Hyde and Aubert de Villaine. Belle Cousine draws its personality from this meeting of Napa fruit purity and **Burgundian restraint**, showing aromatic spice, red and blue fruits, and a distinctive saline mineral thread. The vineyard is certified Napa Green Land and Fish Friendly Farming, with organic and biodynamic practices used in the vineyard.

Winemaking

The 2019 Belle Cousine is a Bordeaux-style blend of **60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot**, all sourced from Hyde Vineyard. This vintage places Cabernet Sauvignon in the lead, giving the wine its graphite, cassis, and firm architectural line, while Merlot contributes plushness, aromatic breadth, and supple mid-palate texture.

The wine was matured for 22 months in French oak, with about 30% new barrels, and was bottled without fining or filtration. This approach supports depth without masking vineyard character, preserving the wine's savoury precision, polished tannins, and vibrant acidity. Cabernet and Merlot are natural partners: Merlot softens Cabernet Sauvignon's more rigorous frame, an idea long established in Bordeaux blends and widely adopted in the New World.

Alcohol :14,40 %

Composition: 60% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Merlot

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Tasting Notes

- **Color:** Deep ruby with a vivid core and youthful brilliance, suggesting concentration without heaviness.
- **Aroma:** Cassis, black plum, blackberry, violet, licorice, cocoa powder, graphite, mint, anise, black pepper, and subtle roasted coffee notes.
- **Palate:** Medium-bodied, pure, and finely detailed, with velvety yet structured tannins, lively acidity, dark red and blue fruit, savoury spice, mineral tension, and a long, elegant finish.

Did you know?

Belle Cousine means "beautiful cousin" in French and pays homage to Pamela Fairbanks de Villaine, Larry Hyde's cousin and the wife of Aubert de Villaine of Burgundy. The wine symbolises the union of two great wine families, the Hydes of Napa and the de Villaines of Burgundy, and was one of HdV's original offerings in 2000.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Herb-crusted rack of lamb:** The wine's cassis, graphite, and fine tannins echo the lamb's savoury depth while cutting elegantly through its richness.
- **Duck breast with black cherry reduction:** Red and blue fruit notes mirror the sauce, while the wine's acidity keeps the pairing lifted and precise.
- **Braised short ribs with rosemary:** Slow-cooked beef flatters the Cabernet structure, and the herbal seasoning draws out the wine's mint, spice, and licorice tones.
- **Wild mushroom risotto with Parmesan:** Earthy mushrooms and umami-rich cheese highlight the wine's graphite, cocoa, and mineral accents.

96 James Suckling

James Suckling (JS) : 96 Points (2019)

Lead pencil and blackberries with blackcurrants. Slate, too. Medium body, firm and fine tannins and a racy finish. Linear and polished. Crunchy. Pencil shavings. Slightly roasted coffee beans. So subtle and energetic. 60% cabernet sauvignon and 40% merlot. Drink or hold.

95 vinous

Vinous (Antonio Galloni) (VN) : 95 Points (2019)

The 2019 Belle Cousine, 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot from Hyde, is fabulous. Bright and focused, the 2019 bristles with energy. Strong Cabernet inflections give this mid-weight red tons of aromatic presence to match its mid-weight personality. Dark red/blue fruits, mint, blood orange, spice, leather and mocha are some of the notes that emerge over time. Like all the best wines here, the Belle Cousine offers outstanding focus, clarity and freshness.

Belle Cousine 2019

Robert Parker (RP) : 94 Points (2019)

The 2019 Belle Cousine is a blend of 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Merlot matured for 22 months in about 30% new French oak. It has intense aromas of cassis, black plums, cocoa powder, violet and licorice. The medium-bodied palate is pure and detailed with velvety tannins, vibrant acidity nestled into its concentrated, perfumed flavors and a long, elegant finish. (EB)