Ridge Vineyards

A distinguished mountain Cabernet from the famed Monte Bello estate, Ridge's 2021 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon captures depth, elegance, and the pure voice of Santa Cruz Mountains terroir.

RIDGE
VINEYARDS

Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2023

California, USA

Region and Vineyards

Ridge's Estate Cabernet Sauvignon 2021 is sourced exclusively from the historic **Monte Bello Vineyard**, perched in the **Santa Cruz Mountains AVA -** an appellation distinct from both California's North and Central Coasts. Nestled between elevations of **1,300 to 2,670 feet**, the site benefits from a cool maritime climate, long growing seasons, and low-yielding vines rooted in **fractured limestone over greenstone-clay loams**. These mountain soils imbue the wine with natural acidity, mineral depth, and age-worthy structure.

The vineyard was first planted in **1886**, abandoned mid-20th century, then replanted in phases beginning in the late 1940s. Some of the vines now producing for the Estate Cabernet date back over 65 years. Most fruit for this cuvée comes from the **Klein Ranch parcel**, selected for its accessibility in youth while retaining the mineral spine and complexity that define Monte Bello's terroir. With yields averaging just **2.1 tons per acre**, concentration is assured even before the grapes reach the cellar.

Winemaking

The 2021 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon is a blend of **84% Cabernet Sauvignon and 16% Merlot**, all estate-grown and hand-harvested. The fruit was destemmed, sorted, and fermented as **100% whole berries** using only native yeasts. The wine underwent full malolactic fermentation on indigenous bacteria and was aged for **19 months in air-dried American oak barrels**, **50% of which were new**.

Ridge adheres to a **minimal intervention philosophy**, using only essential additions—such as a modest dose of sulfur (35 ppm at crush, 158 ppm during aging)—and avoids unnecessary manipulation. With **13.3% alcohol**, the wine is balanced and restrained by modern standards, showcasing freshness and transparency over excess.

Alcohol :13,30 %

Composition: 84% Cabernet Sauvignon, 16% Merlot

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Tasting Notes

- **Color**: Deep garnet core with youthful clarity at the rim.
- **Aroma**: Aromatics reveal blackcurrant, blackberry, blue fruit, dried lavender, anise, and toasted brioche, underscored by earthy mineral nuances.
- **Palate**: Concentrated but refined, with notes of berry compote, sarsaparilla, and cola evolving into blackcurrant and dark chocolate. The structure is firm yet polished, carried by **chalky tannins and vibrant acidity**, leading to a poised, mineral-laced finish.

Did you know?

Though Ridge Monte Bello is its iconic flagship, the **Estate Cabernet Sauvignon** emerged as a separate label in **2008**, designed to express parcels from the Monte Bello estate that are more approachable in their youth. It still offers profound terroir expression and longevity, but in a more open-knit frame - **essentially a second wine that could stand on its own among Napa's finest mountain Cabernets**.

Wine Pairing Ideas

- **Dry-aged ribeye with bone marrow butter**: Complements the wine's depth and savory nuance.
- **Lamb shoulder with rosemary and garlic confit**: A classic pairing that echoes the wine's herbal and dark-fruited complexity.
- **Grilled portobello mushrooms with farro and herbs**: Highlights the wine's earthy core and silky structure.
- **Aged Comté or Pecorino Toscano**: Hard cheeses that enhance the wine's texture and length.

96 Decanter

Decanter (DCT) : 96 Points (2021)

From the legendary Monte Bello estate vineyard, most of this 2021 Cabernet comes from the Klein Ranch portion of the famed Santa Cruz Mountains estate. An American Cabernet (blended with 16% Merlot) evocative of first-growth Bordeaux nuance and complexity. Freshly turned soils, bay leaf and sweet tobacco aromas segue into notes of pure black fruits. Sweet, ripe black plums open the palate with perfectly tart blackberries, muddled mint leaves, pencil shavings, and soaring acidity brighten this wine into a mineral-driven finish. This is a wine that, in 8-10 years, will surely be at its apex.

95 JEB DUNNUCK

Jeb Dunnuck (JD) : 95 Points (2021)

The 2021 Cabernet Sauvignon Estate comes from a great vintage for Napa Valley and comes all from the Monte Bello Vineyard on the eastern side of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Pure crème de cassis, leafy tobacco, spring flowers, and graphite are just some of its nuances, and it hits the palate with medium to full-bodied richness, a pure, concentrated, layered mouthfeel, beautiful tannins, and a great finish. This Saint-Julien-like beauty needs 4-6 years of bottle age but will keep for 30 years. It's not far off the Monte Bello and should be snatched up. 95+

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James Suckling (JS) : 94 Points (2021)

Graphite, tobacco, grilled plums, black olives and black cherries are held firmly by velvety tannins on a medium body at 13.3% alcohol. Tense, concentrated, linear and acid-driven while deep in black fruit and subtle oak accents. Grapes grown on Ridge's Monte Bello property at lower elevations on the slopes. Best after 2029.