



ULYSSES

2014 VINTAGE, EN PRIMEUR

"Can't bring back time. Like holding water in your hand."

James Joyce, Ulysses

Christian Moueix's Ulysses Vineyard is nestled in the hills of southern Oakville, Napa Valley. It lies to the west of the main highway, where the likes of Opus One, Robert Mondavi and Cakebread Cellars are to be found. Once part of the nineteenth century Charles Hopper Ranch, it is modest in the extreme. The estate buildings consist of a simple farmhouse, a wooden barn (pictured above) and a water tower. Brilliant yellow flowers grow between the vines. The Napa of a bygone era – perhaps you can bring back time...

Tod Mostero oversees both Christian Moueix's Californian estates, Dominus and Ulysses. Trained in Bordeaux, Mostero clearly shares Moueix's ideals of freshness and drinkability as paramount to a great wine. He has been instrumental in the recent replanting programme at Ulysses.

Ulysses is just a mile north of Yountville's Dominus. Indeed, it is made at the Dominus winery. The vines are planted on a mineral-rich alluvial fan at the foot of the Mayacamas Range. Although the soil is similar, the climate is more 'continental' than Dominus, lending Ulysses a forthright richness and energy, this being balanced by quite beautiful precision and refinement.

Corney & Barrow is proud to be the exclusive UK agent of Ulysses.

Guy Seddon
March 2018

THE VINEYARD

Ulysses is a 14 hectare plot just west of Highway 29, Napa Valley's main north-south thoroughfare. Whilst the San Pablo Bay exerts a moderating influence on the more southerly areas of Napa, in Oakville the Yountville hills buffer the coastal effect. This makes summer hotter and winter colder.

After Christian Moueix's acquisition, in 2008, of what would become Ulysses Vineyard, an in-depth analysis of the soil and microclimate was undertaken. This was followed by painstaking vineyard restoration. The distinctive lyre trellising system of Dominus has been adopted as the model at Ulysses. The resulting high canopy keeps the fruit zones shaded. Fanned 'cross-arms' measuring two feet across at the top of the canopy further protect against the sun. Narrow rows act as a brake on Napa's natural vigour, driving competition for nutrients. The ubiquitous Napa dust is rinsed off in the vineyard.

As at Dominus, 'dry' (unirrigated) farming is fundamental. This encourages the vine roots to dig deep and develop drought resistance. The soil is composed of deep gravel and clay loam. This fast draining soil, as in Bordeaux's Medoc, is especially suited to Cabernet Sauvignon. Indeed, this venerable grape makes up the lion's share of plantings, currently at 85-90%, the remainder being Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot.

Given that Cabernet excels here, it is not surprising that the Moueix team chose to replant the vineyard's Merlot vines with Cabernets Sauvignon and Franc. (Possibly they also feel they have enough Merlot back on the right bank of the Gironde.) New clonal material has been introduced, including from unspecified top chateaux in Bordeaux...

WINEMAKING

The approach is best described as 'minimalist'. Watching, learning and intervening only where necessary. Harvested at optimal ripeness, individual clusters are selected, before an even more detailed berry selection takes place in the winery.

Gentle and steady are the watchwords during vinification. Around 50% new French oak barrels are used. The majority of Ulysses' barrels are made by the Taransaud cooperage, with the remainder coming from Seguin Moreau and Demptos. A long, light toast is used to ensure only minimal oak charring influence on the wines.

2014 VINTAGE NOTES

2014 was characterised by a very dry early winter with heavy rains in February and continued rainfall in March and April. February saw nearly a foot of rain (!), with four inches in March and two in April. Average temperatures were higher than historical averages with minor heat spikes in June (38°C) and in July (39°C). August and September were more even, ensuring a stable run in to harvest.

TASTING NOTE: ULYSSES 2014

An inky ruby colour in the glass, the 2014 Ulysses is darkly, deeply fruited on the nose. Luxurious blackcurrant, black cherry and a delicate earthiness, with finely ground black pepper soar out of the glass. Top notes of rose petals, brimming with life... The palate is lithe, with a delightful arc of acidity holding the raspberry and blackberry fruit in a gratifying tension. Beautifully extracted tannins cajole the fruit, exerting a squeeze on the finish at this early stage but showing every sign that they will integrate wonderfully. A worthy successor to the 2013 vintage.

CORNEY & BARROW SCORE

17.5 - 18

(RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2022 – 2040+)

£775/CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK

TASTING GUIDE

Our tasting notes provide full details but, at your request, we have also introduced a clear and simple marking system. We hope these guidelines assist you in your selection.

Wines are scored out of 20. Customers seem to like it and it has the benefit of simplicity. We will often use a range of scores (e.g. 16.5 to 17) to indicate the potential to achieve a higher mark. When a '+' is shown it adds further to that potential. Wines from lesser vintages will, inevitably, show a lower overall score.

Wines are judged, in a very broad sense, against their peers. Why? Well, you cannot easily compare a Ford with an Aston Martin, other than they are both cars and have wheels. It is not that different with wine. A score is a summary only. The devil is in the detail, so please focus on the tasting notes and, as always, speak to our sales team.

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