



# ULYSSES

## 2016 & 2017 VINTAGES

EXCLUSIVE TO CORNEY & BARROW IN THE UK

The Moueix family's Ulysses Vineyard sits in the bucolic hills of southern Oakville, Napa Valley, to the west of Highway 29. Once part of the nineteenth century Charles Hopper Ranch, it is modest in the extreme.

Tod Mostero oversees both of the Moueix Californian estates, Dominus and Ulysses, the former just a mile to the south, in Yountville. Trained in Bordeaux, Mostero clearly shares the Moueix ideals of freshness and drinkability as the basis of great wine. He was instrumental in the replanting programme at Ulysses.

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, giving Ulysses a forthright richness and energy. As the only buildings at Ulysses are a simple farmhouse, the above wooden barn and a water tower, the wine is made at Dominus.

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

**Guy Seddon**  
April 2021

## **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 fast-draining soil is deep gravel and clay loam. As in the Medoc, it is especially suited to Cabernet Sauvignon, which makes up 85-90% of plantings, 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. New clonal material has been introduced, including from unspecified top chateaux in Bordeaux...

## **WINEMAKING**

The approach is minimalist: watching, learning and intervening only where necessary. Individual clusters are selected in the vineyard, before an even more detailed berry selection takes place in the winery.

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.

## **THE 2016 GROWING SEASON**

2016 was characterised by a rainy and warmer than average winter. With soil water reserves full, the vines quickly grew dense and vigorous canopies. Flowering and *véraison* (colour change) occurred in warm and dry conditions. Ripening slowed down in August due to cooler temperatures and late morning fog. Warm temperatures in September (38°C on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>) helped the fruit to ripen consistently. Harvest started on 24<sup>th</sup> September, finishing on 1<sup>st</sup> October. The wine was bottled in July 2018.

## **THE 2017 GROWING SEASON**

A very wet winter and spring saw seasonal rainfall at twice the historical average. With soil water reserves full and warm temperatures in May and June, the vines grew quickly and luxuriantly. Several significant heat waves were recorded in June, July, August, and September, with a record-breaking 44°C on 1<sup>st</sup> September. Ripening was fast and steady. The severe heatwave before harvest resulted in significant crop loss. To maintain quality, fruit selection was critical, resulting in the smallest vintage since 1988. Harvest started on 15<sup>th</sup> September and finished on 3<sup>rd</sup> October.

## TASTING NOTES

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### ULYSSES 2016

Deep, saturated ruby colour. Raspberries and bitter cherries on the nose, morello plums and vanilla pod seasoning. Intense wild strawberry on the palate, which is brilliantly pure and vibrant, and is attractively picked out by deft menthol and tomato leaf. The tannins are supple and very polished. An exciting wine of energy and verve.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 17.5+**

**RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2022 – 2035+**

**£650 / CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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### ULYSSES 2017

Tasted alongside the 2016 and, by comparison, darker and more saturated, showing a more deep-seated confidence and ease. The sweet fruited ripeness of Napa is here, as is the savoury classicism of high quality Cabernet, seen in the cassis and graphite, with deft cedary framing and a fine yet firm grip. An impressive statement of intent and astonishing finesse given the late season heat.

**CORNEY & BARROW SCORE 18+**

**RECOMMENDED DRINKING FROM 2024 – 2040**

**£595 / CASE OF 6 BOTTLES, IN BOND UK**

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## **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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