

Onto vintage 2010: Dominican Oaks Cabernet



Ever since the [Rutherford Wine Company](#) of St. Helena created the “Dominican Oaks” label several years ago, we have been treated to an ever-improving Cabernet experience at a reasonable cost. Here’s why.

Dominican Oaks is now a private label used by [Total Wine](#) under their “Winery Direct” program. This strategy provides an excellent value by allowing them to sell wines that are bought exclusively from various producers. Each bottle is provided with unique markings that you won’t see elsewhere.

The winery may also use these specially labeled wines for one-time promotions and other situations for large customers. But the chances of spotting this label outside of Total Wine are slim.

What’s the advantage? Other than its attractive price, Dominican Oaks’ “Napa Cab” is a welcomed party wine. Selections like these are blended to please a wide range of drinkers. Although this may be kind of a bummer for those who are really into wine, occasional imbibers will find it quite approachable. And for a really big party, like a wedding reception, who’s actually going to quibble?

But there’s also another advantage. This is a fairly inexpensive way to take a sneak peek into what’s coming from California’s 2010 vintage. It’s a safe bet that this is a blend from a wide range of Napa producers, and even a little from elsewhere. So let’s check it out.

On the bouquet, dark cherry and plum greet the nose plus something else that’s a little lighter, like raspberries. That’s nice so far, and right up to par with recent vintages. But this wine does a little less in the mouth. It just flows along so well that the Cab seems buttery and round; it’s not obnoxious in any way, just smooth, lightly tannic, and mellow.

The finish is a little more acidic than a few of the previous vintages, is more jammy, and has a little more fruit than the previous year. So good news, looks like the 2010 vintage will be another adventure, especially in the “bouquet department”!

With its lower alcohol and low-key character, this one could pair well with roast chicken, brats, or even a beef stew. Now that begs for a spring party! Why not? Timing is perfect.

You can find oodles of '10 Dominican Cab (and maybe some of the '09 still in stock with the old label as shown) at nearly every Phoenix area [Total Wine](#) store for around \$22. At this price, you should find it "ripe" for some experimentation and taste-offs. As one person noted, "This is very similar to a full-bodied Merlot". Hey, it is all in the *taste* of the beholder. Non-wimpy Merlots sell for a lot more.