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Remember Merlot? It's better than ever.

When it comes to iconic Merlot vineyards in California, none surpasses **Three Palms Vineyard in Napa Valley.**



Duckhorn winemaker Renee Ary concedes that Calistoga is on the warm side for growing Merlot, but the river rocks that spilled out of Dutch Henry Canyon and were deposited in this 73-acre vineyard give the plush Merlot enough stony structure to balance that ripeness. Ary calls it a 'wet stone' flavor.

Duckhorn has made a single-vineyard Three Palms Merlot since its inception in 1978, and in 2015 purchased the property and seized control of the vineyard's 50 acres of Merlot. 'With Merlot's popularity waning, we picked up some unbelievable sources of fruit,' says Duckhorn Vice President of Marketing Carol Reber.

Duckhorn is hardly the only winery in Napa that makes great Merlot. Shafer, Pride Mountain, Rombauer, Blackbird, Keenan, Swanson, Truchard and a few others still have notable Merlot programs, but **Duckhorn is still a benchmark in terms of pricing and brand recognition.** Up until the last year or two, Duckhorn sold more Merlot than Cabernet Sauvignon. Even for Duckhorn, though, Cabernet now outsells Merlot.

In Napa, Cabernet has been displacing everything else. But many of Napa's greatest Cabernet Sauvignons are blended with small amounts of Merlot — as is customary in Bordeaux. 'The irony is that you can't make great Cabernet without Merlot,' Ary pointed out.

Though Merlot may be less popular than it was two decades ago, steadfast fans of the grape are banking on its gradual recovery. One thing's for sure: **The roster of California Merlot may be smaller than it once was, but the quality of California Merlot is better than ever.**



-Tim Teichgraeber, August 2017

"Renee Ary, Duckhorn's winemaker. Duckhorn has weathered Merlot's waning popularity since its peak in the 1990s."