

Wine & Spirits

ESTATE

**WINERY OF THE YEAR
2005 • 2006 • 2007 • 2008**

Diamond Creek

“The combination of the precocious young vines and deep-rooted 40-year-olds produced the most beautiful and compelling California cabernet I have ever tasted on release.”

...At Diamond Creek, there are a number of reasons why the latest blends of young vines and old are among the best vintages we've tasted from this legendary estate. And why they well may lead Napa Valley cabernet sauvignon in a new direction.

Recently, I had the good fortune to taste the 2005 Red Rock Terrace, opened for our December issue cabernet tasting and revisited over the course of a week. The wine tastes fresh from the moment it's first poured and increases in whatever ineffable energy is powering it for days on end. The other selections from Diamond Creek in 2005 are exceptional wines...

The vines at Diamond Creek originated in two first-growth vineyards in Bordeaux. Al Brounstein, who planted the first modern vineyard on Diamond Mountain forty years ago, researched how best to do it by talking with vineyard workers in Bordeaux. Convinced that the genetic heritage of the plants themselves was an important part of the terroir at his new vineyard, he lobbied for cuttings from these two premiere crus, with the promise that he would never reveal their identities. He smuggled the cuttings to Mexico, then piloted them himself to the Napa Valley, where he had them propagated for grafting onto St. George rootstock...

...Phil Steinschiber the winemaker and viticulturist who came to Diamond Creek in 1991...believes that Red Rock Terrace, a north-facing slope, with red, iron oxide in the soil, produced a more precocious wine in 2005... He describes Volcanic Hill, with its southern exposure, as more powerful...Gravelly Meadow, a slightly cooler, shadier spot with poor alluvial soils from the creek, is always the latest to harvest, and he recalls the 2005 harvest as late. After a cool season, it started around October 15 and the long Indian summer sustained ripening into November. On release, these are more exciting wines than the supple, rich cabernets of 2004 with which Diamond Creek earned this *Winery of the Year* award...



The winery atop Red Rock Terrace

What the extended 2005 season may provide is a view into a complex moment in the life of...[the vineyard]...It's the last vintage of Al Brounstein's career; he died in June, 2006, leaving his wife, Boots, and stepson, Phil Ross, in charge of Diamond Creek. Half of it is the old mixed planting of first-generation immigrant vines, half the progeny of those Bordelais parents, from the ones that thrived best on Diamond Mountain...plus all the tinkering Steinschiber brings to each block and each lot, from pruning to fermentation in two-ton vats. The combination of the precocious young vines and the deep-rooted 40-year-olds produced the most beautiful and compelling California cabernet I have ever tasted on release. - J. Greene

2005 TOP-SCORING WINES

Diamond Mountain District, Napa Valley

- 98 '05 Red Rock Terrace, Cabernet Sauvignon**
- 97 '05 Gravelly Meadow, Cabernet Sauvignon**
- 95 '05 Volcanic Hill, Cabernet Sauvignon**