




Wine Reviews: Hourglass

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At **Hourglass**, premium Napa Valley red is more than just Cabernet Sauvignon. Their Cabernets deserve serious credit, but Hourglass has been working on some great varietal expressions of Merlot, Cabernet Franc, and Malbec from the Blueline Vineyard in Calistoga.

2012 was the first full vintage for Hourglass' winemaker Tony Biagi, who took over from renowned winemaker Bob Foley. It appears Tony arrived at a great time because 2012 was a good growing season, and the resulting wines show balance and depth. The 2013 vintage marks Hourglass' first white wine, a Napa Valley Sauvignon Blanc, which I found refreshing and intriguing.

The new oak in these wines is nuanced and integrated, adding creaminess to the texture and accents to the fruit and earth flavors. But given the complexity of flavors, the structure and the balance, the oak never overpowers, at least for my palate.

These wines aren't cheap, but they're delicious and cellar-worthy. All of the wines were received as trade samples and tasted sighted from 375ml bottles. The prices below represent the mailing list allocation cost for a 750ml bottle.

2013 Hourglass Sauvignon Blanc

\$40

A pale straw color. Crisp apple and lime aromas, orange blossom, honeysuckle, a striking amount of slate and minerals. Creamy and rich on the palate, but the acid cuts through with impressive power. Richer notes of apricot, honey and orange marmalade blend with elements of oyster shell, sea salt and minerals. Lots of concentration and depth here, this is a beauty of a Napa Sauv Blanc that refuses to fit in a stylistic box. Hourglass' first shot with white wine, and they nailed it. This wine sees stainless steel as well as some new and old French oak. (91 points IJB)

2012 Hourglass Malbec Blueline

\$75

Generous purple color. Vibrant and playful aromas of deep plums and black currants laced with violets, cola and charcoal. On the palate, fine grained but grippy tannins meet with medium acid, almost crisp. Rich and boisterous, full of bright floral tones, this wine is plummy and packed with tart berries. There's an underlying mix of cocoa powder, charcoal, vanilla bean, cola and black olive. Bold but elegant, this is impressive stuff that shows some solid aging potential. Aged 16 months in 40% new French oak, this wine also includes 25% Petite Verdot. (91 points IJB)

2012 Hourglass Merlot Blueline

\$75

Nose of roses, raspberries, caramel, roses, a lot of explosive ripe fruit but it's backed up by earth and smoke, menthol and smoked meat. Full bodied but this wine shows an elegant texture with fine tannins and medium acid. I get berry compote, raspberries and dark plums; all the fruit is juicy but very tangy. Significant amount of mushroom, balsamic, soy, barbecue sauce and sweet floral elements. Chewy, elegant, rich, complex, this wine is all of these, with a long finish. Could use two to four years and I think this will develop for quite a while longer. Includes 5% Petite Verdot, this wine is aged 16 months in new and seasoned French oak. (93 points IJB)

2012 Hourglass Cabernet Franc Blueline

\$135

Deep and saucy on the nose, I get blueberry, blackberry and plums, but also lots of deep loam, granite, paved road and mushroom. On the palate, wow, this is just beautiful — medium acid, great concentration, dusty tannins. Full of tart blueberry and currant fruit, like crunching through the skins, but then the earth, charcoal, cedar and eucalyptus notes come in. The mushroom, granite and tobacco flavors need time to fully show themselves. Great structure here for aging. This sees 20 months in 40% new French oak. Gorgeous. (93 points IJB)