

Michael and Kathryn Havens may have been starry-eyed academics when they embarked on a winemaking career in 1984, but that's clearly not all they were! They had a vision of quality plus the ingenuity and stubbornness to see it through. They made foresighted (if at the time seemingly unorthodox) choices of vinous and human collaborators, and the result has been worldwide accolades and benchmark wines from Merlot, Cabernet, and Syrah grown in exceptional Napa Valley microclimates.

The major source of Havens Merlot is fruit from the "Congress Valley" area of Carneros, immediately southwest of the town of Napa. Michael weaves this fruit – together with Merlot and Cabernet found further up Napa Valley – into masterful blends. His Merlots are quite frankly among the very few from the New World about which one would guess they're made of the same varietal stuff as Petrus.

Tony and Jo Anne Truchard's Merlot has been there from the beginning. At a recent tasting of the Havens "Truchard Reserve" from the notorious 1989 vintage, even Tony Truchard himself was totally fooled by a bottle of this still formidable, rich and complex wine. (And you'll search hard to find other '89s that merited those adjectives then, let alone now!) Recently, by now celebrated grapes of Larry Hyde's nearby vineyard have also come to play a vital role..

Lee Hudson's exceptional fruit has given Havens a leg up in the Syrah game, although Havens admits that when Hudson first suggested this yield-sensitive "warm climate" grape, his reaction was "?!". "Home-work" in the northern Rhône convinced Havens. Inspired vinification lifted his spicy Syrah above an already crowded field when it debuted in 1991. At Havens' new winery on Hoffman Lane in Napa, there's now a spot of Syrah, too and, in an especially exciting development, they



have been able to plan and plant a Syrah vineyard with John Caldwell in Coombsville, south-east Napa

If Carneros in the days when Michael and Kathryn started out was decidedly better-known for its Chardonnay and Pinot than its Merlot or Syrah, their choice for Cabernet Franc fruit – in fact their willfulness in choosing this grape variety in the first place – must have seemed downright odd. They even named their Cabernet Franc "Bourriquot", which as Michael explains, is Bordelaise "slang for a horse with its own mind, one that's not easily controlled. Just our sort of animal."

But any sense of oddity has worn off. Bourriquot has become a classic thanks to the extraordinarily perfumed fruit of vineyards like Beau Terroir and Hyde. Working under by-the-acre contracts, Havens is able to guarantee that a single cluster per shoot ripens to perfection.

The style Havens wines convey is one of elegance and subtlety, appealing to tasters who are equally appreciative of good wine and of good food, equally willing to enjoy bottles young or to cellar them. As such, it is a compliment and no surprise if one finds oneself comparing them with the finest wines of France.

"Complexity is no accident," opines Michael, and this could serve as the Havens motto. He has a nose for great terroir in growing regions which are only now being charted and tested, combined with a talent for sensitive fine-wine-tuning in an industry which threatens to render "the blender's art" an oxymoron. "You have to get out of

the wine's way," he says, "... but actively."

Toward that end, Michael has immersed himself more deeply than virtually any of his peers in the chemistry of wine. His sophisticated applications of micro-oxygenation in "sculpting" tannins recently landed him on the front page of the New York Times Science section.

Vintner Select has had the privilege to work with Michael and Kathryn Havens and their partners Jon Scott and Russell Lane since the beginnings of our company. Year by year, our respect for their wines increases, as does the excitement generated by each new release.

Varieties: *Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Franc, Albariño*

Acreage: *16.5 acres owned or leased; 2.3 w/long-term "monopole" contracts (Details at left.)*

Vinification: *Havens pioneered co-fermentative and micro-oxygenation techniques. He judiciously employs unobtrusively low-toast barrels.*

Production: *15,000 cases.*

Merlot Napa Valley

Up to ten vineyards, incl. Hyde, Hudson, Truchard, Paradigm & Beau Terroir contribute to success in Havens' signature Merlot.

Merlot Carneros Reserve

From a star-studded Carneros cast headed by Hyde, Truchard, and Beau Terroir.

Syrah Napa Valley

Hudson fruit plus recent Havens additions.

Syrah Carneros "Hudson"

Hudson's "T-B lock" is now in top years the subject of this limited reserve bottling.

"Bourriquot"

Hyde, Truchard and Beau Terroir, low-yields and long hang time make for an aromatic explosion. Still, at Havens, even the "bombs" exhibit complexity, finesse and a certain graceful restraint!

"Working with purchased fruit from some of the best vineyards in Carneros. Michael Havens is crafting limited quantities of some of California's finest merlots and syrahs."

Stephen Tanzer,

International Wine Cellar [5/97]