

## LAIL VINEYARDS

When Robin Lail's father John Daniel sold Inglenook, a winery he and his father had guided to post-war greatness, not all the legacy of Gustav Niebaum changed hands. The Daniels retained what was later to become Dominus, originally a partnership between Christian Moeiux, Robin, and her sister. In 1995, Robin Lail sold her share in Dominus. She and her husband embarked on their own project, Lail Vineyards.

Lail Vineyards preserves not just the winemaking legacy of John Daniel, it also utilizes merlot from the two acre "Totem" vineyard, part of the original "Napanook." To this, the Lails intended to add contract Cabernet from the best Napa benchland around Yountville and Oakville. Finding fruit proved to be a challenge. "We looked around," says Robin, "and wondered where all the friends had gone who used to say, 'ring us up if you want to buy some cab.!'"

In 1996, Robin and Jon Lail purchased three acres on Howell Mountain, setting up the possibility of a true "cuvée" blending two great Napa terroirs. They hired the young Philippe Melka as oenologist. Bordeaux-born Melka is a man on a mission. In an April, 2001 profile entitled "A Star is Born", *Food & Wine* wrote of him: "You may not know his name yet, but Philippe Melka is quickly becoming Napa Valley's hottest consulting winemaker. Melka is both a winemaker and a geologist; his fascination with wine began not with a drink but with

*Lail Vineyards*



dirty." Says Robin, "Geology has an influence on how Philippe looks at things. He's very much at home in the vineyard."

New sites will be incorporated into future Lail bottlings. Even in a region so rich in promising vinous projects as Napa, few are more promising or exciting than Lail Vineyards.

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Varieties: *Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Franc*

Acreage: *4.9 acres: 2 in Yountville's Napanook site, 2.9 on Howell Mountain.*

Production: *1,300 cases.*

### **J. Daniel Cuvée Napa**