

SMITH-MADRONE WINERY

We are honored to be prominently featured in *The San Francisco Chronicle's* August 1 look at the year 2004 which included a blind tasting of 33 2004 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignons. Here is an excerpt of Esther Mobley's article:

San Francisco Chronicle

Tasting the outdated 2004s makes me wonder: Does everything go out of style? Does anything get to be timeless? Maybe not — and maybe, for wine, that's OK. If one of the reasons we love wine is its ability to express its vintage, can that expression be cultural as well as meteorological? If they don't always conform to the reigning style of the day, so be it.

And yet there is one wine in our tasting that seems to defy it all. The 2004 Smith-Madrone from Spring Mountain happens to carry a modest 13.9% alcohol, but that's not the point. By the time we get to it, the 30th wine in our lineup, our mouths are parched and our tongues fatigued. But something in me perks up when I put my nose in the glass.

It's not the most youthful wine on the table. It bears some telltale signs of aging — cigar box, leather, a browning rim. Still, it's alive, pulsing with energy, generous with blackberry, currant, licorice and at the same time, restrained and delicate.

What makes the Smith-Madrone so compelling is that it could have been made in any era. It's a product not of fashion but of principle. It abides by fundamental standards of wine quality — balance, simplicity — that have never gone out of style, and never will.

Tasting the Smith-Madrone, it seems clear to me that today's trendiest wines have more in common with 2004 than their makers would like to imagine. In the annals of taste, wines that are immoderately funky or excruciatingly lean will have just as short of a shelf life as the extravagantly ripe wines of the aughts.

No matter what form it takes, excess will always get old. But sometimes, when something stays the course, ignores the fads, keeps it simple, we get a taste of timelessness.

[<https://www.sfchronicle.com/food/article/How-the-year-2004-changed-California-wine-and-14188620.php?psid=fg7Qb>]