

A TRIO OF GRAND TERROIRS: HIGHLIGHTING OUR THREE ESTATE CABERNET VINEYARDS

by Jodie Morlet

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Some of Luc's fondest childhood memories involve spending time in his family's vineyards and orchards. Even though there was work to be done, he and his two younger brothers always found a way to make the tasks fun. As children, Luc's father began teaching his sons the importance of *terroir*. When their vineyards were young, Luc helped his father cultivate vegetables between the vines. Through this family tradition, they noticed that the potatoes and carrots had a different flavor profile from one plot and soil-type to another.

The Champagne region as a whole is known for its deep, chalky subsoil, and each of the Pierre Morlet *Grand Cru* and *Premier Cru* vineyards provides distinct growing conditions. Of course, in Champagne, these *terroirs* are blended together to form complex *cuvées* that maintain a consistency of style. Yet... it wouldn't be long until Luc was exposed to a viticultural area that was known for the opposite approach to crafting wines.



Luc picks (eats) grapes, harvest 1974, Champagne

BURGUNDY BEGINNINGS

After high school, Luc earned a viticulture degree at École Viticole de Champagne (La Viti d'Avize). Through the recommendation of his family's neighbor, Viscount Philippe Liger-Belair, who was the President of the French National Association of Courtiers and whose family has owned the famous La Romanée *Grand Cru* vineyard in Vosne-Romanée for several generations, Luc was granted an internship at Chan-



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The Cabernet Sauvignons from our three estate vineyards



son Père et Fils in Beaune for the 1989 harvest (and what a vintage!).

The French term *terroir* reveals a true sense of place, denoting the unique geological and climatic conditions of a specific plot of land. For hundreds of years, the utmost ex-

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pression of *terroir* has been attributed to Burgundy producers. Each vineyard block on the slopes of the Côte de Nuits and the Côte de Beaune represents a distinct microclimate and is referred to as a *climat*. For centuries, these parcels have differed from one another in their soil profile, sun exposure and varietal selections and many have their own designated appellation. Each *climat* is picked, vinified, aged, and bottled separately.

With over twenty-five hectares in the beautiful villages of the Côte de Beaune, Domaine Chanson is considered to be one of the best producers in the area. It was here where Luc first learned how a wine can be a spectacular expression of a single site. The Domaine has produced nine individual labels from these vineyard blocks, and Luc particularly recalls appreciating the Clos des Fèves, Clos des Marconnets, Clos de Roi and Clos des Mouches immensely.

Luc went on to earn a DNO and DESS in Oenology from the Université des Science de Reims followed by an MBA in Wine Business at Burgundy School of Business in Dijon. During these studies, he took courses taught by Professor Feuillat from the Dijon Wine Institute. Luc's academic knowledge of Burgundian winemaking grew, enhancing everything that he had previously learned from

his hands-on experiences. Luc then switched gears when he was hired as the winemaker for Château Dauzac, a Classified Margaux Growth; however, he never forgot the time that he had spent in Bourgogne.

Continued on Page 2



The 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard in the renowned Oakville appellation frames a beautiful view of Mount Saint John

OUR THREE ESTATE VINEYARDS

Luc moved to California in 1996 (for me!) and ten years later, he and I founded Morlet Family Vineyards. Over the years, we have had the opportunity to develop three amazing Cabernet properties, each with its own unique combination of micro-terroirs. The distinct soils, subsoils and microclimates are influenced by the range in elevation (122 to 575 feet in elevation) as well as by their interactions with fog systems.

'CŒUR DE VALLÉE' IN THE HEART OF THE NAPA VALLEY (122-142 FEET IN ELEVATION)

Our 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard is located in the world-renowned Oakville appellation, in the "heart" of the Napa Valley. The To Kalon Creek meanders through our 24-acre property, and the vines benefit from a continuous 2% west to east slope as well as an abundance of well-draining 40-

60% gravelly soils, derived from an alluvial fan. The majority of the property is comprised of the same Bale 103 & 104 soils as the adjacent To Kalon vineyard. This area receives morning fog from the San Pablo Bay and lingering sun in the afternoon. Just as the heat begins to peak, the cool bay breeze comes through. The resulting mild temperatures at night preserve the color and acidity of the grapes. In developing this superb estate, Luc designed six parcels to capture the six distinct micro-terroirs, four of which are planted to Cabernet Sauvignon. (The other two blocks are planted to Cabernet Franc.)

Located the furthest west on the property, Block A (Alluvial Block) is planted to Cabernet Sauvignon and consists of 50-60% gravel, resulting in the smallest clusters and berries. This section provides elegance, beautiful tannins and a delicate perfume to the finished wine.

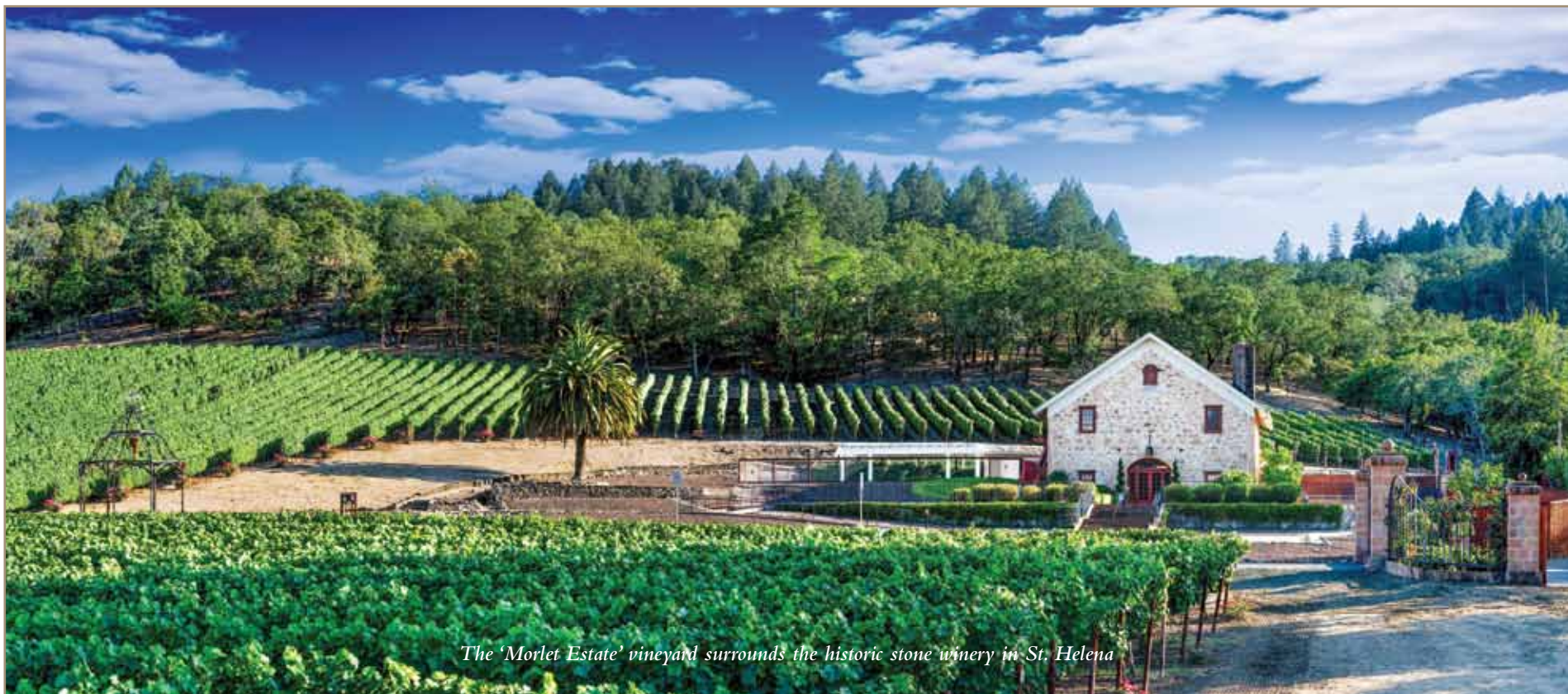
With an amazing 60% of gravel, Block B (Bridge

Block) borders the west bank of the To Kalon Creek. Transitioning to a clay loamy subsoil and shaded by trees in the late afternoon, this section is planted with Cabernet Franc, bringing a depth and complexity to the bouquet while also completing the wine's structure with more linear and age-worthy tannins.



Block C (Creek Block) is located just past the historic bridge and borders the east bank of the To Kalon Creek. With 60% of gravel

Geological soil profile of 'Cœur de Vallée' from the right bank of the To Kalon Creek, with the Cabernet Sauvignon vines above



The 'Morlet Estate' vineyard surrounds the historic stone winery in St. Helena

and loamy soil on clay loamy subsoil, this block benefits from full sun-exposure. These Cabernet Sauvignon vines add an overall intensity of red fruit and an acidic structure to the wine.

The largest of the six blocks, Block D (Doctors' Block) is located at the very center of the property. Growing in loamy topsoil and loamy subsoil with 40-60% of gravel, the Cabernet Sauvignon vines receive full sun-exposure. This fruit offers a rich, concentrated and bold character and delivers silky tannins.

The distinct combination of alluvial soils, topography and an ideal climate makes this vineyard a viticultural treasure. Jeb Dunnuck referred to our 2019 'Cœur de Vallée' Cabernet Sauvignon as "absolutely world-class with incredible tannins, flawless balance, and a blockbuster of a finish. It's classic To Kalon with its rich, powerful, yet weightless style." He praised our 2018 vintage by pro-

claiming, "While unquestionably very different wines, I kept thinking of a great 1982 Bordeaux while tasting this beauty, as those show a similar level of class, richness, and balance."

HISTORIC 'MORLET ESTATE' IN ST. HELENA (240-440 FEET IN ELEVATION)

Surrounding our historic 1880 winery in St. Helena, the 'Morlet Estate' vineyard is planted to 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. The soils represent both volcanic and alluvial origins. The 17-acre property is mapped as Hambright-Rock Outcrops. These well-draining soils were derived from weathered volcanic tuffa/ash (Hambright) mixed with uplifted river sediment and metamorphized rock (Felta). The seventeen acres offer a variety of microclimates due to variations in degrees of slope and sun exposure. Luc developed this vineyard in three main sections, each with

increasing elevations.

The "Foothills" block has an elevation of 240-250 feet and a 5% slope. Containing the most alluvial and deepest topsoil of the estate, this section leads to rounder and softer

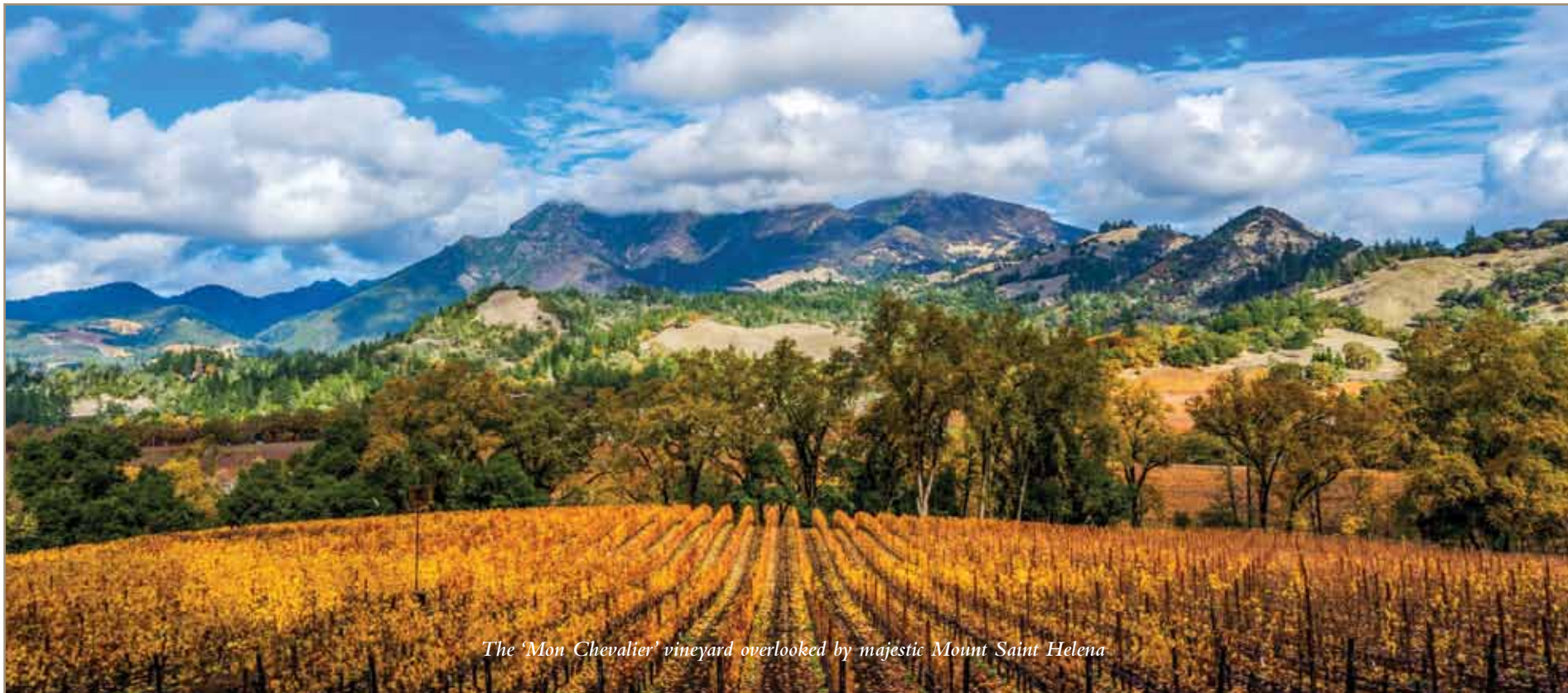


tannins. With full sun-exposure, this northeast-facing portion of the vineyard provides elegance and the *gras* (oily texture) for the wine.

The "Hillside" block has a relatively steep slope of 25-29% and rests at 260-310 feet in elevation. The topsoil here

Geological soil profile of Felta Loam at the 'Morlet Estate' vineyard in St. Helena

Continued on Page 4



The 'Mon Chevalier' vineyard overlooked by majestic Mount Saint Helena

is shallower than the Foothills section but deeper than the Ridge portion of the estate. With shade only in the very late afternoon, but with the same sun exposure as Foothills, this area of the vineyard brings concentration and freshness, providing the core of the wine.

Situated from 340–440 feet in elevation, with a northern aspect and a 22–25% slope, the “Ridge” block has only six to eight inches of topsoil. With full sun-exposure, this section brings structure and further concentration, providing the frame for the wine.

Together, these three blocks supply the fruit for our ‘Morlet Estate’ Cabernet Sauvignon. Robert Parker likened our 2013 ‘Morlet Estate’ to a first-growth Pauillac, and Antonio Galloni asserted that our 2015 “is one of the most distinctive Cabernets in Napa Valley,” further describing it as “an absolutely gorgeous wine that captures all the personality and pedigree of St. Helena’s Northern Corridor.”

MAJESTIC ‘MON CHEVALIER’ IN KNIGHTS VALLEY (490–575 FEET IN ELEVATION)

Mount Saint Helena overlooks our ‘Mon Chevalier’ vineyard in Knights Valley, which is situated from 490–575 feet in elevation. The proximity to the mountain provides great air circulation which is comprised of cool Pacific Ocean breezes through the Chalk Hill Gap as well as from the Napa Valley, along with warm and dry breezes coming from Lake County. Located between two competing fog systems of Napa and Russian River Valleys, this region is typically cooler and windier than our St. Helena and Oakville vineyards. The weather pattern produces a longer ripening season, which results in a more classic Bordeaux-like expression.

Mapped as the Red Hills Clay Loam Series, the soil on our 12-acre property is an ideal combination of silt, sand and clay. The surface horizon and upper subsoil have the

texture of loam, while the lower subsoil contains substantially more clay. This translates into an age-worthy wine with power, richness and more muscular tannins. The strong presence of the soft decomposing rhyolite (volcanic ash) provides excellent natural drainage and an enhanced sense of minerality.



This vineyard is the exclusive fruit source for our ‘Mon Chevalier’ wine which is typically comprised of the five red Bordeaux varietals: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Ver-

Geological soil profile of the ‘Mon Chevalier’ vineyard visible from Bidwell Creek, Cabernet Sauvignon vines above



The competing fog systems of the Napa and Russian River Valleys

dot. Robert Parker announced, “Mon Chevalier may be the finest wine I have ever tasted from Knights Valley. Brilliant winemaking and meticulous attention to detail in the vineyard have resulted in a prodigious effort.”

A GENTLE HAND

Luc is passionate for the expression of *terroir* and therefore applies a gentle hand to the winemaking process. Influenced by the best producers of Burgundy, even for our Bordeaux varietals, he is able to express *terroir* at the most precise level.

Luc’s non-interventionalist winemaking style actually requires a great deal of effort. He spends countless hours in the vineyards determining when each block has achieved full physiological ripeness. The grapes are then hand-picked at night in 35-pound lugs and transported to the winery exclusively in refrigerated trucks owned by Morlet Family Vineyards. Thus, freshness and aromatics are preserved.

Two-thirds of the grapes naturally ferment and macerate in small, open-top stainless steel tanks, while one-third of the grapes naturally ferment and macerate in open-top French oak puncheons. These barrels, which are almost three times the size of a normal barrel, are referred to as *demi-muids* when they are closed and used for aging and *gueule-bée* when they are open-top and used for fermentations. Luc does not utilize pump-overs which is a harsher

handling of the fruit. Rather, punchdowns in both the small stainless steel tanks and the open-top barrels are carried out by hand twice per day. This gentler process brings more aromatic complexity, aids in extraction, preserves freshness, leads to rounder and softer tannins, and results in a more *terroir*-driven wine.

Luc invented the multi-functional Gyrobox™. Rather than pumping out the wine over the course of an hour,



One-third of our red wines naturally ferment and macerate in gueule-bée barrels, which are instrumental in mapping our vineyards



The Gyrobox™ which Luc designed drains a puncheon after fermentation and maceration are completed

Continued on Page 6

Continued from Page 5

Luc's innovative design drains a puncheon in twenty minutes using only gravity. This gentler method preserves the wine's aromatics. (When tilted the opposite direction, this device also serves to remove pomace.) The wine is then racked into only the finest French barrels from artisan coopers for the remainder of the *élevage*.

As one of the rare winemakers who takes the time to taste and evaluate each barrel multiple times in order to craft the finished wines, Luc purposely maintains a small enough production across our entire portfolio to make this possible. After careful racking and blending, each of our wines is bottled unfinned and unfiltered.

VINEYARD MAPPING

With close to forty vintages under his belt and with his own zest for innovation, Luc uses centuries-old Burgundian principles while adapting his classic approach to California's natural conditions. Yet, he goes even further. When the fruit is ready, the eight members of our harvesting team hand-pick four rows. As soon as a pallet of lugs is formed, it is designated to go into one puncheon, which in turn yields exactly one barrel. Thus, Luc is able to "map" our estate vineyards, as each barrel represents a specific four-row section. He can therefore evaluate the quality of fruit coming from each micro-*terroir*.

TERROIR IN A GLASS

Luc's ability to combine traditional Burgundian methods with each of our California *terroirs* contributes to the creation of true *vins de garde* with graceful aging capability. Robert Parker declared, "Luc Morlet is not only a fabulous winemaking talent, he knows how to bring the French *savoir-faire* of complexity, elegance and precision to the ripe, concentrated, intense fruit of California." And... I couldn't agree more!

Our single vineyard wines allow Luc to showcase each unique *terroir*. Three wines come exclusively from our 'Cœur de Vallée' vineyard in Oakville. The vineyard's namesake Cabernet Sauvignon has gained worldwide recognition, as the 2019 'Cœur de Vallée' entered La Place de Bordeaux last fall. Colin Hay of The Drinks Business proclaimed, "Gloriously indulgent and screaming 'Napa'...



Luc evaluates the synergy among the Cabernet Sauvignon barrels from our three estate vineyards

there's something French about this too... there is almost a hint of Château Lascombes on the nose. Great density and very fine-grained silky tannins give this a structured, architectural, almost sculptural form." We are pleased to report that even during the very challenging 2020 vintage, Decanter Magazine bestowed 97 points on this Cabernet Sauvignon.

Also hailing from our Oakville estate are our two Cabernet Franc wines. Right out of the gate, the inaugural 2019 vintage of 'Force Tranquille' received 99 points. Lisa Perrotti-Brown wrote that it is a "stunning, elegantly-styled expression of Cabernet Franc." Our 'Force de la Nature' has truly lived up to its name, receiving 100 points for the 2013, 2015, 2016 and 2019 vintages! Robert Parker stated that it is "an ethereal wine that goes beyond just being majestic.. remarkably rich, full-bodied, but light on its feet and on the palate, the wine builds incrementally to a majestic, full-throttle, seamless work that is rather remark-

able. The amazing wine certainly proves once again Luc Morlet's incredible talents and knowledge of great vineyard sites." Lisa Perrotti-Brown noted that this wine "continues to set the bar sky-high for Napa Valley Cabernet Franc." Jeb Dunnuck concurred that our 2015 vintage is "one of the best expressions of Cabernet Franc out there - reminding me of a young 1998 Cheval Blanc" and that our 2019 vintage is "one of those wines where nothing is out of place, and it brings incredible intensity paired with a hard to describe level of finesse and elegance."

Moving a little higher up in elevation, our 'Morlet Estate' Cabernet Sauvignon from the winery estate in St. Helena has also received the perfect 100-point score. Lisa Perrotti-Brown described the 2019 vintage as "full-bodied, rich, and seductive, with firm exquisitely ripe, fine-grained tannins and seamless freshness, finishing epically long and with a myriad of perfumed layers." Just like its Oakville counterpart, the 2020 'Morlet Estate' was also awarded 97

points by Decanter.

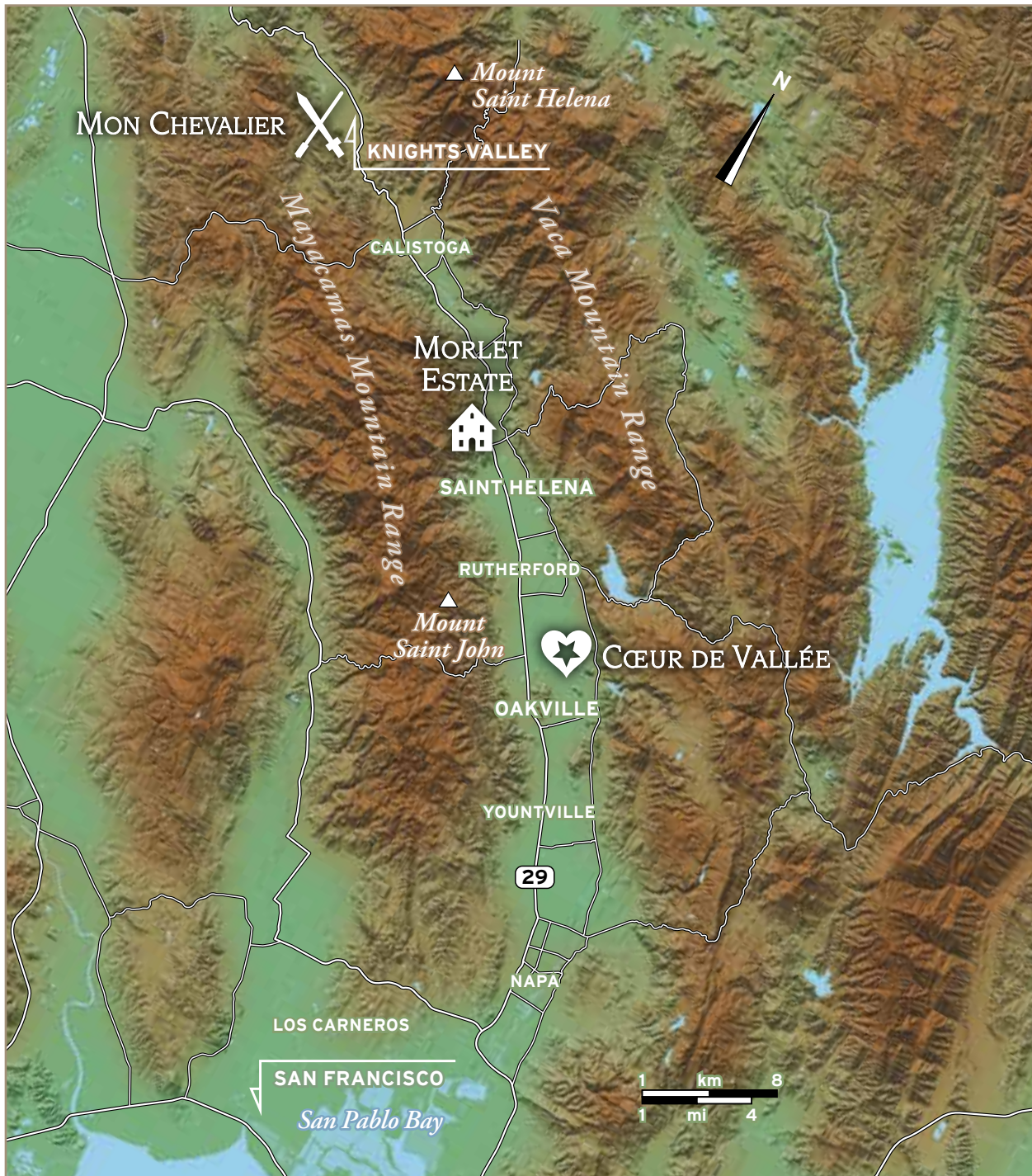
Coming from our estate vineyard with the highest in elevation is the 'Mon Chevalier' Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2018 vintage received 99 points from Jeb Dunnuck, who wrote that this wine "always seems to have one foot in Napa and one foot in Sonoma... a pure, full-bodied, multi-dimensional Cabernet that's flawlessly balanced, has ripe yet certainly present tannins, a notable sense of minerality, and a great, great finish. It's just another incredible wine from Luc Morlet."

AND NOW...BEYOND "CLIMATS"

Moving beyond the concept of *terroir*, our 'Passionné' Cabernet Sauvignon demonstrates Luc's expertise in *L'Art d'Assemblage*. Much like a composer's elaborate arrangement results in a melodic symphony, Luc has the ability to "compose" a harmonious 100% Cabernet Sauvignon by selecting and blending the barrels which best showcase the synergy among each of our three estate vineyards. He is committed to achieving the highest quality for our single vineyard wines, therefore only a small number of barrels are designated for this judicious blend. Luc named this wine in honor of me, so I am especially grateful that it has received 100 points on more than one occasion. Lisa Perrotti-Brown deemed the 2016 vintage to be perfect. "This is a staggeringly, stunning and very singular Cabernet achievement by Luc Morlet – bravo!" Jeb Dunnuck agreed, stating that it is "Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon at its finest." Also giving the 2018 vintage 100 points, Mr. Dunnuck declared that it is "pure magic in a glass and tops out on my scale... reminding me of some of the older Harlan Estate releases."

THE TRUE SENSE OF PLACE

Jeb Dunnuck has proclaimed, "Hats off to winemaker Luc Morlet, who unquestionably has a magic touch with both Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc." Mr. Dunnuck recently tasted all of our 2020 Cabernets with Luc and told him that they are "among the best of the vintage!" Luc crafts these amazing wines with the desire that they be enjoyed with family and with friends. So, while we trust that you will "taste" Luc's tremendous efforts in the vineyards and in the cellars, we hope that it will be the personal memories that you build as you enjoy our wines that leave you with your own magical sense of place. *A Votre Santé!*



Fall 2023 Release



2020

'MORLET ESTATE'

ST. HELENA, NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Our unique estate lies on the western foothills, just north of the town of St. Helena. Shallow loamy topsoil and rocky subsoil of the Hambright series, as well as full sun exposure, create superb conditions for our Cabernet Sauvignon vines. Respecting its historic 1880 charm, we restored the pre-Prohibition stone winery, which is illustrated on the label. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques and reminiscent of a true First Growth, this wine represents the precious memory of a very special place.

Winemaker Notes: *The stunning 2020 'Morlet Estate' displays a dark vibrant purple hue showcasing a complex bouquet with intense floral aromatics of rose petals and violets with notes of anise, Foin de Crau and tobacco leaf, intermixed with red Bing cherries, blackberry and a hint of graphite. Rich, concentrated, yet elegant and refined, this outstanding wine possesses a magnificent texture with an incredible sense of balance, freshness and vibrancy. The moderately high level of acidity interacts with the soft and tender tannins, maintaining proper tension, and culminating in a seamless and driven wine. With a serious nod to 2018, the 2020 'Morlet Estate' is an amazing and approachable wine upon release and will age gracefully for decades thereafter. — Luc Morlet, May 2021*



2020

'CŒUR DE VALLÉE'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Located in the world-renowned Oakville appellation, in the heart of the Napa Valley, the To Kalon Creek meanders through our property. The Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc vines benefit from the gravelly and loamy Bale soil derived from an alluvial fan in this warm yet temperate climate. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques, this wine is dedicated to Dr. Richard Johnson and Dr. Nancy Hampel who have always demonstrated their kindness of heart. It is 'Heart of the Valley' or 'Cœur de Vallée.'

Winemaker Notes: *Boasting an intense and complex bouquet of crushed strawberry, cassis, blackberry, black cherry, dark chocolate, fig leaf, mocha and tobacco leaf, the 2020 'Cœur de Vallée' is rich and concentrated, with a superb entry of red and black fruits, dark bittersweet chocolate, Kahlúa liqueur, dried lavender, potpourri and cedar cigar box. With round tannins and an overall energetic texture, this magnificent Cabernet Sauvignon finishes very long and savory. — Luc Morlet, January 2023*

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2020

'MON CHEVALIER'

KNIGHTS VALLEY
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Located on the foothills of Knights Valley, near Calistoga, our vineyard, comprised of rocky and loamy clay Red Hills soil, benefits from its proximity to Mount St. Helena, whose warm and windy climate is ideal for the long ripening of the red Bordeaux varietals: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot. Handcrafted using classical winemaking techniques, this special wine is dedicated to our son, Paul Morlet. It is 'My Knight' or 'Mon Chevalier.'

Winemaker Notes: *Intense aromas of blueberry, black cherry, red fruit compote and licorice intertwine with notes of cedar chest, scorched earth and tapenade. The mouthfeel is reminiscent of the bouquet, with intensity, depth and richness. A round and soft texture in the entry leads quickly to a remarkable concentration and a great density, where youthful tannins extend further the sensation of this "Vin de Garde." The 2020 'Mon Chevalier' is enjoyable now and will age beautifully over the next 25 years. — Luc Morlet, August 2023*



2020

'FORCE DE LA NATURE'

OAKVILLE, NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET FRANC

This wine captures the strong, rich and dense character of the Cabernet Franc grapes from our vineyard in the world-renowned Oakville appellation. Bottled only during outstanding vintages, this massive wine pays homage to Luc's great-grandfather, Gaston Morlet, who had a reputation for being a force of nature in his native Avenay-Val-d'Or. His pioneering spirit remains one of the forces behind our family's passion for making the best wines possible. Crafted from 100% Cabernet Franc grapes, this wine truly is a 'Force of Nature' or 'Force de la Nature.'

Winemaker Notes: *The 2020 'Force de la Nature' boasts a very intense and deep nose of red and black currants, toasted red pepper and mulberries intermixed with mocha, toasted dark coffee beans, pencil lead and hints of Kahlúa liquor. The full-bodied palate is rich, powerful and dense, with silky yet firm and grainy tannins and an overall ethereal quality; finishing with an epic length, the name is so well-deserved! This one-of-a-kind wine will gain to be cellared for 2-3 more years and will age beautifully over the following three decades or more. — Luc Morlet, August 2023*



2021

'COUP DE CŒUR'

SONOMA COAST
CHARDONNAY

Each vintage, the tasting of individual lots of Chardonnay reveals a strictly limited number of barrels with truly outstanding features. These selected barrels are then judiciously blended to compose this magnificent cuvée. Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, this wine represents our 'Heart's Astonishment' or 'Coup de Cœur.'

Robert Parker Wine Advocate: *The 2021 'Coup de Cœur' is another stunning effort, being simultaneously full-bodied and plush yet electric, with notes of grilled pineapple and pencil shavings underscored by vibrant acids and tremendous length on the finish. — JC, March 2023*



2021

'JOLI CŒUR'

FORT ROSS - SEAVIEW
PINOT NOIR

This Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir is made from the very best section of the 'Côteaux Nobles' vineyard, located on the eastern slope of the second ridge from the Pacific Ocean. This great and beautiful (Joli) plot is at the very center of the ranch, its heart (Cœur). Handcrafted using classical Burgundian winemaking techniques, we named this age-worthy wine after the French expression which references the intriguing and attractive character of Pinot Noir. It is the 'Charming Character' or 'Joli Cœur.'

Robert Parker Wine Advocate: *The terrific 2021 'Joli Cœur' delivers layers of ripe black cherries, balanced spice and even a slightly briary complexity. It's medium to full-bodied, beautifully balanced and textural and long on the finish. — JC, March 2023*



2019

'LES PETITS MORLET'

NAPA VALLEY
CABERNET SAUVIGNON

From a judicious blend of different barrels, this special cuvée from Napa Valley embodies the youthful character and energy of the newly planted vines and is the offspring of our mature Cabernet Sauvignon bottlings. Named in honor of our children, Paul & Claire, 'Les Petits Morlet' represents their passion, talents, optimism and future.

Jeb Dunnuck: *What functions as an entry level wine from this great estate, the 2019 'Les Petits Morlet' Cabernet Sauvignon is bright and juicy, with wild cherry, tobacco, and leafy herbs notes in a sweetly fruited, round, creamy, and undeniably delicious package. Drink it over the coming decade. — JebDunnuck.com, March 2022*



2021

'LES PETITS MORLET'

SONOMA COUNTY
SAUVIGNON BLANC

From a judicious blend of different barrels, this special cuvée from Sonoma County embodies the lively, aromatic and classic character of the Sauvignon Blanc grapes and is the offspring of our internationally acclaimed 'La Proportion Dorée.' Named in honor of our children, Paul & Claire, 'Les Petits Morlet' Blanc represents their enthusiasm, skills and cheerfulness.

Robert Parker Wine Advocate: *Like previous vintages, the 2021 'Les Petits Morlet' Sauvignon Blanc is approximately 85-15 Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon that was barrel fermented in older oak. This vintage shows ample richness and texture on the palate, allied to intense, citrusy aromas and flavors, culminating in a zippy, lime-zest finish. — JC, March 2023*

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