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CONTINUUM ESTATE

Tim Mondavi's Bordeaux blend hasn't missed a beat in recent vintages, and yet the wine has been totally transformed in just the past few years. As recently as 2007, it was made from 80% To Kalon fruit and just 20% from his new estate on Pritchard Hill. In 2008, his estate vines, planted in iron-rich volcanic soil, comprised 70% of the blend, and in 2009 79%. The percentage of cabernet sauvignon has also risen steadily, reaching 75% in the 2009 vintage. Yields rarely surpass two tons per acre on this property. Mondavi does a strict sorting of his fruit, vinifies in oak fermenters with a maceration lasting about 35 days, and does some batonnage in barrel. Mondavi told me he harvested quickly in dry, windy conditions in 2008. The 2009 harvest was longer, and there was "less collapse of fruit," yielding a more floral wine. He summed up: "2008 has more nerve while 2009 is more opulent."



2008 PROPRIETARY RED WINE NAPA VALLEY (\$150)

(71% cabernet sauvignon, 17% cabernet franc, 7% petit verdot and 5% merlot)

Good full medium ruby. Aromas of dark berries, dark chocolate and graphite minerality, lifted by a whiff of orange peel; vibrant and cool but not green. Large-scaled and voluptuous yet light on its feet, with lovely floral perfume to the flavors of black cherry, minerals and sexy caramel oak. This very young and broad wine finishes with well-buffered ripe tannins, captivating sweetness and superb aromatic persistence. Seems every bit as strong as the 2007 bottling, and perhaps even more refined. **RATING | 95**

2009 PROPRIETARY RED WINE NAPA VALLEY

(76% cabernet sauvignon, 14% cabernet franc, 8% petit verdot and 2% merlot)

Bright, deep ruby. Very tight nose hints at black licorice, bitter chocolate, menthol and flowers. Wonderfully dense and rich in the mouth, but with a medicinal reserve keeping the wine's fruit under wraps today. A graphite edge and firm tannins from the petit verdot are currently hardening the wine. This still needs more euvage and will likely require a minimum of several years of aging upon release. Hard to assess today but long on potential. **RATING | 92-95**