

Forbes

America's Top Red Wine, According To The Decanter World Wine Awards



The Decanter World Wine Awards is among the most prestigious and largest wine competitions in the world. The 2024 judging saw more than 18,000 wines submitted. Just .64%, only 117 of these entries were recognized with Platinum medals as among the world's best. Among the more than 1,000 American entries, only 106 medaled, and only two took Platinum medals. The sole North American producer to claim the honors for the top red wine varietal blend, with a score of 97/100, is Trefethen Family Vineyards.

Trefethen Family Vineyards is a prominent and historic winery located in the Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley, California. Established in 1968 by Eugene and Catherine Trefethen, the winery has remained family-owned and operated, now in its third generation, embodying a deep commitment to quality, sustainability, and the expression of Napa Valley's terroir.

The property had a winemaking history dating back to the late 19th century. The Trefethen restored the original 19th-century winery building and replanted the vineyards. They focused on creating estate-grown wines that showcased the unique characteristics of their land.

The winery adheres to an “estate-grown philosophy” – all their wines are made from grapes grown on their property. This approach ensures full control over the quality and consistency of their wines. The vineyards are farmed sustainably, with a focus on environmental stewardship, including water conservation, soil health, and biodiversity.

Located in the heart of Napa Valley, the Oak Knoll District is known for its moderate climate, which is ideal for growing a wide range of grape varieties. The district’s diverse soils contribute to the complexity and depth of Trefethen’s wines.

Dragon’s Tooth is a signature red blend inspired by Trefethen Family Vineyard’s commitment to producing bold and distinctive wines. Named after the volcanic rocks found in the vineyard, which resemble dragon’s teeth, this wine is crafted to reflect the strength and uniqueness of its Oak Knoll volcanic soil terroir.

The wine is typically a blend of Malbec, Petit Verdot, and Cabernet Sauvignon. The 2021 vintage was 49% Malbec, 37% Petit Verdot, and 14% Cabernet Sauvignon. The exact proportions may vary slightly between vintages, but the focus remains on creating a robust and balanced wine.

These three varietals blend well together. Malbec adds deep color, ripe plum and blackberry flavors, and soft tannins. Petit Verdot contributes intense color, floral notes, robust tannins, and structure. While Cabernet Sauvignon provides backbone, structure, and complexity with flavors of blackcurrant, cedar, and spice. Blends of Malbec, Petit Verdot, and Cabernet Sauvignon showcase the versatility and complementary characteristics of these grape varieties. Regions like Bordeaux, Napa Valley, Mendoza, Cahors, South Australia, Colchagua Valley, and Tuscany are renowned for their ability to craft exceptional wines that highlight the best qualities of these varietals, offering wine enthusiasts a diverse range of flavors and styles to explore. Outside of Argentina and to some extent Cahors, however, it is unusual to find blends that feature such a high percentage of Malbec.



The wine exhibits a deep, dark ruby color, with a slight purple hue.

On the nose, there is a profound aroma of ripe blackberries, dark cherries, and plums. There are also hints of violets, cocoa, and a touch of vanilla and spice from the oak aging.

On the palate, Dragon's Tooth is a dense, full-bodied and well-structured wine. The initial burst of dark fruit flavors of blackberry and black cherry are followed by layers of dark chocolate, espresso, and a subtle, dusty minerality. The tannins are firm yet velvety and well-ripened, giving the wine a noticeable backbone.

The finish is long and smooth, with lingering notes of dark fruit, spice, and a hint of smokiness. Although readily drinkable now, the wine's structure and fruit forward character make it an ideal candidate for extended aging. At an average retail price of \$45, it also represents excellent value.

The Decanted World Wine Awards Judging Panel described the wine as featuring:

"Intrepid aromas of richly peppered blue and black fruit with a sheen of minty refreshment. Structured, polished and densely textured, with indulgent tannins and a penetrating bead of fine acidity. Built for the long haul."

Trefethen Family Vineyards is a testament to the enduring legacy and commitment to quality in Napa Valley winemaking. Their dedication to sustainable practices and estate-grown wines is evident in the character and complexity of their offerings. Dragon's Tooth is a standout example of their craft, showcasing the bold and unique qualities of their vineyard's terroir. Whether enjoyed now or cellared for future enjoyment, Dragon's Tooth offers a rich and rewarding wine experience.