



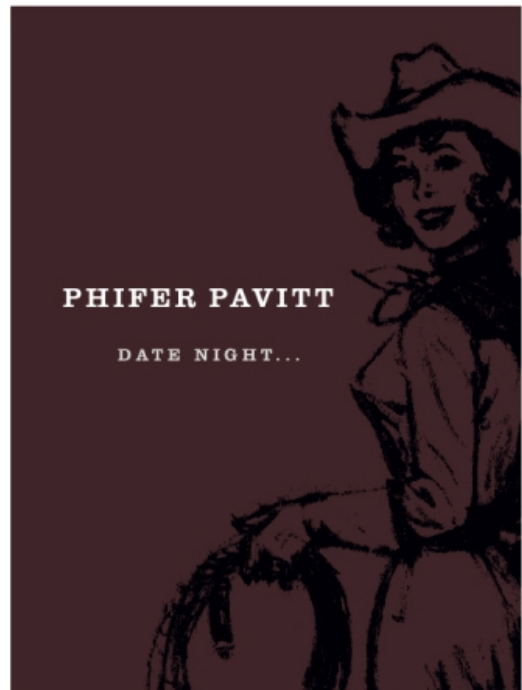
Damnit! Shoulda Written about Phifer Pavitt Date Night 2007 Last Year!

Posted by Fredric Koepfel

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But, here it is, almost the middle of 2012 and I'm finally getting down to it.

As happened with the renditions of Date Night for 2006 and its initial release of 2005, I was knocked out by this wine, the 2007, an example of the purity and intensity of which Napa Valley cabernet sauvignon is capable when treated with respect and thoughtfulness. Not general Napa Valley, but for the Phifer Pavitt cabernets a specific site, the all-organic Temple Family Vineyards in Pope Valley, a small and lightly populated area — but not yet a legally recognized American Viticultural Area — north of Howell Mountain in the extreme northeast region of Napa Valley. (Napa Valley now contains 16 sub-appellations or AVAs; how long before not an acre of valley floor or mountainside does not carry a federally approved title?) Though shoe-horned into its famous neighbors, as far as the federal viticultural boundaries are concerned, geographically, Pope Valley faces the opposite direction, draining away to the east and Lake Berryessa (motto: "I'm the second-largest artificial lake in California!"). Pope Valley is home to the Dollarhide Ranch, which supplies St. Supery with cabernet sauvignon and sauvignon blanc grapes, and to vineyards for such producers as Cosentino, Peju, Rutherford Hill, Kathryn Hall and others. The Phifer Pavitt winery, owned by Shane Pavitt and Suzanne Phifer Pavitt, is on the Silverado Trail near Calistoga. Winemaker is Ted Osborne.



The Phifer Pavitt Date Night Cabernet Sauvignon 2007, Napa Valley, contains three percent petit verdot grapes. Fermentation starts with wild yeasts; the wine aged 17 months in French oak barrels, 70 percent new. Wonderful tone and presence here, perfect balance and integration of power and elegance. Smoky aromas of cassis,

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PHIFER PAVITT
Date Night
Napa Valley

black cherries, graphite and blueberry tart are permeated by slightly astringent notes of ancho chili and cocoa powder, then clean earthy peat and loam and deep bass tones of iodine and iron. The intensity, the concentration of elements continue on the palate, ornamented by layers of spicy but never toasty oak that lend suavity and suppleness to the wine and buttressed by broad and deep dimensions of dense, chewy but never ponderous tannins. I said, however, that power *and* elegance are the hallmarks of this wine, and the elegance makes itself known through a sense of winsome detail, like traces of lavender, licorice and potpourri running through the black and blue fruit flavors, and through a quality of charm and finesse that feels almost paradoxical, a sense of tact and decorum, almost delicacy in the presentation. The finish, though, brings up every aspect of seriousness, cementing the oak and tannin and vibrant acidity into a long, dry fairly austere entity touched with underbrush, walnut shell and dried porcini. 14.8 percent alcohol. Production was 372 cases. Drink now — with a medium rare steak, please — through 2020 to '22. Exceptional. About \$75.

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