

Wine Spectator

A photograph of Tom Seaver, a middle-aged man with grey hair, smiling and standing in a vineyard. He is wearing a blue and white plaid button-down shirt and blue jeans with a black belt. He is holding a bunch of dark grapes in his right hand and leaning his left arm on a rusty metal post. The background shows green grapevines and a clear blue sky.

www.winespectator.com

2010 CALIFORNIA CABERNET

A CLASSIC VINTAGE
FOR THE CELLAR

**TOM SEAVER
MAKES ALL-STAR
CABERNET ON
DIAMOND MOUNTAIN**

**POLISHED WHITES
FROM ALSACE**

**A MENU MATCHED
WITH RIESLING**

**WINE STARS
FROM AUSTRIA,
BORDEAUX,
BURGUNDY**

THE NEW & THE NOTEWORTHY

Six producers taking Cabernet in new directions

CARTE BLANCHE

A CLEAN SLATE IN CALIFORNIA

Few vintners grew up drinking classified-growth Bordeaux with dinner, but for Nicholas Allen it was a family tradition. His great-grandfather, Clarence Dillon, purchased Château Haut-Brion in 1935, launching a business that would later own neighboring Château La Mission Haut-Brion as well. Raised on his family's cattle farm in Bedminster, N.J., Allen learned about wine at his grandmother's table, where talk often turned to vineyards and growing conditions.

Allen, 40, spent a decade in the real estate industry before turning to wine, launching his California label, Carte Blanche, in 2007. The name refers to his decision to step away from his family's legacy in Bordeaux. "It was a pretty nerve-wracking startup," admits Allen. "I'm the only one [of my family] to venture out on my own on U.S. soil."

With no formal winemaking experience, Allen turned to vintner Luc Morlet, who is best known for his work at Peter Michael and Morlet Family Vineyards. "We are very much in tune," explains Allen. "I had already tasted his wines and followed his career for a while." Morlet's connections also gave him access to top vineyards in Napa and Sonoma.

Allen doesn't own any vineyards; instead, he leases the properties he sources, which gives him more flexibility when putting together the final blends. The 2010 Cabernet Sauvignon is a blend of grapes from Beckstoffer Missouri Hopper Vineyard, in Oakville, and Blossom Creek Vineyard (formerly called McBride), in Calistoga. In addition to Cabernet, Allen makes a Merlot blend, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Rhône-style wines, with a total production of 4,000 cases.

—Augustus Weed

91 CARTE BLANCHE Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley 2010 **\$125** 400 cases

ENTRE NOUS

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WINE

After years of working as a clinical psychologist at the California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco, Kristine Ashe, 46, decided to pursue her dream of growing grapes. She had gained an appreciation for wine from her father, who regularly opened bottles at meals, and her interest in agriculture blossomed while taking enology classes at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo.

In 2003, Ashe purchased a 26-acre vineyard along Highway 29 in Oakville that was planted to Bordeaux varieties. She turned to friend and viticulturist David Abreu to renovate the property and convert it to biodynamic farming. Ashe tried to split her time between the vineyard and her career, but found it too taxing. "I tried to do it as a hobby, but it wasn't fulfilling or satisfying that way," she says. The first time she applied for a sabbatical, she was turned down, but when she applied again, her company said yes. She never looked back.

Ashe's initial goal was to be a farmer growing high quality grapes to sell to top producers, and the majority of her fruit still goes to clients such as Araujo and Darioush. Yet along the way, Abreu taught Ashe how to make wine. She started producing Cabernet for her friends and family, and eventually decided to create her own label. During that



Nicholas Allen of Carte Blanche



Entre Nous' Kristine Ashe, with son Max

time, she met vintner Philippe Melka, who became her winemaker, producing the wines at Caldwell Vineyard.

Ashe employs labor-intensive practices in her vineyard, such as making multiple passes to drop unripe clusters, and hand-destemming all of the grapes to cull shot berries, which she says can impart a bitter taste in the wines.

—A.W.

94 ENTRE NOUS Cabernet Sauvignon Oakville 2010 **\$155** 225 cases

HEROLD

AN OLD HAND'S NEW TRICKS

The second act of winemaker Mark Herold's career began in 2007, when he sold Merus, the Napa label he and his ex-wife, Erika Gottl, founded in 1998. After the sale of Merus, he launched a new company, Mark Herold Wines, while also making Cabernet Sauvignon for other producers. The deal with Foley Family Wines to buy Merus precluded