



R.H. Drexel: Getting Lost and Found Inside Premiere Napa Valley



BY **R.H. DREXEL** | MARCH 2, 2024



On a bright, clear February morning, I hop on a shuttle bus at Charles Krug Winery, located off the Hwy. 29 corridor just outside of St. Helena, California. I'm surrounded by other lanyard-wearing, bleary eyed members of the wine trade. In a few moments, we'll be dropped off across the way at the Culinary Institute of America's Greystone Campus, where we'll be attending the 28th annual Premiere Napa Valley, the most high-profile annual business event for people who buy and sell Napa Valley wines. This year, registered attendees are arriving from 29 different states and 10 nations.

It's 9:00 AM, and most of us have already been here for a few days, attending private break-away events at some 35 different winery locations. Premiere Napa Valley week culminates with the futures tasting we're all headed to. Futures are wine lots that have not yet been bottled. There will be a live auction the following morning, during which bidders will vie for rare, one-off bottlings made solely for Premiere Napa Valley. Over 300 producers participate and all the proceeds from PNV go to programs that fulfill the Napa Valley Vintners' mission to promote, protect, and enhance the Napa Valley.



On offer to taste as futures this morning will be 124 Cabernet Sauvignons, seven Cabernet Francs, four Merlots, three Pinot Noirs, four Sauvignon Blancs, three Chardonnays, one each of Chenin Blanc, Rose, Petite Sirah, Riesling, and Zinfandel, a few sparkling wines, and 14 red blends. Lots are offered in increments of 5, 10 or 20 cases. Retailers and restaurateurs who successfully bid add these wines to their shelves and lists. Donning special labels and elevated prices, these wines are often heavily allocated. Most of the Cabernet Sauvignons are from the 2022 vintage. The three vintages highlighted as futures are 2021, 2022, and 2023.

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Winemaker Francoise Peschon has a way with Sauvignon Blanc. One of the highlights of PNV week for me is attending the break-out Sauvignon Blanc tasting at PRESS restaurant, during which a ten-year vertical of Sauvignon Blancs (2013 to 2023), made by Peschon for **Accendo**, is poured for guests. Accendo's 2023 Sauvignon Blanc, offered at the futures tasting and organically and biodynamically farmed, is breathtaking.

