

2004 Saxon Brown, Napa Valley, Cabernet Sauvignon

Vineyard:

If you are looking for the Saxon Brown vineyard, you will be searching far and wide, as maker Jeff Gaffner actually sourced select grapes for this fresh Cabernet from various Napa Valley wineries, contributing to its fine blend. A consulting winemaker, Gaffner describes early morning picking excursions followed by a rush to the winery by 10 a.m., for all things grape stemming and soaking. Think back to dark caverns as you envision the juices being soaked in burgundy barrels for three years, and another two in bottles for what Gaffner calls quite possibly his favorite Cabernet to date.

Growing Season:

The 2004 Napa Valley harvest season experienced early bud break in August thanks to Mother Nature, a weather wonder which worked out quite nicely since heavy rains would soon cover the region. The overwhelming consensus for the year was a fast season with vibrant colors and aromas, with early sugar development eventually keeping pace with accompanying acids. Overall, the year yielded a smaller crop presentation than typical, but very good quality which this wine maker took advantage of.

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At \$75, the Cabernet is for the appreciative palate with absorbent rich, bold, and spicy aromas. Patience is the key to this rich wine which mimics warm chocolate cake richness or the smoky hints of sweet pipe tobacco and sugary coffee. Anticipate an hour wait as you feign casualness while the wine decanters for smooth, silky tasting. Meanwhile impress your guests with its swirling complexity that fulfills goblets all around.

Known for his role at Chateau St. Jean, Gaffner was part of the wine team responsible for the award winning 1996 Cinq Cepages, "Spectator Magazine's" 1999 Wine of the Year. In 1997, Gaffner developed the Saxon Brown brand to portray his favorite vineyard sites and aptly named it after the heroine from Jack London's Valley of the Moon known for its Sonoma history. This particular Cabernet follows upon Gaffner's rich experience in small vineyard creations.