



*Robert Parker*  
Wine Advocate

## The Independent Consumer's Bimonthly Guide to Fine Wine

### RATING SYSTEM

Robert Parker's rating system employs a 50-100 point quality scale. It is my belief that the various twenty (20) point rating systems do not provide enough flexibility and often result in compressed and inflated wine ratings. THE WINE ADVOCATE takes a hard, very critical look at wine, since I would prefer to underestimate the wine's quality than to overestimate it. The numerical ratings are utilized only to enhance and complement the thorough tasting notes, which are my primary means of communicating my judgments to you.

<b>96-100</b>	An <b>extraordinary</b> wine of profound and complex character displaying all the attributes expected of a classic wine of its variety. Wines of this caliber are worth a special effort to find, purchase, and consume.
<b>90-95</b>	An <b>outstanding</b> wine of exceptional complexity and character. In short, these are terrific wines.
<b>80-89</b>	A <b>barely above average to very good</b> wine displaying various degrees of finesse and flavor as well as character with no noticeable flaws.
<b>70-79</b>	An <b>average</b> wine with little distinction except that it is soundly made. In essence, a straightforward, innocuous wine.
<b>60-69</b>	A <b>below average</b> wine containing noticeable deficiencies, such as excessive acidity and/or tannin, an absence of flavor, or possibly dirty aromas or flavors.
<b>50-59</b>	A wine deemed to be unacceptable.

BOND ESTATE	2008	MATRIARCH	NAPA VALLEY	(\$85.00)	RED	89
BOND ESTATE	2009	MATRIARCH	NAPA VALLEY	(not yet determined)	RED	91
BOND ESTATE	2008	MELBURY	NAPA VALLEY	(\$275.00)	RED	(91-93)
BOND ESTATE	2009	MELBURY	NAPA VALLEY	(not yet determined)	RED	(93-95)
BOND ESTATE	2008	QUELLA	SPRING VLY./HOWELL MTN.	(\$275.00)	RED	93
BOND ESTATE	2009	QUELLA	SPRING VLY./HOWELL MTN.	(not yet determined)	RED	(94-96)
BOND ESTATE	2008	ST. EDEN	OAKVILLE	(\$275.00)	RED	94
BOND ESTATE	2009	ST. EDEN	OAKVILLE	(not yet determined)	RED	(93-95)
BOND ESTATE	2008	VECINA	OAKVILLE	(\$275.00)	RED	95
BOND ESTATE	2009	VECINA	OAKVILLE	(not yet determined)	RED	(94-96)
BOND ESTATE	2008	PLURIBUS	SPRING MOUNTAIN	(\$275.00)	RED	95
BOND ESTATE	2009	PLURIBUS	SPRING MOUNTAIN	(not yet determined)	RED	(95-97)

Bill Harlan and his team make the BOND wines through long-term lease arrangements they hold with vineyard owners in a handful of top hillside sites in Napa Valley. The Melbury, Quella and Vecina vineyards are planted with 100% Cabernet Sauvignon. The St. Eden vineyard includes 5% Cabernet Franc that was recently grafted onto Merlot rootstocks, while the Pluribus vineyard includes 13% Merlot and 11% Cabernet Franc. Overall, the 2008s are less consistent than the 2009s, which are shaping up to be brilliant. I also tasted a number of 2010s from barrel with Bill Harlan and winemakers Bob Levy and Corey Empting that were striking for their purity, depth and class.

The **2008 Matriarch** shows lovely focus in an understated expression of dark red fruit. Flowers, spices, licorice and tobacco are nicely layered into the finish. Overall, the 2008 comes across as a bit compact. Anticipated maturity: 2012-2018. The **2009 Matriarch** opens with a burst of dark red fruit, flowers, licorice and tobacco. It boasts remarkable inner perfume, soft, silky tannins and fabulous overall balance. I especially like the way the 2009 fleshes out on the finish. The depth and roundness of the fruit makes the 2009 very appealing, even at this young stage. Anticipated maturity: 2013-2019. The **2008 Melbury** flows across the palate with layers of dark sensual fruit, spices, licorice, leather and tobacco. Clean veins of minerality frame the fruit beautifully through to the finish. Floral notes add an element of brightness on the close. Anticipated maturity: 2013-2023. The **2009 Melbury** is a gorgeous, totally seamless wine. Ripe red fruit, flowers, spices and tobacco are some of the notes that flesh out in this rich, textured wine. The 2009 displays remarkable volume and tons of finesse. Here, too, I especially like the way the wine fleshes out on the finish. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2024. The **2008 Quella** is a dark, brooding wine loaded with super-ripe dark black fruit, smoke, tar and licorice. It is a seriously intense wine that will require bottle age. This is an especially authoritative wine from Bond. Anticipated maturity: 2014-2028. The **2009 Quella** is a big, big wine. Layers of plush, inviting dark fruit saturate the palate. The 2009 possesses remarkable depth and sheer purity from start to finish. Silky, finessed

tannins frame the exceptionally polished, refined finish. This is a superb, intense Quella that should drink beautifully for a number of years. Anticipated maturity: 2017-2029. The **2008 St. Eden** is one of the richest, fleshiest and best-balanced of the 2008s in the Bond portfolio. Dark red fruit, flowers, minerals and spices are some of the notes that take shape in the glass. The 2008 has the mid-palate pliancy that is less evident in some of the other 2008s here. There is plenty of focus as well, especially on the long, saline finish. Tar, smoke and licorice add the final notes of complexity. Anticipated maturity: 2018-2028. The **2009 St. Eden** is more refined than the 2008, but is also remarkably weightless and understated. Dark red fruit, tobacco, flowers and spices are some of the notes that are layered into the textured, pretty finish. There is substantial weight in the glass. Silky, polished tannins frame the finish. Anticipated maturity: 2017-2029. The **2008 Vecina** is a huge, strapping wine bursting with dark fruit, leather, licorice, smoke, minerals and tar. It possesses striking mid-palate depth and more than enough fruit to stand up to the firm, imposing tannins. Iron, graphite, smoke and minerals are layered into the dark, brooding finish. This is an impressive showing. Anticipated maturity: 2015-2025. The **2009 Vecina** emerges from the glass with dark red fruit, red berries, mint and flowers. It is fascinating to taste the 2009 next to the 2008, as it is a brighter, more floral wine, even though it has plenty of muscle and sheer size. The combination of elegance and power is striking. Anticipated maturity: 2019-2029. The **2008 Pluribus** is a gorgeous wine laced with black fruit, menthol, minerals, spices and licorice. It shows fabulous density and richness through to the finish. This is a very typical Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon. Anticipated maturity: 2015-2025. The **2009 Pluribus** wafts from the glass with an intriguing *mélange* of dark red fruit, savory herbs, leather and tobacco, all of which come together beautifully. This is a stunning wine graced with exquisite class and finesse. It is sweet, silky and totally beguiling from start to finish. Anticipated maturity: 2017-2029. Tel. (707) 944-1441