

Even after more than 30 years in the wine business, I still get chills when a new winery catches my attention. In the case of Patland Vineyards, I noticed that the winemaker was Jay Buoncristiani – one of Napa’s superstars. Then I noticed the vintage – the near-perfect 2007. And finally, the source of the grapes – Stagecoach Vineyard. The Patlands, I figured, must be shooting for the moon. I was right.

In just 16 years, Stagecoach has become one of the most famous and respected vineyards in Napa Valley. The owners have earned the right to be picky about who puts their name on a label. And here is the first vintage of Patland sporting the prestigious Stagecoach name – a good sign.

Napa attracts dreamers like flames attract moths. Only a few succeed in the long run, but don’t bet against the Patlands. Henry Patland emigrated with his family from the Ukraine in the late 1970s as a young boy. Success in the technology industry allowed Henry and his wife, Olga, to follow their long-held dream of owning an estate in Napa Valley and making bold, elegant, classic reds.

I first tried this Cab at an industry tasting, an event with more than 300 wineries present. I was blown away. Don’t let that Wine Spectator 89 rating fool you. This is way better wine than that score would lead you to believe.

### **Tasting Note**

When I first sniffed the Patland, the hair on the back of my neck stood up. It is simply classic Napa Valley Cabernet, classic Stagecoach Vineyard. Beautiful aromas of black currants and cassis – edged with a whisper of sage and tobacco and elegant cedar notes – spoke to the concentration, power and great finesse that you’ll find in the best Cabernets. I’d had the common sense to decant the wine before dinner, and I’m sure that enhanced its initial impression. On the palate, the Stagecoach profile shines with abundant black fruit, sweet oak and a bit of herbal character. The wine is astutely balanced and has genuine beauty, which is always about restraint.

In its youth, I paired it with a simple filet mignon wrapped in bacon. As it gets older, I think I’d drink it with roast lamb. I’ve noted this for the Patland bottles in my cellar.