

Built to Impress

IN TERMS OF QUALITY AND VALUE, CALIFORNIA'S JMC LUXURY PORTFOLIO CHECKS OFF ALL THE BOXES

by Chris Sawyer

With a record number of Napa Valley wines now retailing for more than \$100 a pop, it's a pleasant surprise when you come across a series of small-lot, artisan expressions that fall into the more user-friendly range of \$35–\$50 per bottle.

Emerging on the scene over the past five years, three impressive brands rising to this occasion are part of the JMC Luxury Portfolio, a joint project started by fifth-generation winemaker Paul Scotto; his brother Anthony Scotto III, of the Lodi-based Scotto Family Cellars; and late wine-country pioneer John McClelland.

The brothers established their roots in the industry at an early age while growing up across the street from their grandparents' winery in Livermore Valley. Paul then honed his winemaking skills at the University of California, Davis, as Anthony developed a successful series of Scotto labels in Lodi and Amador County in the late 1990s.

After Paul reunited with the family business in 2009 as Director of Winemaking, the brothers joined forces with McClelland, who used the extensive connections he'd honed while working with reputable brands like Robert Mondavi, Charles Krug, Almaden, and Geysler Peak to launch J. McClelland Cellars in Napa Valley in



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JMC Luxury Portfolio CEO Anthony Scotto III, Winemaker Paul Scotto, late co-founder John McClelland, and Winemaker Mitch Cosentino.

2011. This varietally driven brand crafts high-quality offerings of Chardonnay, Merlot, and Cabernet Sauvignon as well as a few additional releases, which included separate bottlings of Malbec and Petit Verdot in 2014.

The following year, they hired well-respected Napa Valley winemaker Mitch Cosentino as a consultant. Paul and Cosentino now collaborate on an

annual release modeled after the classic Meritage blend, with a Cabernet core supplemented by smaller amounts of Merlot and Cabernet Franc. "With respect to the Old World style, our goal is to take a hands-on approach of working with high-class fruit to capture the balance of ripeness, concentration, and purity of flavors in the finished wine," Cosentino says.

To preserve the history of the region, The Lost Chapters brand focuses on a wider range of varieties like Cabernet Franc, Pinot Noir, Charbono, and Zinfandel, which are selected from individual lots in esteemed vineyards and bottled in small 200-case increments each vintage. "We can take the things that we learned from producing great value wines in Lodi and apply it to the high-quality grapes we work with in Napa Valley to make wines with high levels of depth and quality that far exceed the price," Anthony says. ■■



After converting the old Moss Creek Winery in eastern Napa County to Steele Canyon Cellars, the JMC Luxury team launched its second brand, 50 Harvests. Made with stellar fruit from the 2012 vintage and named to commemorate the Scotto family's inaugural California releases in 1963, the wine debuted in 2013.



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