

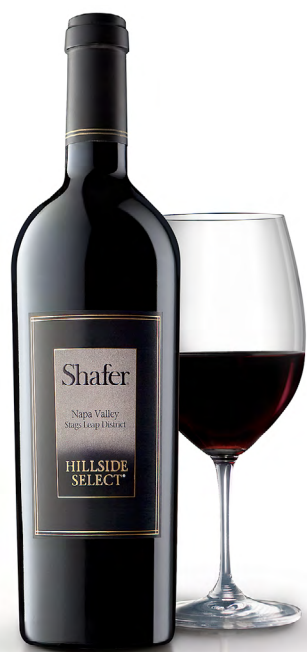


THE HILLSIDE SELECT® STORY

ELEGANT CABERNET SAUVIGNON FLAVORS FROM RUGGED VINEYARD SITE

Sheer rock walls tower along the eastern-boundary of Shafer's hillside estate vineyards, reflecting the warming rays of the afternoon sun and channeling cool breezes off the bay. These are the Stags Leap palisades from which this small appellation takes its name. They create a craggy amphitheater that is home to Shafer Vineyards and stand as a silent testament to the eons-old history of the place.

On this remote site Cabernet Sauvignon vines prod their roots through thin, volcanic soil before hitting weathered bedrock below. Thanks to scant nutrients and soil moisture the yields are meager; the berries at harvest time are small, about the size of blueberries. They're dark and intensely flavored.



Shafer's property has been the site of vineyard cultivation since the 1880s, but it wasn't until the 1970s when John Shafer came to Napa Valley looking for a hillside site, that vines were planted on these rock-choked slopes.

Napa Valley viticulture was a different world in the 1970s, when Shafer acquired the neglected vineyards planted 50 years earlier by a farmer named Batista Scansi. White varietals sometimes grew side by side with red, modern trellising was unknown, and existing vineyards had been planted with little regard to what is now known about the relationship between terroir and varietal. On the Shafer property, vine spacing of the original hillside vineyard was on an 8 x 8 foot grid and cross cultivation by tractor proved perilous, as the machine side-slipped down the rocky slope.

Planting the steep upper vineyard called for dynamite to uproot truck-sized boulders and clear the land for planting, actions that earned the precipitous vineyard block its name of "John's Folly." Today, John's Folly is the grand-dad of the hillside Cabernet blocks, an important component of Hillside Select Cabernet. It comes as no surprise that many of the vineyard blocks bear the names

of favorite ski runs, one of them Sunspot, named after a challenging slope in Alta, Utah.

Made from a single varietal, 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, Hillside Select gains complexity from the variety of clones and rootstocks planted in the vineyards, each of which adds its individual characteristics to the finished wine.

The exposure of each vineyard block is also part of the complexity equation. Upper and Lower Sunspot blocks, for example, obtain maximum sunlight because they face southwest, ideal in most vintages because the vines receive the last warming rays of the setting sun, but requiring close monitoring for sunburn if a heat spike occurs. Other blocks like John's Folly, Rattler and Lookout have a southern exposure and are shaded by the contours of the hills earlier in the evening, ripening slowly and evenly, ensuring long hang time.

The range of vineyard exposures and diversity of clones, each ripening on a slightly different schedule, ensure that Hillside Select will be produced each year regardless of the vagaries of the weather, although quantities will vary by vintage.

Until recent years, a well-tended vineyard was notable for its neatness: the earth cleared of any other greenery that might compete with the vines. Along with the risk of toxicity to humans and other life forms, the herbicides used left the vines as even greater targets to voracious insects. Fighting these pests took another layer of chemical treatment. And the meager soil of hillside vineyards was vulnerable to loss from winter runoff, depleting an already precious resource.