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EBC Barrel Tasting at Medlock Ames

By Heather Burton

When I first started at Barrel Builders over 2 years ago I was under the impression, along with many others, that French oak was the standard and American oak was one dimensional. Driven by the false mentality that if something cost more than it must be better, right? Wrong. The barrel hierarchy I had created in my mind was first challenged when I tried a Silver Oak Cab done in American Oak. Another crack in the foundation of said hierarchy was when I tried the DeWitt Family Cab that recently won Gold at the Chronicle this year (done in EBC Kentucky oak). The final nail was hammered in the coffin when I did a DeWitt Cab barrel tasting at Medlock Ames, where they do custom crush. The eulogy of my preconceived notions of barrel superiority was handed down by the Assistant Winemaker at Medlock Ames, Eiji Akaboshi.



To back it up a bit, this all started when Dave (our sales guy) invited me to join him for the barrel tasting at Medlock Ames to which of course I agreed. The day of the tasting my phone navigation proceeded to send me to not one but two wrong locations, wonders of technology. Luckily, I managed to make it to the appointment on time. The winery facility is a testament to functionality but the panoramic view is a show stopper. You're surrounded by valley oaks, rolling green hills, and





duck filled ponds that could be straight out of a Disney movie. If you take a look at the Medlock Ames website you'll see that they purposefully didn't plant the entire property. "Only 55 of our 338 acres are farmed, we chose to leave the majority of land in a natural state - reserving the majority of our acreage for oaks and wildflowers, not vines". On top of that they kept wildlife corridors through the

vineyard to let animal pass safely. My kinda winery.

After Eiji gave us a tour of the property we headed down to the barrel room below the winery. Eiji then proceeded to climb up a ladder to the top of the barrel rack whilst holding a wine thief and a glass and somehow managing to make it look easy, he'd done this before a time or two.

The first tasting we did of the 2015 DeWitt cab was a neutral EBC barrel; nice aromatics of mild smoke and spice with good barrel integration but not over powering. Next we came to my personal favorite, the new EBC barrel with a medium toast and toasted heads. Comparing it to the neutral, this one was much more complex and layered but still delicate with



spice, anise, and cinnamon notes. My favorite aspect of this wine was how it travel across the palate and blossomed in the middle finishing with round approachable tannins. Up next was the heavy toast EBC barrel; the big black fruit on the nose was awesome while the tannins on the back of the palate were a bit abrasive but you could tell would round out with some more time.

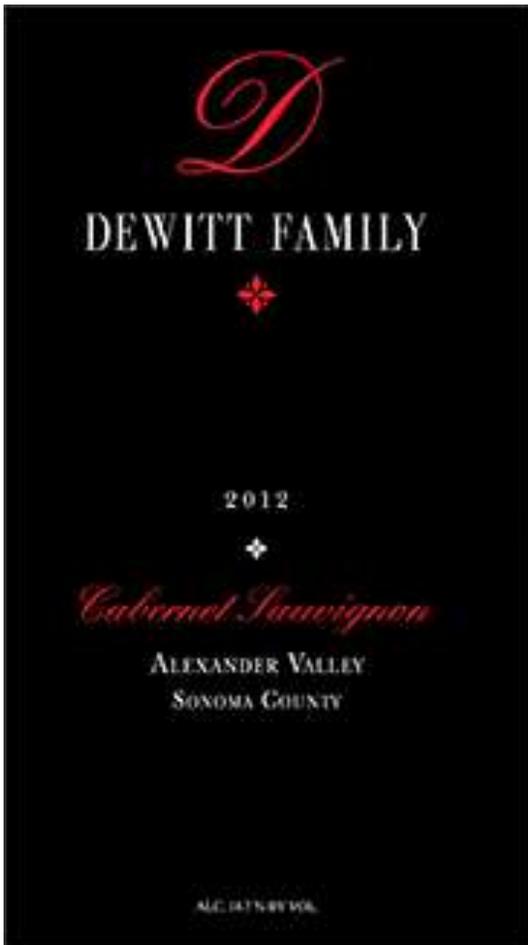


The more I get to know EBC Kentucky oak barrels the more I love them. Eiji said it best when he mentioned that it wasn't like your typical American oak barrel and was more of a combination of French and American. It can have this delicate finesse that I don't normally associate with American oak. EBC barrels create this wonderful mid-palate expansion that increase mouth feel and complexity.



So this is me swallowing my pride and admitting that SOMETIMES I might (just a little bit) be wrong. I'm sure there's a humbling life lesson in here somewhere and I'll ponder over it while enjoy a glass of cab done in Kentucky oak.

A big **thank you** to Eiji for taking some time out to taste with us and Medlock Ames for letting Dave and me visit.



Be sure to check out Medlock Ames website. It's cool.
<http://www.medlockames.com/>

Learn more about DeWitt Family Wines
<http://www.dewittfamilywines.com/>



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