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Cameron Hughes Wine, Costco's Best Bargain?

Cameron is what you would refer to as a Negotiant Winemaker, that is, he doesn't grow his own grapes, or have his own winery. **Instead, Cameron sources finished wine from a winery, puts it in bottle, puts his label on it, and takes it straight to Costco.** This brilliant method slashes most distribution costs, since the standard "three tier" distribution method is cut out. As Cameron puts it, wine doesn't cost a lot to make, it costs a lot to market. The savings are passed on to the consumer, and the wines retail for around \$10. But don't let the price fool you, these are serious wines. The first wine that really stunned the market was the 2002 Dry Creek Valley Cabernet Sauvignon Lot 7, **which Costco had a hard time keeping in stock after word spread between friends, family, and on wine forums.**

So how does he get his hands on this stellar wine? Many times a winery will have a few lots that don't fit their needs, so that finished wine is sold to large producers as a "silver bullet" to be blended with mediocre wine to help kick quality up a notch. **Instead of blending this wine away, Cameron has struck a deal to purchase this finished juice and sell it under his label.** How does the wine remain consistent if it's being made by different winemakers? He trusts his palate, and uses only lots consistent with his taste buds and vision.

The following are my notes from a recent tasting of Cameron's current/soon to be released line-up.

2004 Cabernet Sauvignon Lot 16, Stags Leap District, California \$14

A great wine from Stags Leap for Under \$15? You betcha! Put down that bottle of Sleeping Dove, this is the alter eagle! Although this wine is very young, and still developing in bottle, **the aroma throws pepper and stone fruit hints at you, with lots of Blackberry/Cherry character caressing your tongue. Amazingly, this wine offers a silky finish without a tannin in sight.** Obviously, this wine is meant to be enjoyed young, but could easily benefit from 2-5 years in bottle. 5,000 cases produced. (Just Released!)
www.chwine.com

Score: 90 pts

