

# 2017 Helios Sunbasket Vineyard Cabernet Franc



Abundant winter rains in 2017 got the vines off to a great start. August, the greater part of the ripening season, was moderate with cold nights, perfect for color and flavor development. Then heat around Labor Day turned the vintage into a sprint, with the entire harvest picked in nine consecutive days. Thankfully, our grapes were all in weeks before the fires, fermented and resting safely in barrels.

Flowers! The cool ripening season yielded classic Cabernet Franc floral perfume. Varietal pencil-lead and dried herbs complement subtle blueberry and plum fruit. Lifting slate minerality and earthy notes add complexity, and mouthwatering natural acidity and velvety tannins provide the structure for approachability and longevity. The finish goes on and on.  
~ Cathy Corison

**VIEW FROM THE CELLAR** 93 Cathy Corison's 2017 Cabernet Franc bottling from the Sunbasket Vineyard is outstanding. The wine comes in at 13.9 percent octane and offers up a precise and classy bouquet of sweet dark berries, a touch of raspberry, beautiful spice tones, a touch of menthol, tobacco leaf, lavender, lovely soil tones and cedary oak. On the palate the wine is bright, full-bodied, focused and impeccably balanced, with a lovely core, very good soil signature, ripe, buried tannins and a long, tangy and vibrant finish. This is very light on its feet for nearly fourteen percent alcohol and is built to age long and very, very gracefully. First class juice. 2027-2055+.  
*John Gilman, View from the Cellar, Issue #87, May-June 2020*



## Top 100 Best Wines of 2020

96 Sunbasket is on St. Helena's western benchlands, just north of Cathy Corison's winery. She purchased the vineyard in 2014, most of it planted to cabernet sauvignon, with three short rows of franc that she bottles as Helios. If you enjoy silken elegance in your cabernet, you owe it to yourself to find a bottle of this wine. It offers the kind of sunny generosity that Napa Valley so easily gives; here, that effusive cornucopia of flavor is grounded in earthy detail, focused so it reads as light rather than weight. This wine's sense of ease with its layers of complexity suggests it will age and develop for a decade or more.  
*Josh Greene, Wine & Spirits Magazine (10/20)*



Followers and fans of winemaker Cathy Corison will be quick to recognize the gentle, very careful winemaking hand here, and... it is as thoroughly interesting as it is graceful and well-mannered. Nothing about it roars from the glass, but upon second and third sniff and sip, it reveals more and more. It is young, but it is refined from front back, and it is remarkably long lasting with the energy of a wine that will age and age and is certain to gain further refinement as it does.  
*Connoisseurs' Guide to California Wine, May 2020*



92 Cathy Corison's Cabernet Franc Sunbasket Vineyard is marked more by the vintage than variety in 2017, but that does not detract from its considerable allure. Dark cherry, plum, mint, cedar, mocha and tobacco are all nicely pushed forward in a racy Franc that offers tons of immediacy. I would prefer to drink it over the next decade or so.

*Antonio Galloni, Vinous – explore all things wine, January 2020*

## JamesSuckling.com

95 Wonderful red fruit with strawberry and rose-petal highlights. Turns to black fruit. Medium body. The fruit is pure and succulent in this wine. Citrusy acidity gives it character and energy. Drink or hold.

*Jamessuckling.com, 18 Jan, 2020*

## purely domestic wine report

95 The nose is a ripe blue fruit with mint, dark chocolate and whiffs of candied orange. The palate entry picks up the citrus, adding in a coffee-like richness with essence of nectarine and peach finishing with dried herb and brown spices delicately woven with textured amber stone fruit.

*Doug Wilder, purely domestic wine report, October 2020*

## vinography

The Soul of Refinement: Recent & Upcoming Releases from Corison Winery, Napa  
Medium to dark garnet in color, this wine smells of plum and plum skin with hints of dried green herbs. In the mouth, juicy plum skin, sour cherry, and dried flowers are bursting with bright acidity and shot through with dried green herbs. Lovely faint powdery tannins give some structure to the wine, but this is largely just mouthwatering juiciness. Very light on its feet and easy to drink. 13.9% alcohol. Score: **between 9 and 9.5**.

*Alder Yarrow, vinography.com, August 25, 2021*

## Wine Spectator

**93** A very fresh, high-pitched style, with a floral lattice around a core of damson plum, cherry and red currant coulis flavors. Sleek and refined through the finish, shows light savory and mineral details, adding range and length. Poised, pure and set up nicely for time in the cellar. Drink now through 2032. 75 cases made.

*James Molesworth, Wine Spectator, March 31, 2021*

## WINE ENTHUSIAST

### **95** Cellar Selection

This is a stunning wine from a benchland site, so true to the variety in its violet perfume and underlying power. Tobacco, cedar and dried herb lead to a midpalate of fresh, focused cherry, berry and cassis, with tension and tautly wrapped tannin providing structure and ageability. Cellar this and enjoy best from 2027 through 2032.

*Virginie Boone, Wine Enthusiast, 9/1/2020*

## California GRAPEVINE

**92** Medium-dark ruby; attractive, deep, ripe, spicy, floral, dark cherry, raspberry, and cassis aroma with hints rose petal, black licorice, and mocha; full body; elegantly styled, nicely balanced, red and dark berry fruit flavors with bright acidity and a silky mouthfeel; full tannin; lingering aftertaste. Very appealing now in its youth, though best to bottle age for three to five more years. **Very highly recommended.**

*Nick Ponomareff, California Grapevine, Issue #47, December 2020*

## wine review online.com

**97** Aromatic development, palate texture construction, layered flavor complexity, finish staying power and whole package elegance. Words I've likely said about other wines from Cathy Corison, and all in evidence here in a stunning Cabernet Franc. The wine opens with soft powder and spice aromas, revealing layers of roses, intense cherry liqueur and gentle pepper on a long, slow draw. Palate entry is silky soft, with aromas transitioning very smoothly into echoing flavors, and the wine gains in intensity as you chew on it, the acidity washing away the silk and pushing the fruit and spice through an extremely long finish. While evaluating this, I find myself having a hard time moving on to the next wine on my desk. Once again, a standing ovation!

*Rich Cook, winereviewonline.com, May 12, 2020*

## Daniel Mangin

California Wine & Travel

On first sip, this 100% Cabernet Franc impressed with its vibrant acidity, slight earthiness, and intricate flavors. Floral in both taste and aroma, the wine gets a boost from expressive tannins that in youth register pleasingly on the front palate.

*dannymangin.com, June 2020*

## WASHINGTON WINE BLOG

**95** The 'Sunbasket Vineyard' Cabernet Franc is another stunning wine by Cathy Corison. Bright red fruits connect with shades of dark chocolate shavings... and exotic spices on this beautiful bouquet. The palate is extremely elegant and soft, delivering a core of red and dark fruits with mocha and graphite tones alongside

shades of wintergreen. Showing great length, this medium-bodied effort will cellar well for the next fifteen years... this shows even more splendidly on the second day. Drink 2021-2035

*Owen Bargreen, Washington Wine Blog, 8/21/20*

## International WINE REPORT

**92** Sourced from the Sunbasket Vineyard, the 2017 'Helios' Cabernet Franc is simply gorgeous. Cathy Corison has crafted this stunning Cabernet Franc which showcases the varietal in its purest form. It opens to pretty aromatics of raspberries and cassis, which are laced with smoldering tobacco, licorice, anise and spring flowers that all come together and emerge beautifully from the glass. On the palate this possesses a refined medium body, with a fine silky texture that is impeccably balanced and displays remarkable finesse all the way through the graceful finish. This is an absolutely beautiful, elegant display of Cabernet Franc from Corison that should go on to evolve nicely, however it is also utterly delightful to approach at this youthful age.

*Joe D'Angelo, International Wine Report, May 2020*

## The Nittany Epicurean

The wine showed a medium ruby color. Cherry, raspberry, vanilla, currant, licorice and oak could all be found on the nose. Black cherry, raspberry, vanilla, plum, loganberry, currant and oak followed on a palate that was consumed with dark berry fruit and vanilly. The wine was medium-bodied and exhibited good length along with soft tannins. This wine would pair very well with braised lamb shanks.

*Michael Chelus, January 2, 2021*