

CABERNET SUPERLIST | BEST CHAMPAGNES | BASQUE AND TUSCAN SMALL-PLATE FEASTS

Wine & Spirits

A green wine bottle is tilted, pouring a stream of red wine into a clear glass decanter. The background is a soft-focus bokeh of warm, golden lights, creating a festive or elegant atmosphere. The bottle's neck and the decanter's rim are in sharp focus, while the rest of the scene is blurred.

COLLECTOR'S CLASSICS

- 2001 **Barolo & Barbaresco**
- 2002 **California Cabernet**
- 2003 **Vintage Porto**
- 2004 **Mosel Riesling**

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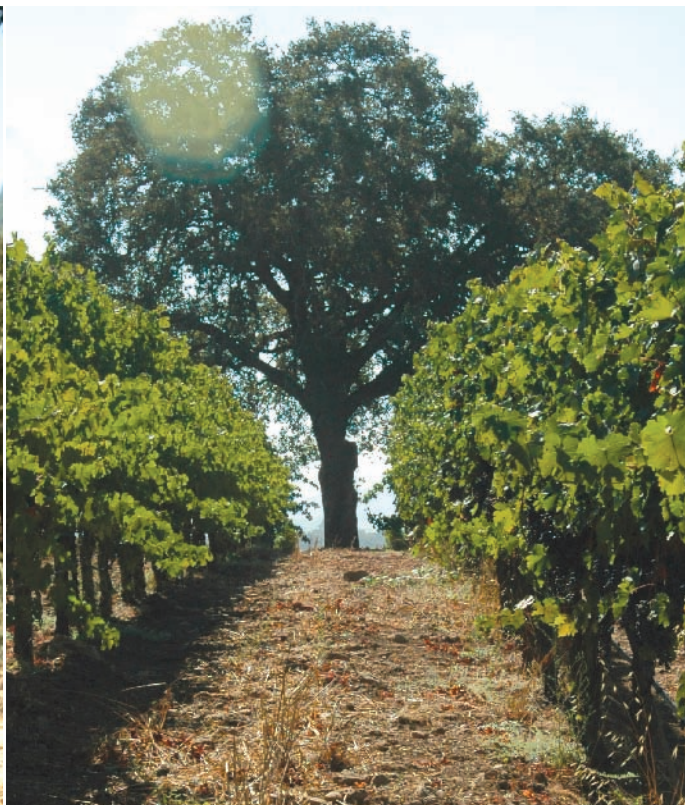
COLLECTING DUST

2002 Rutherford Cabernet Sauvignon

by Rod Smith



Valeria Huneus,
Quintessa (right & below)



There's more to the annual Rutherford Dust Society tasting than just a coalition of wine producers presenting their wares. It's simply the most significant regional tasting on the California wine calendar.

The two dozen wines at this year's tasting, all from the 2002 vintage, demonstrated yet again that Rutherford cabernet sauvignons (and cabernet-dominant blends) are the most consistently convincing—and collectible—wines California has to offer.

The 2002 Rutherford cabernets, as a group, are the most impressive viticultural statement by a California AVA to date. They're what I think of as "Endless Summer" wines (evoking the idyllic feeling captured on the two surfing films under that title made by Bruce Brown), reflecting all the qualities of a summer that's as pleasant for people as for vines—days that are nice and hot without being infernal, with heat lingering into the evening before being kissed away by cool marine air that laps over into morning and burns off easily well before noon. The best of these wines, such as Niebaum-Coppola, Quintessa, Sequoia Grove, Tres Sabores and Staglin (among quite a few others) show the definition and structure of a cooler year such as '98 but without the tendency toward greenness. There's also a certain juicy ripeness.

