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# San Francisco Chronicle

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## CHRONICLE'S WINE SELECTIONS Central Coast Cabernet Sauvignon

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When it comes to California Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley is the star in the klieg lights; Sonoma County is the less glamorous character actor still capable of stealing the show on any given night.

With some exceptions -- one is the Santa Cruz Mountains, led by the impeccable wines made by Paul Draper at Ridge Vineyards -- California's other Cabernet Sauvignon-producing regions compete for bit parts or wait in the wings for their turn.

Our panel will taste Santa Cruz Mountains Cabernet Sauvignon in the near future, but we thought it time to check in on Cab from California's large Central Coast region -- including Livermore, Paso Robles, and Monterey and Santa Barbara counties. We found some wines worthy of attention, most priced significantly lower than Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa or Sonoma.

We also tasted many wines that had off-putting green, herbaceous flavors and/or hard, astringent tannins. Those wines that found the proper balance are below.

**TWO AND A HALF STARS 2002 Steven Kent Livermore Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$45)**  
*Its full body, ripe fruit (black cherry, black plum) and alcoholic strength (14.7 percent on the label) are balanced by a supple texture, licorice and chocolate complexity, and refreshing acidity. Drinkable now, this wine should last another five years.*

KEY: FOUR STARS...Extraordinary, THREE STARS...Excellent, TWO STARS...Good

Central Coast  
Cabernet  
Sauvignon

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