

# VIEW FROM THE CELLAR

By John Gilman



## 2011 Lexington "Gist Ranch Estate" Merlot (Santa Cruz Mountains)

Lexington is a new project of Thomas Fogarty and his Cellar Master, Nathan Kandler, which has been a decade in the making. The fine Fogarty winery specializes in chardonnay and pinot noir, and for many years, the team here has been looking for a possible vineyard to develop to produce Bordeaux varietals. The remote Gist Ranch was identified close to a decade ago and cleared and planted, with the first wines to roll out of the cellars due for release this autumn.

The 2011 Merlot comes in at a fairly moderate octane of 14.5 percent alcohol and was raised entirely in used barrels. The inaugural release offers up a very Pomerol-like aromatic blend of plums, black cherries, chocolate, tobacco leaf, soil and a touch of cedary wood. On the palate the wine is pure, full-bodied and very elegant on the attack, with a fine core, ripe, suave tannins, good acids and just a bit of backend heat on the long and nicely chewy finish. I would have loved to have seen this just a touch lower in alcohol, particularly in the 2011 vintage, but this is a very well-made bottle of merlot with serious aspirations and it should age quite well indeed. It is a new project of Thomas Fogarty and his Cellar Master, Nathan Kandler, approachable today, but still quite primary, and I would give it at least a few years in the cellar to allow some of its secondary layers to emerge. 2017-2035+?

90+ Points

## 2011 Lexington Gist Ranch Estate APEX (Santa Cruz Mountains)

Interestingly, the 2011 cabernet sauvignon bottling from Lexington includes twenty percent merlot sauvignon in the 2011 vintage (with only one percent merlot in the blend), which is more than their varietally-labeled cabernet sauvignon, but I assume that the Apex cuvée will vary its cépages depending on vintage characteristics in future iterations. The wine sees the most new wood of any of these fine Lexington bottlings, but this is only one-third new oak, and like the cabernet sauvignon, it tips the scales at a very cool 14.1 percent alcohol. The wine offers up a beautiful bouquet of black cherries, cassis, cigar wrapper, tobacco leaf, a nice touch of bell pepper, a fine base of soil and a refined framing of luxuriant nutty new wood. On the palate the wine is deep, full-bodied and rock solid at the core, with lovely generosity on the attack, ripe, firm tannins and outstanding length and grip on the well-balanced and beautifully focused finish. This will need some extended aging to reach its apogee, but it will be a great bottle once it has blossomed. Stylistically, it is a bit more refined than the straight cabernet sauvignon and it will be interesting to see how these two superb wines evolve over the long haul, but today, though the Apex is the more polished out of the blocks, I am not sure that it will necessarily be the superior wine down the road. That said, this too is great juice. 2021-2055.

94 Points

