

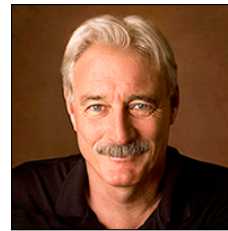
Wine Spectator

james laube's blog

A Napa Vintner Eyes a New Look

Melkas decide for a more serious, personal (and penetrating) label

Posted: May 5, 2010 3:34pm ET



Greg Gorman

Great. Al Pacino has his own wine label. He's right there, sitting on the table, staring straight at me, with that *Dog Day Afternoon* set of eyes.

Except it isn't Al, but rather Philippe, as in [Philippe Melka](#), with the dark, darting eyes. This is the new look for [Melka's wine company](#).

In the video clip below, taken last week in our Napa office by MaryAnn Worobiec, Cherie Melka explains the thinking behind the new label, and Philippe chimes in, too.

The new look is a radical departure from the rather vaguely defined Métisse label used in the past. One part of the new label suggests an extension of the Facebook look and a more personalized reach for consumers. It also emphasizes Melka's name. As Cherie explains in the video below, Philippe is known so much for his consulting work, there was some confusion over whether Métisse was *their* wine or just another of Philippe's consulting projects.

Despite the success of the Métisse label, Melka is still best-known for his consulting. He has worked with 25 wineries in California, and is still involved with a dozen. If you connected the dots to chart Melka's client list, it would look like a spider web overlay of Napa Valley. He began his career here in 1991 at [Dominus Estate](#), met Cherie Ridge in 1992, and from there his path includes positions at [Lail](#), [Constant](#), [Seavey](#), [Caldwell](#), [Vineyard 29](#), [Bryant Family](#), [Dalla Valle](#), [Prevail](#), [Flanagan](#), [Dana](#), [Roy Estate](#), [Skipstone](#), [Justin](#), [Raymond](#), [Parallel](#), [Hundred Acre](#), [Gemstone](#), Feathered Horse and his newest, overseeing a spanking new winemaking venture for Norma Hunt (an owner of the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs) in Knights Valley.

But I'm not sure I want to be staring at those eyes throughout dinner. Philippe says the eyes are intended to convey a serious determination and intensity.



In a perfect world, a vintner would create a timeless label that conveys a branded message and image for the winery, one that would withstand the passage of time. But most vintners end up changing their labels, often many times, in an attempt to create that new look. The new Melka label coincides with the Melkas' expansion of their own wine company.

In addition to the Napa Valley Cabernet, a line they've made for years, from Jumping Goat Vineyard in St. Helena, near Spottswoode, they've added a 2007 Knights Valley Merlot-Cabernet Franc blend from their partially planted property near Peter Michael, as well as a 2007 St.-Emilion from Le Châtelet Vineyard. All three wines retail for \$125.

The 2007 California wines are stronger; 2007 in Bordeaux was, says Melka, "not the most fantastic vintage." But they feel fortunate to have secured enough grapes to make 175 cases and keep them connected to France, his homeland.

They also bottled a 2007 Cabernet under the CJ designation, for \$48, named for the first letter in their children's names, Chloe and Jeremy.