

**McGrail Vineyards****2004 Cabernet Sauvignon  
(Livermore Valley)**

Ginger and Jim McGrail planted their 16-acre vineyard to Cabernet Sauvignon (clones 8 and 15) in 1996 with the intent of selling most of their fruit to their good friend Phil Wente, who encouraged them to grow the grape in this hilly site on the far eastern side of Livermore. But then a lot of other people had the same idea. Fortunately, when the vineyard came online bigtime, there were other wineries who stepped in and took their excellent hillside fruit, most notably Steven Kent, Crooked Vine Winery, and Wood Family Vineyards.

In 2004, the McGrails had their fruit custom-crushed at several places, including Wente. Claude Bobba, legendary winemaker for Wente, Steven Kent Winery and many others in the region, was their *vigneron et chaperone* at the Senior GrapeStomp Prom. Jim McGrail is the winemaker of record. The resulting **McGrail Vineyards** Cabernet was aged in American, Hungarian and French oak for 30 months, with several rackings prior to bottling.

This to me is classic Livermore Cab, with ripe earthy blueberry-blackberry pie aromas, framed by wet adobe brick walls. It has a gorgeous color that completely entrances. The flavours are complex and layered like a Dutch chocolate cake, going from mint chocolate to currants to cassis, then black pepper, tarragon and even meaty bacon and pumpernickel bread. It's easy to drink, even for an '04. And the alcohol is not too over the curved crown of that adobe wall. There is something distinctive and attractive about Livermore Cab, and this is it.

Reviewed December 7, 2007 by [Laura Ness](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [McGrail Vineyards](#)

**Vintage:** 2004

**Wine:** Cabernet Sauvignon

**Appellation:** [Livermore Valley](#)

**Grape:** [Cabernet Sauvignon](#)

**Price:** \$36.00

**THE REVIEWER****Laura Ness**

A wine writer and wine judge for major publications and competitions around the country, Laura Ness likens wine to the experience of music. She is always looking for that ubiquitous marriage of rhythm, melody, and flawless execution. What is good music? You

know it when you get lost in it. What is good wine? It is music in your mouth.