

## WINE REVIEWS

*Robert M. Parker, Jr. - The Wine Advocate*

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### **2007 Arietta H Block Hudson Vineyards Napa Valley, 93-95 points**

A prodigious wine, the 2007 Proprietary Red H Block Hudson Vineyard (a blend of 55% Cabernet Franc and 45% Merlot) boasts a deep purple color as well as a gorgeously sweet nose of lead pencil shavings intermixed with spring flowers, black raspberries, black currants, and incense. Deep and full-bodied with a stunning texture, sweet tannin, and superbly integrated acidity, alcohol, wood, and tannin, this 2007 should age effortlessly for 20+ years.

### **2007 Arietta Variation One Napa Valley, 94-97 points**

The blend of 55-60% Syrah and the rest Merlot is called Variation One (450-500 cases produced). A sensational effort, the 2007 Variation One (60% Syrah and 40% Merlot) displays a vivid, super-fragrant perfume of bouquet garni, white chocolate, blackberries, plums, and subtle smoky oak. Full-bodied with silky tannins, a decadent opulence, and a sumptuous texture, this is a head-turning, full-bodied, expressive wine to enjoy over the next 15-20 years.

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### **2006 Arietta H Block Hudson Vineyards Napa Valley, 92-94 Points**

The 2006 H Block, which is a blend of 60% Cabernet Franc and 40% Merlot, exhibits a deep ruby/purple color like its predecessor and a sweet nose of boysenberry, raspberry, and an almost vivid floweriness, with nicely integrated oak and hints of lead pencil shavings. The wine has great fruit, medium to full body, and again, terrific elegance and finesse. It's interesting to note that this is the first vintage where Screaming Eagle's winemaker, Andy Erickson, consulted on the winemaking at Arietta.

### **2005 Arietta H Block Hudson Vineyards Napa Valley, 94 Points**

The 2005 H Block, which is 100% from the Hudson Vineyard, is a co-fermented blend of 80% Cabernet Franc and 20% Merlot. This is one of the finest I have tasted from Fritz Hatton, and it has put on considerable weight since I had it last year. An exceptional nose of white chocolate, espresso, tobacco leaf, and raspberries, in addition to red currants and even blacker fruits, are present in this complex wine, which is fragrant, medium to full-bodied, and seamlessly textured. It is a beautiful, highly nuanced, strikingly elegant wine to drink over the next 10-15 years.

### **2006 Arietta Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley, 92-94 points**

Far more promising is the 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon, which was the first wine to benefit from the consulting work of Screaming Eagle's Andy Erickson. With riper, richer, sweeter fruit, more cassis, licorice, and crushed rock, along with some spring floral notes, the wine is medium to full-bodied, much more impressive and opulent than the 2005, but not lacking structure. This wine should drink nicely for 12-20 years.

### **2006 Arietta Variation I Napa Valley, 91-93 points**

The most interesting blend is the co-fermented version of Syrah and Merlot, the Variation One. The 2006 Variation One (55% Syrah and the rest Merlot, again co-fermented together) shows more chocolate and berry fruit in a plumper, riper style, with slightly lower acidity and very little of the forest floor, mossy earth characteristics. The wine is fleshy, rich, and more hedonistic than the intellectually leaning 2005. It should drink well for 12-15 years as well.

### **2005 Arietta Variation I Napa Valley, 92 points**

The most interesting blend is the co-fermented version of Syrah and Merlot, the Variation One. The 2005 Variation One exhibits musty, moss-ridden forest floor notes intermixed with pepper, earth, and black fruits. The wine is rich, extremely complex, but I have the feeling this is a love-it-or-leave-it type of wine, given its rather distinctive aromatics. It is pure in the mouth, with some slightly austere Bordeaux-like tannins, but good delineation. This wine needs 3-4 years of bottle age, and should drink well for 15 or more.

### **2006 Arietta On The White Keys, 90-92 points**

Charismatic auctioneer Fritz Hatton's love of music is the basis for the play on words for Arietta, all serious wines produced from innovative blends, especially the Variation One. These are distinctive and dramatic wines, and it is good to see a new addition of 85% Sauvignon Blanc and 15% Semillon, The White Keys. The 2006 version reveals terrific grapefruit and other honeyed citrus notes intermixed with some guava and white currant. The wine behaves much like a dry white Graves, finishing with good acidity, power, and depth.

### **2005 Arietta On The White Keys, 92 points**

The 2005 may even be better but perhaps is just a year older, with more subtle bottle nuances such as honeysuckle, fig, and a touch of melon and lemon oil. Both are medium to full-bodied, very dry, seriously endowed wines that should be superb with an assortment of different cuisines.

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**2003 Arietta H Block Hudson Vineyards Napa Valley, 93-95 points**

The dense ruby/purple-hued 2003 Proprietary Red H Block Hudson Vineyard (a 500-case blend of 70% Cabernet Franc and 30% Merlot) reveals restrained aromatics (sweet cranberries, cola, underbrush, black cherries, cassis, minerals, and lead pencil shavings) as well as an elegant, restrained, concentrated, delicate, nuanced personality. Drink it over the next 10-12 years.

**2003 Arietta Variation One Napa Valley, 93-95 points**

The 2003 Variation One (60% Merlot and 40% Syrah) offers a sweet kiss of white chocolate along with pepper, raspberry, fig, and plum notes. Dense and hedonistic, but not yet revealing all the nuances found in the 2002, this is an impressively endowed, complex, intellectually as well as hedonistically satisfying wine the likes of which are so singular and different than anything else produced in California. It is classic in all its proportions, aromas, and flavors.

**2002 Arietta Red H Block Hudson Vineyard Napa Valley, 98 points**

One of the most extraordinary wines I tasted during my trip through Northern California was Arietta's 2002 Proprietary Red H Block Hudson Vineyard. Made from equal parts Merlot and Cabernet Franc, this dark purple-colored 2002 exhibits wonderfully refined, complex notes of scorched earth, menthol, mocha, cherries, plums, figs, and espresso. With great intensity as well as surreal elegance and refinement, this beautifully pure effort unfolds on the palate in incremental layers of finesse and flavors. This amazing, noble wine is a tour de force in winemaking for California. It should drink well for 15 years.

**2002 Arietta Variation One Napa Valley, 95 points**

The stunning 2002 Variation One (70% Merlot and 30% Syrah) exhibits an exotic, opulent personality with a deep purple color, and sweet aromas of cocoa, new saddle leather, black raspberries, cassis, and acacia flowers. Full-bodied, with beautifully integrated oak (all of these wines are aged in 100% new French wood), wonderful sweetness, tremendous delineation, and laser-like clarity and transparency of character. A beauty, it is ideal for drinking over the next 10-15 years.

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**2001 Arietta H Block Hudson Vineyards Napa Valley, 92+ points**

Tightly wound, with dense, full-bodied notes of black fruits, charcoal, smoke, earth, and pain grille, it is big and rich, but tight, structured, and backward. Give it 3-5 years of cellaring and drink it over the following 12-15.

**2001 Arietta Variation One Napa Valley, 93 points**

2001 Arietta Variation One exhibits sweet, flowery, blackberry and cassis flavors with chocolate and leather in the background. This big, full bodied, opulent, layered, multidimensional 2001 needs 2-3 years of cellaring. It should drink well for 1-2 decades.

**2000 Arietta Red H Block Hudson Vineyard Napa Valley, 96 points**

The 2000 Arietta tastes like an over-sized, phenomenal Cheval Blanc. It has blossomed beautifully since I tasted it last year. A dense purple color is followed by scents of cocoa, underbrush, chocolatey black cherry and black currant fruit, minerals, truffles, and graphite. A big, thick, chewy, tremendously long, intense, well balanced red, I would love to taste it along side the 2000 Cheval Blanc. It should hit its prime in 3-4 years, and last for 2 decades. Like most of these cuvees, there are approximately 800 cases.

**2000 Variation One Napa Valley, 90 points**

The 2000 Variation One comes from the Hudson Ranch, and like the Arietta cuvee, is aged in 100% new oak (none of these wines could be called "oaky"). Its dense purple color is accompanied by sweet aromas of new saddle leather and roasted meats. Although monolithic, it is medium to full-bodied and intense. Given my confidence in Kongsgaard's winemaking, it will undoubtedly reveal more "music" with 3-4 years of bottle age. A blend of 72% Merlot and 28% Syrah, it should be at its finest between 2007-2016.