

CENTURION

M A G A Z I N E

SPRING | SUMMER 2019

Larger Than Life

BRYANT FAMILY VINEYARD, the celebrated winery set on 13 acres on Napa's Pritchard Hill, is marking its 25th anniversary with a Melchior of the 2016 Bryant Family Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon to be sold at this year's Auction Napa Valley. The influential critic Robert Parker gives this particular vintage, a fresh and restrained wine made exclusively with grapes grown on the estate, a perfect score. One 750-milliliter bottle typically retails for \$550—and the Melchior holds the equivalent of 24 bottles. To give a sense of scale, if the average person sat down next to one on the floor, the top of the cork would be at eye level.

One needs a cranelike apparatus to lift the bottle, so Bettina Bryant, the winery's proprietor and president and the curator of the lot, decided to include a custom Bryant-branded VCanter, a decanting machine handmade in Switzerland specifically for pouring oversized bottles of wine, along with a wheeled carrying case. "I knew the 2016 wine was going to be fantastic, and I wanted to do something dramatic," says Bryant. "I was in Hedonism, an incredible wine shop in London's Mayfair, and they had this beautiful display of large-format bottles from around the world, and I thought, 'Why not?'"

Because an opened bottle of wine doesn't have much of a shelf life, a Melchior should be uncorked only on an occasion when one plans to pour the 120 glasses inside—a wedding, for instance. Thankfully, the lot will also include more manageable bottles, namely a 375-milliliter, a 750-milliliter, a magnum, and a double magnum. The whole kit is expected to fetch between \$200,000 and \$300,000, 90 percent of which will go to various children's education and community-health nonprofits in Napa Valley. *May 30–June 2; auctionnapavalley.org. —Rachel Hurn*

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The 2016 Bryant Estate Melchior bottle, held up by a custom VCanter machine.