



BELL

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Merlot 2002 Yountville Napa Valley

Vineyard

Our Merlot grapes are estate grown on the winery's vineyard in Yountville approximately one mile south of the Yountville Hills. Yountville enjoys the early morning fog and cool growing conditions of the maritime influenced southern Napa Valley, whilst the early receding fog gives us more sunlight and warmer daytime temperatures than the more southerly Carneros region. Our warm summer daytime temperatures and cool evenings result in grapes with rich fruit flavors and an excellent acid balance.

Vintage Notes

The 2002 vintage was extremely compressed, and followed a long, cool growing season. A cool Spring saw some frosts in April and this was followed by light rains in May. Following veraison in July, growing conditions were truly ideal with warm days and cool, even cold nights. A few manageable heat spikes in late September and early October brought the fruit to full maturity. A brief heat wave during harvest had growers scrambling but temperatures dropped to season normals and the remaining grapes matured slowly and evenly.

Vinification

Merlot grapes were hand-harvested and gently crushed to minimize crushing of berries and maximize fruit character. We fermented at 80 degrees-F with a Bordeaux yeast strain, and extracted color utilizing gentle irrigation over the skins. Following fermentation the wine underwent malo-lactic fermentation and was then racked to barrel. The wine was barrel aged in a combination of French and American oak barrels for 20 months. The wine was not fined and received one filtration prior to bottling.

Tasting Notes

Our Merlot, deep garnet in color, has rich black cherry fruit aromas, with hints of eucalyptus and oak. Addition of Syrah brings depth of fruit to the nose and palate, while the addition of Cabernet sauvignon adds structure to the finish. Soft tannins balance well with good fruit acidity and concentrated fruit flavors to yield a wine that will develop well with several years of aging. A rich, concentrated Merlot with a lingering finish and supple mouthfeel.

Technical Analysis:

Varietal:	Merlot (87%), Cabernet sauvignon (5%) Syrah (8%)
Appellation:	Napa Valley
Harvest Sugar	24.7 Brix
Harvest Acid	0.45 gm/100ml
Total Acid	0.66 gm/100ml
pH	3.61
Alcohol	14.1%
Aging	20 months in oak, 67% French, 33% American
Bottle Date	July 2004
Production	565 cases
Suggested Retail	\$30.00

