



BELL

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Merlot 2001 Napa Valley

Vineyard

Our Merlot grapes are estate grown on the winery's vineyard in Yountville (76%) approximately one mile south of the Yountville Hills; and the Hurley Vineyard (13%) located in Rutherford. 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 2001 vintage, three weeks early and about 15% lighter than usual followed a roller coaster growing season. Winter rains were about half of normal, and several nights of frost in April added to a cold and harsh spring. The hottest May on record caused shatter in some varieties, and the third hottest June on record hastened vine growth. July temperatures exceeded 100F but were followed by cool August days and cold evenings. This allowed the grapes to settle, extending the hang time and balance the flavor profiles with the rising sugar levels.

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 21 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 (89%), Cabernet sauvignon (4%) Syrah (7%)
Appellation:	Napa Valley
Harvest Sugar	23.7 Brix
Harvest Acid	0.39 gm/100ml
Total Acid	0.64 gm/100ml
pH	3.53
Alcohol	13.9%
Aging	21 months in oak
Bottle Date	August 2003
Production	565 cases

