



1999 MERLOT "ESTATE"

87.5% Napa Valley Merlot
12.5% Cabernet Franc
Harvested at 26.3 Brix, between
September 25-26 1999
13.9% Alcohol
0.49 TA/ 3.72 pH
163 cases produced
Release Date: May 2002

Harvest Notes: The 1999 Napa Valley growing season was long and cool allowing us to harvest extraordinarily clean, healthy grapes with excellent acidity and mature varietal fruit flavors. With growing conditions in 1999 similar to 1998, but cooler, grape clusters were very healthy with no sunburn. This year Napa Valley experienced its typical difference in daytime (warm) and evening (cool) temperatures that create optimal conditions for the development of balanced sugar and acid levels. Other than a trace of precipitation in mid September, rain was not an issue in 1999. Yields average 3.2 tons/acre in 1999.

Winemaking notes: Our Estate program follows traditional French winemaking practices. Native yeast induce fermentation. Techniques include the use of extended maceration (each lot averaged 25 days on the grape skins) and frequent pumping-over (three to four times a day). The 1999 vintage aged for 22 months in 50% new Tronçais, Nevers and Alliers oak (thin-staved, medium-plus toast Chateau Ferre barrels). Tonnelleries: 75% Seguin Moreau and 25% Radoux. Barrels were topped monthly and racked every four to six months. To preserve fruit intensity and body, the wine was not filtered prior to bottling in August 2001.

Tasting Notes: The complex nose offers an enticing blend of vanilla, black cherry and currant aromas. Hints of cedar and tobacco combine with the layers of fruit to form a rich but perfectly balanced wine. The finish displays an intense purity of fruit and soft velvety tannins. Drinkability and Maturity: Now-2011

Vineyard Notes: Our estate vineyards planted in 1990 on the Napa Valley hillsides east of the Silverado Trail provided the grapes. A variety of exposures increased the wines complexity. Western slopes: Cabernet and Merlot. Eastern slopes: Cabernet Franc and a second Cabernet vineyard. Crop level and vine growth were closely monitored to achieve balance and intensify fruit character. The vineyards are densely planted (1240 vines per acre) and vertically trellised. Rocky soil with moderate amount of clay averaging three feet in depth provides excellent drainage.