



2011 Reserve Merlot

Philosophy

Merlot is a grape known for its soft, lush appealing fruit. Bordeaux is heavily planted with this variety for good reason. It is usually blended with Cabernet Sauvignon to help soften the tannins and astringency of the Cabernet Sauvignon grape. Here in California, wineries began to bottle it as a stand-alone variety because it is so good by itself.

Vineyard Source

The estate Merlot Vineyard is three clones of Merlot grafted onto 26 year old Cabernet Sauvignon roots. It is located on a South-facing slope on our ridge with the vine rows running East to West. This vineyard block was our original planting in 1974 when we first moved here and started growing grapes. The fruit from this block has always been spectacular, whether it is Cabernet Sauvignon or Merlot. We are bringing back some of the Cabernet plants so are now getting a field blend of Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Merlot from mountain areas are usually more Cabernet like, with stronger structure and tannins,



2011 Vintage

2011 started with above average rainfall in the winter followed by a late spring. This caused the vines to bud out late by several weeks. A late bloom of course followed this. The late bloom caused a late veraison starting in mid August and harvest was not until the first week of October for the estate grapes. The difference between 2011 and 2010 was just after we harvested some Zin we had 6" of rain followed by a long Indian summer. The rest of our grapes ripened so that we harvested the last of the grapes 2 days before the next 6" rain.

Winemaker's Tasting Notes

This Merlot is lovely, intense, full bodied and well balanced: unusual for this variety. The aroma reminds me of flowering plum and cherry. There are notes of black raspberry and black stone fruit flavors and a hint of oak followed by a long lingering finish. This is a versatile complex wine with many nuances to go with a variety of moderately seasoned foods. Serve it often with summer barbecues of chicken, Cajun fish, steak and of course hamburgers.

John MacCready, Owner & Winemaker