

2001 Cabernet-Merlot

Columbia Valley

THE WINE

Blending Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot has been a tradition for centuries. But in most cases, only a small amount of Cabernet or Merlot is added to the other for a bit of additional complexity or softness. We think blending almost equal amounts of each varietal makes the resulting wine a perfect complement to both varietals: the body and character of a Cabernet with the soft richness and fruit of a Merlot. Our 2001 Cabernet-Merlot has a purple/red color, with aromas of blackberry, tobacco and licorice. A chocolatey top note lingers behind the fruit. Flavors are of berry and spice, complemented by a medium-rich mouthfeel and a toasty vanilla finish.

THE VINTAGE AND VINEYARDS

The 2001 vintage gave us average temperatures through June, then it warmed up through mid August. At that point the thermometers really spiked and the season ended up being a warm one overall, with temperatures averaging around 84 F from June through September. The summer drought provided an extra challenge for water management. Ultimately, it turned out to be a rewarding vintage in both the vineyard and winery. Moderate crop loads ensured very good color and tannin development. The majority of the fruit for this Cabernet-Merlot came from the Yakima Valley (42%), with other sources being the Wahluke Slope, Tri-Cities and Alderdale growing regions.

THE WINEMAKING

The Cabernet and Merlot lots were cold-soaked, then fermented separately in stainless steel tanks with a peak temperature of 89°F. Fermentation lasted an average of 7 days. The lots were inoculated for malolactic fermentation during the primary yeast fermentation. About 24% of the wine aged in new and seasoned French and American oak, but the majority of the wine aged in stainless steel, where some of the lots underwent micro-oxygenation to build and complete the tannin structure of the wine before blending. The new wine was bottled in August 2002.

THE NUMBERS

Appellation: Columbia Valley, Washington 10 Word Description: Aromas of cherry, tobacco and licorice. Fruit and spice flavors with a toasty finish.

Varietal Percentages: 51% Cabernet Sauvignon, 44.7% Merlot, 4.3% Cabernet Franc

Brix at Harvest: 24.6°B

Total Acidity: 0.58 g/100 ml 30 Word Description: A wine with the best of both varietals: full body and rich aromas of cherry, tobacco and licorice. Flavors of chocolate, fruit and spice, with a rich mouthfeel and a toasty finish.

pH: 3.64

Alcohol: 13.5% by volume

Release Date: February 2003

