

# 2003 Cabernet-Merlot

Columbia Valley

## THE WINE

While Hogue produces varietal Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon wines we have also been blending the two to make a distinct Cabernet-Merlot for several years. This allows us to make a wine that highlights the impact of Washington State terroir and balances the distinct varietal characteristics of both Cabernet and Merlot. The 2003 Cabernet-Merlot has aromas of caramel and cinnamon with ripe, plummy fruit. On the mouth it comes across as well structured and supple showing balanced oak and fruit reminiscent of fresh cherries and strawberries mingled with sun-dried tomato, cinnamon, and subtle spice.

## THE VINTAGE AND VINEYARDS

The grapes were sourced from the entire Columbia Valley growing region. The growing season of 2003 was the warmest of the last decade. Warmer regions such as the Horse Heaven Hills (53.3% of the fruit) and Wahluke Slope (12.3%) produced very ripe and tannic fruit while the Yakima Valley (31.7%) brought balance to sugar, acidity, and fruit character. The total heat unit accumulation (April 1 to October 31) was 15% higher than the average. A fairly cool spring was followed by a long, warm summer. It was also a dry year, with only 2 inches of rain compared to the 70-year average of 3½ inches. Perfect harvest conditions in September resulted in a vintage of great quality.

## THE WINEMAKING

The fruit was harvested between September 5th and October 24th at an average 24.7°Brix. The base wines fermented primarily with Pasteur Red yeast for an average of five days at a peak temperature of 91°F. After pressing they were all inoculated for malolactic fermentation and allowed to reach dryness with frequent racking. Once dry, the wines were aged, with oak exposure for up to ten months with the goal of preserving fruit and mellowing the wine.

## THE NUMBERS

Appellation: Columbia Valley, Washington

Varietal Percentages: 56% Cabernet Sauvignon, 44% Merlot

Brix at Harvest: 24.7°

Total Acidity: 0.63/100 ml

pH: 3.77

Alcohol: 13.9% by volume

Release Date: June 2006

