

2001 Merlot

Columbia Valley, Washington

THE WINE

This is the second vintage of Fruit Forward Merlot. We had an extraordinary reception to the 2000 and we're pleased that expansion of our Merlot program over the past three years has provided many new grape sources, especially from warmer sites, that should ensure consistent high-quality for a long time to come. Because eastern Washington has such a long growing season, Merlot matures and reaches full maturity every year. It has plenty of time to build the right sugar and acid balance, along with ripe, developed flavors. Aromas are of oak toast & spice, with a sweet rich mid-palate, and vanilla, cassis, nutmeg, cocoa, fig, and marzipan flavors. Intense fruit and good structure add to its character.

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 new Merlot came from the Yakima Valley (80%) and the Alderdale growing regions.

THE WINEMAKING

We want to emphasize fruit flavors in this Merlot, and we also want it to have a soft mouth-feel for early enjoyment. After fermentation the new wine stayed on the skins almost eight days, 28% longer than the 2000 vintage. We pressed the wine at dryness, and aged all of it in seasoned oak to preserve fruit character. Some of the lots underwent micro-oxygenation to build and complete the tannin structure of the wine before blending it with the barrel fraction. After 10 months on wood the new wine spent another 10 months in the bottle before being released.

THE NUMBERS

Appellation: Columbia Valley, Washington

Varietal Percentages: 76% Merlot, 15% Syrah, 9% Sangiovese and Lemberger

Brix at Harvest: 24.9°

Total Acidity: 0.55 g/100 ml

pH: 3.70

Finished Alcohol: 13.6% by volume

Case Production: 15,000

Release Date: September, 2002

