

2002 Merlot

Columbia Valley, Washington

THE WINE

The expansion of our Merlot program over the past four 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 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 delicate oak and spice, with a sweet, rich mid-palate, and anise, nuts, and eucalyptus flavors. Weight and tannins are moderate. Intense fruit and good structure add to its character.

THE VINTAGE AND VINEYARDS

A normal year in terms of heat accumulation, 2002 was characterized by unseasonably hot weather in July followed by a normal August and an exceptionally dry and temperate fall. The dry, breezy fall weather led to optimal ripening, with plenty of hang time for the development of flavors. Merlot harvest began on September 15 and ended on September 26. The Lemberger, a late ripening variety, was picked on October 21. The majority of the fruit for this Merlot came from the Alderdale (34%), Yakima Valley (32%), and Wahluke Slope (24%) 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 proper color, flavor and tannin extraction the wine was pressed off from the skins. This is often before the wine has fermented completely dry. The wine finishes fermentation in tank and then some of it is barrel aged 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 12 months on wood the new wine spent another 4 months in the bottle before being released.

THE NUMBERS

Appellation: Columbia Valley, Washington

Varietal Percentages: 83% Merlot, 11% Lemberger, 4% Cabernet Franc, 1% Sangiovese, 1% Syrah

Brix at Harvest: 24.9°

Total Acidity: 0.59 g/100 ml

pH: 3.65

Finished Alcohol: 13.9% by volume

