

2003 Merlot

Columbia Valley, Washington

THE WINE

Washington State has been touted as the best Merlot producing region in the United States. Our 2003 Merlot lives up to this reputation and stands as a firm reminder of why we've received so much attention. Its generous fruity nose is complemented by anise and soft earthy tones. The palate is packed with ripe cherries and raspberry. Supple, coating tannins give a rich mouthfeel without excessive astringency. The addition of Syrah at 8.8%, Lemberger at 7.2%, and judicious oak exposure combine to add a hint of nutmeg and mace spices to the wine. This concentrated wine is ripe and rich, sure to complement any sweet red pasta sauce or lamb dish.

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 (27%) and Wahluke Slope (42%) produced very ripe and tannic fruit while the cooler Yakima Valley (30%) 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 3 ½ inches. Perfect harvest conditions in September resulted in a vintage of great quality.

THE WINEMAKING

The fruit was harvested between September 5 and October 24 at an average of 25.4°Brix. The base wines fermented primarily with Pasteur Red yeast for an average of five days at a peak temperature of 88°F. After pressing they were all inoculated for malolactic fermentation and allowed to reach dryness with frequent racking. Once dry the wines were aged exposed to oak for up to ten months with the goal of preserving fruit and mellowing the wine.

THE SCREWCAP SEAL

Hogue Cellars has switched to screwcap seals following its four-year closures study, which found that screwcaps best preserve wine quality in the bottle, keep flavors freshest, eliminate the threat of cork taint, and ensure consistency of flavors.

THE NUMBERS

Appellation: Columbia Valley

Varietal Percentage: 82% Merlot, 8.8% Syrah, 7.2% Lemberger, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon

Harvest Brix: 25.4°

TA: 0.57/100 ml

pH: 3.63

Alcohol: 13.8%

Release Date: September 2005



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