

2004 Merlot

Columbia Valley, Washington

THE WINE

Washington State has been touted as perhaps the best Merlot producing region in the United States. Hogue Merlot lives up to this reputation and delivers a warm and fruity wine with aromas of crushed raspberry, cherry, and lavender. This robust wine has a core of cranberry and cherry flavors with hints of vanilla and spice. With its long, fruit-forward finish and supple structure, the Merlot would go quite well with succulent barbecued pork or beef.

THE VINTAGE AND VINEYARDS

A hard freeze in January 2004 was cause for alarm and there were expectations that up to half the vintage would be lost. With skillful viticulture and much thanks to Mother Nature we still ended up meeting our crop goals for the year. A warm spring was followed by a warmer than normal summer. An early harvest was expected but cool weather in the beginning of September slowed development and allowed for a relatively normal harvest. Dry weather in late September and October allowed for extended hang time and excellent ripening. The grapes came from our three main growing regions, with 48% from the Wahluke Slope near Mattawa, 25% from the Horse Heaven Hills, and 27% from the Yakima Valley. A full 43% of the grapes were from the Desert Wind Vineyard on the Wahluke Slope.

THE WINEMAKING

The grapes were picked at an average of 26.5° Brix between September 2nd and October 23rd. They were destemmed and crushed into stainless steel tanks for primary fermentation at a maximum temperature of 92°F and pressed at around 10.0° Brix based on color, astringency, and flavor. The wines then went through malo-lactic fermentation and micro-oxygenation to stabilize and round out the wine during aging. Over the course of a year the winemakers tasted and blended the lots to carefully craft our final product. The wine was bottled in August using the Stelvin screw cap to preserve freshness.

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: 87% Merlot, 7% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Syrah, 1% Lemberger

Harvest Brix: 26.5°

TA: 0.54g/100 ml

pH: 3.64

Alcohol: 13.9%

Release Date: January 2006



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