

2003 Reserve Merlot

Columbia Valley, Washington

THE WINE

The Hogue Cellars has a long history of producing outstanding Reserve Merlot and the 2003 vintage is no exception. It is very much a Reserve style wine to savor now or cellar, as it will age well. The aromas are complex, with black olive, cocoa, and roasted coffee beans complementing the dark ripe plum and earthy core of the wine. It is a big structured wine with immense depth. Ripe cherry and cassis flavors mingle with toasty oak and mocha notes. Pair this with a bacon-wrapped fillet minion and blue cheese sauce.

THE VINTAGE AND VINEYARDS

The growing season of 2003 was the warmest of the last decade. 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. The grapes were harvested primarily from the Wahluke Slope AVA, with a full 80% being from the Fries Vineyard. Another 18% of the wine came from the Red Mountain AVA, with about 2% more topping wine from various sources.

THE WINEMAKING

The grapes were crushed and then fermented in stainless steel tanks. After five days of frequent pumpovers and careful monitoring, the wines were pressed off the skins and much of the wine was immediately barreled down to finish primary and malo-lactic fermentations. After a very detailed process of tasting to determine which lots were likely to be Reserve quality, we re-allocated our barrel mix and allowed the wines to barrel-age for twenty five months primarily in new French oak with frequent racking. The final blend was made five months prior to being bottled in January 2006.

THE NUMBERS

Appellation: Columbia Valley

Varietal Percentage: 98% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon

Harvest Brix: 26.9°

TA: 0.58/100 ml

pH: 3.56

Alcohol: 14.5%

HOGUE
R E S E R V E