



APPELLATION: KNIGHTS VALLEY
VARIETAL BLEND: 100% MERLOT
WINEMAKER: SPENCER GRAHAM
RELEASE DATE: EARLY SPRING 2009

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Garnet red with carmine highlights. This Merlot has cascading fruit aromas of rich plum, black cherry, blackberry with hints of cocoa, graphite and bay leaf. The palate exhibits voluptuous flavors of ripe black cherry, currant, plum, chocolate, mocha and vanilla with notes of invigorating herbs. Dusty red fruit presages the firm tannins and grand structure of this powerful Merlot. The finish boasts a firm grip full of dark fruit flavors and this Merlot has excellent ageing potential.

WINEMAKING

Upon arrival at the winery, our 2006 Merlot grapes were carefully sorted by hand, and we exercised strict control over the quality of fruit entering the fermentation tanks. Our grapes were given a long cold soak prior to fermentation in order to extract as much color and flavor as possible early on. Allowed to ferment with native yeasts, the must received a combination of pumpovers and cap management treatments while in tank, decided on a daily basis by taste alone. Once fermentation had completed, the wine was macerated on the skins to increase extract and allow the tannin structure to soften. Our Knights Valley Merlot was aged for 16 months in 100% French oak from select coopers including Taransaud, Sylvain, Darnajou, and Nadalie. We handled the wine as little as possible from fermentation to barrel to bottle in order to allow it to continue to deepen in richness and complexity, and it was bottled unfiltered and unfiltered.

VINEYARDS

Our Knights Valley Merlot is sourced from a meticulously tended vineyard in the hills north of Calistoga. Knights Valley lies between the Alexander Valley and Chalk Hill wine regions to the west and the Mayacamas Mountains to the east. Geographically, the appellation separates the rest of Sonoma County from the Napa Valley. Our grower is quite conscientious and can frequently be found inspecting the grape clusters on the vine and removing individual berries that do not meet his high standards. The interplay of soil, aspect, morning fog, and conscientious viticulture combines to produce fruit which is nothing less than singular in nature. Knights Valley is the warmest of Sonoma County's viticultural areas and derives its heat from its lofty perch beyond the reach of influences of the Pacific Ocean.

VINTAGE

At the start of the growing season, 2006 appeared to be on the same path as 05 had been, with a wet spring and a cooler than average summer, until midsummer, when a two week heat wave arrived. Thankfully, our Merlot grapes were not yet through veraison when the hot weather struck, and so, because they had not begun to soften, were not adversely affected by the high temperatures. Temperatures cooled significantly following the heat wave, and the temperate finish to the growing season produced Merlot grapes that were rich in flavor, aromatically complex, and possessing classic Bordelaise character.

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