

# GUNDLACH BUNDSCHU

## 2003 RHINEFARM VINEYARD MERLOT

### VINTAGE

The 2003 growing season presented many challenges as well as, ultimately, very high quality fruit. Springtime frosts, rain and hail reduced crop size for many varieties. Warm temperatures interspersed with early summer showers increased mildew potentials, testing the vigilance of vineyard managers. As harvest time approached, spikes in daytime temperatures further tested the endurance of vine and man alike. Mercifully, there were no rain events during the harvest period, allowing ample maturity time. Despite Mother Nature's curve balls, the resulting fruit was rich, showing good concentration of varietal character.

### VINEYARD

The La Paz section of our estate, planted in 1976, is one of the oldest Merlot vineyards in California. It is a cooler site that contributes structure, complexity and mineral notes, while the vines planted on lowlands in front of the winery tends to contribute forward red fruit such as cherry/raspberry flavors. The 11 distinct blocks of Merlot planted on Rhinefarm were harvested and fermented as 12 individual lots in 2003 which were used to craft the final blend.

### WINEMAKING

The grapes were hand-picked and delivered to the winery in the cool morning hours where they were gently destemmed and delivered to small stainless steel fermenters. After a 3 to 5 day cold soak, the must was inoculated with prepared yeast and pumped-over throughout fermentation. Pressed at dryness, the wine aged for 17 months in 40% new French oak barrels, primarily Loreiro, Nadalie and Treuil. It was then blended and lightly filtered to bottle.

### WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES

The 2003 Rhinefarm Merlot offers dusty cherry, cranberry, dried sage and allspice aromas. From the smooth entry, red currant and berry flavors prevail, as the well-integrated tannins and firm acidity carry the elegant structure through to a long, focused finish. Delicious upon release, this structured Merlot will benefit from five years of cellaring and continue to age gracefully for 10 to 12 years.

### ANALYSIS

*Blend: 96% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1% Malbec*  
*Cases Produced: 4,693*

### *Harvested*

Brix: 25.8

TA: 0.64g/100ml

pH: 3.43

### *Bottled in May, 2004*

Alcohol: 14.2%

TA: 0.57 g/100ml

pH: 3.68



Jeff Bundschu, Sixth Generation Vintner



Linda Trotta, Winemaker

