



GUNDLACH
BUNDSCHU
EST. 1858

1999 Rhinefarm Vineyard Merlot

Vintage

1999 was a superb year for Merlot in the Sonoma Valley, with moderately cool temperatures and a warming trend at the beginning of October, which provided a final nudge to the ripening process. The result is reflective of Rhinefarm's unique cool climate—fruit that is supple and expressive, with an all-important natural balance. Yields were below normal, and the vintage saw little to no rain during the critical fall ripening window.

Vineyard

The Merlot is sourced primarily from the estate, blended with a small portion from the Desnudos Vineyard located 700 feet above the valley in the Mayacamas Mountains. The La Paz section of our estate, planted in 1976, is a colder site that contributes complex mineral notes to the blend. The portion sourced from the lowlands in front of the winery tends to show forward red fruit such as cherry/raspberry flavors and provides us with structure and acid. Desnudos fruit from the higher altitude site offers black fruit character and in warm years adds tremendous extract to the palate.

Winemaking

Harvest was conducted in the early morning hours to retain the cool temperature in the grapes. The clusters were gently destemmed and lightly crushed with the rollers half open, to promote a partial whole berry fermentation (roughly ten to fifteen percent) towards developing palate delicacy. Fermentation of each lot was conducted and aged separately until final blending. The wines were pumped over twice daily with gentle sprinklers and tasted daily to observe tannin resolution and wine development. Several lots underwent extended maceration to better balance the tannins. Fourteen months aging in French (75%) and American oak barrels (20% new) and an addition of 3% Cabernet Sauvignon added dimension to the 1999 Merlot. The wine was not fined and was lightly filtered before bottling.

Winemaker Tasting Notes

Opaque, with a saturated purple-red color. The nose of the 1999 Merlot is bursting with aromas of black cherry, rose petals, spice and dried cocoa. A rich middle palate showing flavors of ripe cherry and red currant opens to an elegant frame with integrated tannins and a firm acidity reflective of the cool Rhinefarm vineyard climate.

Analysis

Harvested September 30-October 15, 1999

Brix: 24.5 TA: 0.68 g/100ml pH: 3.60

Bottled in June, 2001

Alcohol: 14.0% TA: 0.57 g/100ml pH: 3.66

Release date: January 1, 2002