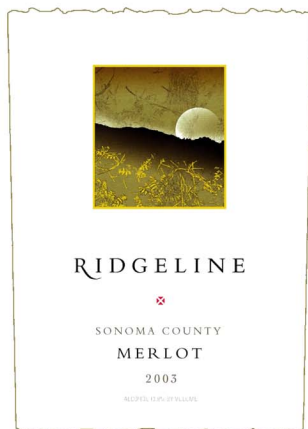


RIDGELINE

2003 MERLOT SONOMA COUNTY



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RELEASE DATE

September 2006

HARVEST INFORMATION

October 1-11
Average sugar at harvest, 24.5°Brix

VINEYARDS

Five in Alexander Valley

TECHNICAL DATA

Alcohol content 13.9% by volume
1,506 cases produced

COOPERAGE

Aged for 21 months in
50% new/50% used French oak barrels



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THE 2003 VINTAGE

The winter was cool with above-average rainfall continuing well into late spring. The growing season started out slowly and by the middle of summer we were about two weeks behind our normal maturation pattern. Complete ripening was assisted by the slightly below-average crop load and having the patience and vine health to wait out a couple of late summer heat spells. A long Indian summer made sure everything was picked at peak flavor.

ABOUT THE VINEYARD

This wine has five primary vineyard sources in Sonoma County; Sonoma Valley, Sonoma Mountain, Knights Valley and Alexander Valley. A combination of warm and cool climate Merlot. Power and density from the cool areas (Sonoma Mountain and Sonoma Valley) and a supple forward fruit from the warmer climates (Alexander Valley and Knights Valley). Pulling leaves to provide sunlight and an aggressive veraison fruit thinning were critical in this cooler vintage

WINEMAKING

Following hand-harvesting, the grapes were destemmed only (whole berries). Fermentations were conducted in a combination of open-top vessels with a punch-down device and closed tanks with gentle cap irrigators. Several types of yeast were used for both inoculated and uninoculated fermenting. Most lots were pressed directly to barrel, and malolactic fermentations finished in barrel. Post-fermentation, selected lots received extended maceration averaging 28 days for further phenolic development. After one year, the wines were racked and returned to barrel for an additional nine months of aging.

TASTING NOTES

A wonderfully complex wine that opens and evolves in your glass. This Merlot is full of cherry, plum, blackberry and blueberry fruits melded with spicy cedar, clove and allspice. Enticing hints of chocolate, butter, vanilla and smoke delight your nose and provide great depth. This is a serious Merlot with excellent structure and finely polished finishing tannins and will age gracefully over the next decade.