

Cakebread Cellars



2006 Dancing Bear Ranch Howell Mountain, Napa Valley

Vineyards

Our Dancing Bear Ranch on Howell Mountain in eastern Napa Valley is planted to classic red Bordeaux varieties, with Cabernet Sauvignon predominating. Hugging steep slopes at elevations ranging from 1,800 to 2,200 feet, the vineyard is named for the omnivorous black bear that has long enjoyed feasting on our mountain grapes as they approach ripeness. Fortunately, our ursine friend leaves behind enough fruit for us to craft this classic Napa Valley mountain red, which in 2006 is a blend of 79% cabernet sauvignon, 17% merlot and 4% cabernet franc.

Vintage 2006

In 2006, a wet spring delayed budbreak and set back vine growth through June. A hot spell in mid-July quickened vine development and sugar accumulation, but August brought a return to cooler temperatures, which persisted through the balance of the growing season. This mild, classic late-summer and early-fall weather pattern allowed for slow, even ripening of our Dancing Bear Ranch grapes, which were harvested between September 30th and October 2nd.

Winemaking

The terroir of our Howell Mountain estate vineyard produces Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc grapes with deep color, bright acidity and full tannic flavor. As a result, our winemaking goal is to capture Dancing Bear Ranch's intense fruit character without extracting overly aggressive tannins. During fermentation and maceration, winemaker Julianne Laks carefully monitors the 'cap' of skins at the top of the fermenting tank, whose contact with the juice determines the degree of tannin extraction. When she believes the wine has achieved an optimal balance of fruit intensity and ripe tannins, the free run wine is drained from the skins and transferred to French oak for aging. The 2006 Dancing Bear Ranch was aged for a total of 26 months in barrel, 60% new, before being bottled in April, 2009.

Tasting Notes

Showcasing the interplay of intensity and elegance that is Dancing Bear's trademark, the 2006 edition of our Howell Mountain red entices with perfumed aromas of ripe black fruits, forest-floor spice, and rich fig and chocolate tones. On the beautifully structured palate, the wine delivers intensely concentrated blackberry, black currant, wild cherry and ripe fig flavors balanced by firm acidity and round, silky tannins. Built for aging and with a deep core of fruit that unfolds in a lengthy, spice-and-mineral tinged finish, this dramatic mountain red makes compelling drinking now, yet its tight-knit structure argues for another 7-10 years of bottle age.

Grape varieties: 79% Cabernet Sauvignon, 17% Merlot, 4% Cabernet Franc

Vineyard: Dancing Bear Ranch, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley

Harvest dates: September 30 – October 2, 2006

Fermentation: 100% in stainless steel

Barrel aging: 26 months in French oak, 60% new

Alcohol: 14.8%

Total acidity: 0.68 g/100 ml

pH: 3.79

Bottled: April, 2009

Winemaker: Julianne Laks