Cakebread Cellars



2002 Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley

Vintage 2002

In 2002, Napa Valley enjoyed a long, mild growing season of consistently warm days and cool nights, with just a few manageable heat spikes in late September and early October. With an expectation of healthy yields, many growers significantly thinned their crops and pruned shoots and leaves extensively to guarantee the vines put all their energy into ripening the remaining grape clusters, ensuring highly concentrated, complex fruit flavors. Cakebread Cellars further maximized grape quality by using advanced soil moisture management techniques to precisely calibrate the amount of water required by the vines at critical junctures throughout the season.

Vineyards

The grapes for our Napa Valley Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon, which in 2002 was blended with 14% Malbec, come from vineyards in Oakville and Rutherford that lie on Napa's western benchlands, with 50% issuing from Cakebread Cellars' estate vineyards. The eastern exposures of these gently sloping, well-shaded hillside vineyards allow the grapes to mature at a slow, even pace, which results in wines with optimal color, fragrance and flavor intensity. In 2002, we harvested the fruit at full ripeness between September 16th and October 8th.

Winemaking

After the grapes were crushed, the "must" (unfermented juice and skins) was cold soaked in tank for two days to enhance color and flavor extraction. Once fermentation begins, the temperature is carefully monitored and adjusted to control the rate of fermentation, as well as keeping favorable conditions for the yeast. The "cap" of skins that forms at the top of the tank is dispersed throughout the fermenting juice for optimal tannin extraction during a procedure called "pumpover" (sprinkling juice over the cap). Another technique called "rack and return" where the juice is drained and returned back over the cap thoroughly macerates juice and skins and helps to soften tannins. The winemaker tastes the wine daily to assess tannin levels, wine texture and mouthfeel. When the wine shows good fruit intensity, and is balanced with ripe tannin, the wine is gently drawn off of the skins as "freerun". The "freerun" was transferred to French oak barrels, of which 55% are new, where it aged 20 months prior to bottling in April 2004.

Tasting Notes

Our 2002 Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon displays a complex, seductive aroma of ripe blackberry and plum fruit augmented by scents of tar, coffee and sweet oak. On the palate, the wine is full-textured and lush, with rich plum, black fig and cocoa flavors supported by smooth tannins. Boasting excellent structure and balance, this delicious Napa Valley Cabernet is delightful to drink now, but will handsomely repay another 7-10 years of cellaring.

Grape varieties: 86% Cabernet Sauvignon

14% Malbec

Vineyards: Oakville and Rutherford districts **Harvest dates**: September 16 – October 8, 2002

Fermentation: 100% in stainless steel **Barrel aging**: 20 months in French oak,

55% new

Alcohol: 14.1%

Total acidity: 0.69 g/100 ml

pH: 3.57

Bottled: April 2004 Winemaker: Julianne Laks