

Cakebread Cellars



2011 Merlot, Napa Valley

Vineyards

Ninety percent of the grapes for our 2011 Napa Valley Merlot came from our estate vineyards, including the cool, hilly Suscol Springs Vineyard east of the town of Napa and our high-elevation Dancing Bear Ranch on Howell Mountain in northern Napa Valley. Controlling our fruit sources ensures we can consistently produce quintessential Napa Valley merlots boasting rich, vibrant varietal flavors, smooth, supple tannins and fresh acidity.

Vintage 2011

2011 was a challenging vintage. The year began with a wet winter and spring, followed by atypically cool summer weather and several October rainstorms. As a result, the grapes ripened very slowly, resulting in a prolonged harvest. At Cakebread Cellars, we took an aggressive approach to the situation, extensively thinning our merlot vines to ensure the remaining fruit reached full maturity and sorting meticulously through the grapes at the winery to guarantee only the best berries reached the crusher. This reduced our production, but achieved our goal of making a rich, concentrated merlot with ripe, rich aromas and flavors.

Winemaking

To maximize the extraction of color, flavor and tannins from the grape must, we fermented in 2011 at higher temperatures and increased the number of ‘pumpovers’ during fermentation. (The pumping of juice from the bottom of a tank of red wine over the cap of skins and other solids that form at the top during fermentation submerges the cap and macerates the skins and juice more thoroughly, thus achieving a greater absorption of color, flavor and tannin from the skins.) Our various vineyard lots of merlot fermented in a mix of small closed and open-top stainless steel tanks, and subsequently were transferred to carefully selected French oak barrels, 35% new. After aging for six months in those barrels, the component lots were blended and the blended wine spent an additional 12 months aging in barrel prior to bottling.

Tasting Notes

Our 2011 Merlot displays expressive aromas of black cherry, red plum and pomegranate with a hint of toasty oak. Rich and juicy on the palate, the wine’s concentrated dark cherry, plum and blackcurrant flavors are supported by fine tannins and balanced acidity, leading to a long, fruitful finish showcasing pleasing cassis and toasty oak tones. Red wines from cool years tend to develop slowly, so while our 2011 Merlot is tasty now, it will reveal the full scope of its charms as it ages.

Composition: 98% Merlot, 1% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1% Syrah
Vineyards: Napa Valley, 90% estate
Harvest dates: September 14 – October 29, 2011
Fermentation: 100% stainless steel
Barrel aging: 18 months in French oak barrels, 35% new

Alcohol: 14.1%
Total acidity: 0.61 g/100 ml
pH: 3.62
Bottled: April, 2013
Winemaker: Julianne Laks