

Cakebread Cellars



2007 Merlot Napa Valley

Vineyards

In 2007, 90% of the grapes for our Napa Valley Merlot came from vineyards in the Oakville, Rutherford and Calistoga districts of upper Napa Valley, with 10% from the cooler Carneros district in the southern end of the valley. As a result, our 2007 Merlot is especially ripe and mouth-filling, dominated by the ripe dark plum and berry flavors characteristic of northern Napa Valley Merlot, with a touch of the bright cherry and spice notes typical of Carneros Merlot fruit.

Vintage 2007

The exemplary 2007 growing season commenced with a dry, mild winter and unusually warm spring, which prompted early budbreak and bloom. The summer was consistently mild, which enabled our modest crop of small-clustered Napa Valley Merlot grapes to ripen slowly and evenly, developing rich, distinctive varietal flavors. Warm temperatures in early September, followed by classic California Indian Summer weather, allowed us to harvest our Merlot fruit at perfect maturity between August 28th and October 10th.

Winemaking

Our winemaking protocol with Merlot is to de-stem and crush the grapes – segregated by vineyard lot – into stainless steel tanks ranging in size from 10 to 15 tons. We cold-soak the must (unfermented juice and skins) for between 24 and 72 hours to extract color and flavor prior to fermentation. Early during the fermentation, we employ a Bordeaux technique called rack-and-return: fermenting juice from one tank is drained and transferred to another, leaving the ‘cap’ of grape skins in the first tank to fall to the bottom. The fermenting wine is then returned to the original tank, re-macerating the skins and maximizing color and flavor extraction while softening tannins. Once fermentation completes, we transfer the various lots to carefully selected French Bordeaux barrels (up to 50% new), where they age 6-8 months prior to blending. The blended wine then ages another 12 -14 months in barrel prior to bottling. This extended barrel time adds elegance and complexity to our Napa Valley Merlot’s rich, ripe fruit.

Tasting Notes

Our 2007 Merlot boasts richly fruity aromas of ripe black plum and cherry fruit, complemented by savory roasted herb and toasted oak scents. Soft and open on the palate, with a round, luxurious texture and supple, seamless tannins, the wine’s lush black cherry and plum flavors culminate in a long, delectable finish brightened by a youthfully flinty, mineral-y tone. Sumptuous, elegant and beautifully balanced, this classic Napa Valley Merlot makes delicious drinking now, but will profit from another 2-3 years of bottle age.

Composition: 90% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Sauvignon,
1% Malbec

Vineyards: Napa Valley

Harvest dates: August 28 – October 10, 2007

Fermentation: 100% stainless steel

Barrel aging: 18 months in French oak barrels, 42% new

Alcohol: 14.2%

Total acidity: 0.64 g/100 ml

pH: 3.67

Bottled: July, 2009

Winemaker: Julianne Laks