2001 Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon
Napa Valley

Vineyards
The grapes for our Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon come from two outstanding vineyards in the Oakville (55%) and Rutherford (45%) appellations of Napa Valley. Both are located in the benchlands of the Mayacamas Mountain Range, on the western side of the valley. The eastern exposures of these gently sloping, well-shaded hillside vineyards allow the grapes to mature at a slow, even pace, and their gravelly loam soils provide excellent drainage, permitting a precise calibration of the amount of water required to nourish the vines. Because of the superb quality of these vineyards, we’ve used them since 1995 to produce our Benchland Select bottling. In 2001, we harvested the fruit at full ripeness between October 4th and October 10th.

Vintage 2001
The 2001 vintage was a bit of a roller coaster ride. A warm March led to early bud break, followed by April frosts that reduced the crop in some north coast regions. May and June were warm, ensuring a healthy bloom and grape set, but the weather turned cool in July. A brief mid-August heat spell reignited the ripening process, which slowed again with cool weather in late August and early September. Fortunately, a classic California Indian summer ensued, bringing the harvest to fruition in October with a moderate crop of fully ripened, small-berried Cabernet Sauvignon grapes blessed with ripe, intense flavors.

Winemaking
After the grapes were crushed, the unfermented juice and skins (must) were cold-soaked in tank for two days prior to fermentation to enhance color and flavor extraction. After fermentation commenced, the juice was drained from one stainless steel tank to another and back again (a technique known as rack-and-return), to foster even more color and flavor extraction and encourage the formation of the phenolic compounds that produce smoother tannins. After fermentation completed, the juice and skins were allowed to macerate for an additional 3.5 weeks, with daily pumpovers, to further extract flavor and soften tannins. The wine was then pressed and transferred to French oak barrels, 75% new, where it aged 23 months prior to bottling in August 2003.

Tasting Notes
Our 2001 Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon offers a seductive aroma of perfectly ripened black fruits laden with scents of black figs, chocolate and smoky, toasty oak. On the palate, the wine delivers opulent, mouth-filling, ripe blackberry and black plum flavors balanced by firm tannins and crisp natural acidity. This lavishly flavored Napa Valley Cabernet, packed with deep, lush fruit, is delicious to drink now, but will handsomely repay 7-10 years of cellaring.

Grape varieties: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon
Alcohol: 14.8%

Vineyards: Oakville and Rutherford districts
Total acidity: 0.72 g/100 ml

Harvest dates: October 10th -14th
pH: 3.8

Fermentation: 100% in stainless steel
Bottled: August 2003

Barrel aging: 23 months in French oak, 75% new
Released: March 2004

Barrel aging: 23 months in French oak, 75% new
Winemaker: Julianne Laks