

Cakebread Cellars



2006 Merlot Napa Valley

Vineyards

Sixty-four percent of the grapes for our 2006 Napa Valley Merlot came from select vineyards in the Oakville, Rutherford and Calistoga districts of upper Napa Valley, while 36% came from the cooler Carneros district at the southern end of the valley. Our up-valley fruit contributed ripe dark plum and berry flavors, while the Carneros fruit added bright black cherry and spicy black tea notes, with vibrant acidity and a vein of refreshing minerality.

Vintage 2006

The long, cool, 2006 growing season imbued our Napa Valley Merlot grapes with concentrated, well-structured flavors balanced by bright acidity. The growing season began with a wet winter, which delayed bud break and led to a late flowering of the vines. Fine weather in June was followed by a heat wave in July, but cool weather returned in August and continued throughout the harvest season, resulting in a long grape ripening period that fostered deep fruit flavors in our Napa Valley reds. The grapes for our 2006 Merlot, which includes 9% Syrah, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon and 2% Petit Verdot, were harvested between October 4th and October 26th.

Winemaking

After the grapes arrive at the winery, we de-stem and crush them, then cold-soak the must (unfermented juice and skins) for 24-36 hours to extract color and flavor prior to fermentation. Once fermentation commences, we used a Bordeaux technique called rack-and-return, in which fermenting juice is drained from one tank and transferred to another, leaving the 'cap' of grape skins in the first tank to fall to the bottom. We then return the fermenting wine to the original tank, re-macerating the skins and maximizing color and flavor extraction while softening tannins through controlled aeration. Once fermentation completes, we age the wine in French oak barrels – a total of 18 months in 2006 – which further softens this delicious, fruit-driven wine.

Tasting Notes

Our 2006 Merlot impresses right off the bat with pretty black cherry and dark plum aromas that gain complexity from subtle earth, hazelnut, black tea, cocoa and toasty oak tones. On the beautifully structured palate, the wine offers pure, concentrated, black cherry and plum flavors balanced by bright acidity and round, supple tannins, concluding in a long, elegant finish that showcases a refreshing minerality and savory black-tea spice tone. Delicious now, this cool-vintage Merlot will blossom further with another 2-3 years of bottle age.

Composition: 87% Merlot, 9% Syrah, 2% Cabernet Sauvignon,
2% Petit Verdot

Vineyards: 100% Napa Valley

Harvest dates: October 4-26, 2006

Fermentation: 100% stainless steel

Barrel aging: 18 months in French oak barrels, 25% new

Alcohol: 14.1%

Total acidity: 0.64 g/100 ml

pH: 3.67

Bottled: July, 2008

Winemaker: Julianne Laks