



MATTHIAS
SON

2011 Red Hen Vineyard Merlot

The wine is 100 percent Merlot from the historic Red Hen Vineyard. Our block is in the far northwest corner of the vineyard, nestled into the crook of Dry Creek. This block has been the basis of our Red Wine since 2003, when it was the inspiration for starting our own commercial wine venture. This block is so rocky and low yielding that the owners of the vineyard planned on putting their reservoir in this location. We couldn't let this happen, so we convinced them to lease us the block so we could farm it ourselves.

The fruit was fermented in a small, open-top tank and punched down by hand two to three times a day, depending on the rate of extraction. The wine was aged in 1 new Bousset barrel, and 2 older neutral barrels. After 20 months of elevage, with no rackings, the wine was bottled.

3.49 pH, the 6.39 g/l TA, 13.5% Alcohol. 72 cases were made.

The wine is very structured—more cabernet-like—but has the richness and aromatic profile of Merlot. The vineyard always gives intense cherry and chocolate aromas, and is balanced by notes of tea and earth. Since 2011 was such a cool year, there are a whole cast of additional herbaceous notes, such as sage, cigar box, and Bay, as well as brambly fruit, such as Marion berry and blackberry.

The Vineyard

The Red Hen Merlot Vineyard, along Dry Creek in the Oak Knoll district, at the very top of the creek's alluvial fan, is a warm site with very light and thin soils, composed of a foot of silty loam sitting on top of at least 10-20 feet of pure cobble. The vines are naturally small berried and early ripening. The stress results in extremely low yields, barely making over a ton per acre of intense and concentrated fruit. In the 1950's through the 1970's, this block produced the top fruit for Christian Brothers, when it was still run by the Church (it was called "block 74"). It was forgotten about as a top quality site until we rediscovered it in 2003.