



2011 Napa Valley Red Wine

This wine is our attempt at crafting a classic balanced and age-worthy red wine—wine like the wines produced and collected around the world when people like Thomas Jefferson and Winston Churchill wouldn't have dinner without a bottle of Claret. Old school age-worthy wine with finesse but with guts, and complete from beginning to end.

The blend is roughly 56 percent Merlot, 32 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 8 percent Cabernet franc, 2 percent Malbec, and 2 percent Petit verdot.

The fruit was fermented at low temperatures in small, open-top tanks and punched down by hand one to three times a day, depending on taste during the fermentations. Maceration was 24 days. The wine was co-fermented (fermented together as one lot) so that the wine could marry from the very beginning—much magic happens during fermentation, and co-fermenting can create a seamless wine in a way that doesn't always happen with blending after the fact.

The wine was aged in 50% new French oak (Taransaud and Bossuet), and 50% older French oak barrels. The wine was given 20 months of elevage (aging in barrel). Only 222 cases were made.

The unusually long and cool 2011 growing season resulted a very savory and aromatic vintage. Along with the typical bright red fruits there is plenty of dark graphite and mineral character, and gorgeous dried herb aromas. The Red Wine has its classic cherries, dark chocolate, Marionberries, olive, black tea and forest aromas. There is the trademark structure for aging. The pH is 3.60, TA is 6.03, and alcohol is 13.5%.

The Vineyards

The Red Hen Merlot Vineyard, along Dry Creek, 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 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"). The vineyard provides rich ripe aromatic fruit.

In the mouth of the Dry Creek canyon, upstream from the Red Hen, the Meadowbrook Cabernet Sauvignon receives the nightly air current off of Mt. Veeder, which also blocks the intense late afternoon sun. This makes it the cool foil to the warmer Red Hen. The coolness and sun protection lets the fruit develop and maintain an unusually strong backbone of acidity and tannin. Every year, on schedule, as the nights get cold, the leaves change color and drop before any other vineyard in the area, signaling that the fruit is ready to harvest. The vineyard sits on old creek deposits, and the spots selected for harvest are on shallow clay with coarse sand, over dry cobbles and silt. The vineyard provides structure and firm acidity.

The Cabernet franc and Petit verdot are from The Matthiasson Vineyard, our home, and the Malbec is from one of Steve's clients in St. Helena.