



2003 Napa Valley Red Wine

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SON

The 2003 Napa Valley Red Wine is a blend of fruit from two vineyards which sit against the hills on the far west side of the Oak Knoll District. They are both on Dry Creek; one is in the cool mouth of the canyon, the other is on a warm gravel bar.

The Bordeaux/Napa blend is 40 percent Meadowbrook Cabernet Sauvignon and 60 percent Red Hen Merlot. The cool Cabernet vineyard was chosen for its tannic structure and firm acidity, and the warm rocky Merlot vineyard for its rich, ripe, aromatic fruit. The ratios were determined in the field before harvest, tasting fruit and observing the vines and the vintage.

The fruit was fermented at low temperatures in very small, open-top tanks, and punched down by hand two to three times a day. The wines were blended immediately after the lots were pressed so that they could marry from the very beginning.

The wine was aged in 100% French Oak Taransaud barrels, 60% new, and 40% used.

After 18 months of elevage, with minimal rackings, the wine was bottled, unfiltered and unfiltered. 120 cases were made.

The wine is rich and fleshy, with intense aromatics and a long finish. The tannins are ripe and supple. It has deep, dark fruit, and a soft, but dense mouthfeel. Fresh acidity balances the ripeness.

The Vineyards

The Red Hen Merlot Vineyard, along Dry Creek, at the very top of the dry creek 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. With very low vigor, the vines are naturally small berried and early ripening. The stressed vines are extremely low yielding, 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"). Over the years, however, the block has been buried unnoticed in a large corporate vineyard. We discovered it in Steve's consulting work, and to enable us to do all of the work ourselves, we were able to lease just that 1.7 acre block.

In the mouth of the Dry Creek canyon, 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 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 switch turns in the vines and the leaves turn color and drop before any other vineyard in the area, and the fruit is ready to harvest. The vineyard sits on old creek deposits, and the spots selected for harvest are on a shallow, heavy clay with coarse sand, over dry cobbles and silt.