



## 2006 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 wine with finesse but with guts. The blend is 51 percent Merlot, 40 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 5 percent Cabernet franc, 3 percent Petit verdot, and 1 percent Malbec.

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 34 days. The wine was blended immediately after the lots were pressed, so that the wine could marry from the very beginning.

The wine was aged in 50% new French oak (Taransaud, Boutes, Bossuet), and 50% neutral barrels. After 18 months of elevage, with only one racking when it was blended, the wine was bottled, unfinned and unfiltered. 290 cases were made.

This vintage gave a freshness and minerality that can be very elusive in the Napa Valley. The aroma shows violets, red and black cherries, chocolate and black raspberries. The palate has cleansing acidity and firm chocolaty tannins, and has a beginning, middle, and end. The long finish returns to chocolate and black fruit, with a hint of Earl Gray tea. The pH is 3.64, the TA is 5.73, and the alcohol is 14.6 %.

### 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 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 shallow clay with coarse sand, over dry cobbles and silt. The vineyard provides structure and firm acidity.

The Cabernet franc, Petit verdot and Malbec were such small quantities that they were gleaned out of favorite spots in vineyards of Steve's consulting clients.

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