

Chateau Montelena 2003 Montelena Estate Cabernet Sauvignon

Winemaker's Notes

From start to finish, the 2003 growing season in our Estate Cabernet vineyards was a fine one. A warm March evolved into a rainy month of April, setting the stage for excellent vine health and growth later into the year. This is an especially important factor in the “heart” of the Montelena Estate Cabernet vineyard because these blocks possess very well drained soils. Our older Estate vines don't naturally produce very much fruit, so a little extra water early on can be quite the elixir for the longer term.

Vintage Weather

Good weather prevailed for most of the summer. Then a welcome September warm-up stimulated the onset of harvest, and we enjoyed consistently stable ripening weather. The harvest itself was quite lengthy. In fact, we can point to two distinctly different waves of picking. The first of these occurred early on in September from the super low yielding, droughty, dry-farmed hillside blocks planted on volcanic soil. Fruit from these vines came in with ripeness and maturity reminiscent of 1999 and 2001 vintages. Then during October we completed harvest in blocks planted on our alluvial and sedimentary soils. Interestingly enough, this second wave of fruit – possessing ideal chemistry - reminded me of the 1986, 1992, 1994, and 1997 vintages. Even after more than 30 years of farming these Estate vines, their brilliant variety never ceases to amaze me.

Tasting Notes

The wine is a typically bright ruby red, with opaque density and color, which leads to a nice array of aromas: sweet black currant jam, with hints of black cherry and flowers. There is much fruit in the nose, not unexpected considering the excellent ripeness achieved in this vintage. The unique blend of soils in our vineyard leads to very pleasing layers of complexity, and I particularly like the evident menthol-cedar note attributable to the volcanic soil component. On the palate it delivers intense, broad and sweet fruit, layered with spicy cherry, and even a bit of chocolate. The overall structure is ripe and rich, pure and well delineated. It is very much in the Montelena Estate style, in which vineyard flavors drive the wine. It is a very structured Cabernet from a great growing year, and it will greatly reward you after a few more years of cellaring.



Production and Technical Data

Harvest Dates:	Sept. 21 to Oct. 29
Bottling Date:	December 2005
Release Date:	March 2007
Production:	12,000cases
Barrels:	25% new French%
Time in Oak:	22 months
Sugar at Harvest:	23.6 to 25.2 brix
Alcohol:	13.8%