

Chateau Montelena 2000 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Winemaker's Notes

The 2000 vintage was long and slow. We had forecast a small crop for the Cabernet and it came in even lighter than expected. The Merlot was also a much lighter crop than average. Mediocre vine growth in 1999 resulted in fewer buds than needed for a normal sized crop, and combined with cluster loss from windy heat in June made for a bleak year.

In addition to Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot from our Estate, we brought in grapes from four vineyards in the Calistoga district. In spite of the forecasts for low yields, we worked diligently with the growers to maintain their canopy management and thinning. The smaller crop size from all of our vineyards proved to be a blessing because the grapes were able to ripen very well in the cool vintage. This will set us apart from the rest of Napa Valley, since we ended up with riper fruit than our neighbors to the south and west.

Vintage Weather

Cool. Average rainfall. Growing season dominated by cool weather with spikes of intense heat in June. Cluster loss from windy heat in June kept yield low. The light crop allowed full ripening and harvesting before the onset of wet weather. The wine is very refined, high quality.

Tasting Notes

The color of the wine is a deep garnet red in the glass, like nice dark claret. The nose is raspberry, bramble, cassis, some earth and the characteristic Cabernet black pepper spice. There is a bit more cedar and pepper up front with the softer Merlot aromas in the background. It is a wine with more classic cassis and terroir, rather than the dominant jammy fruit we see in warmer vintages.

The palate is soft, with warm cassis, lots of red berry, and great varietal character. It has a very polished and supple tannin structure, highlighting the complexity that results from the blend of the different vineyards. The judicious use of 20% new oak barrels also gives a soft warmth and depth to the wine's basic character without being obvious. In the end it is a wine and a vintage where our more traditional winemaking techniques and low yields combine to give an elegant, Old World style wine. You can enjoy this one right out of the gate!

Bo Barrett, Winemaker



Production and Technical Data

Harvest Dates:	Sept. 20 to Oct. 6
Bottling Date:	March 2002
Release Date:	October 2003
Production:	9,200cases
Appellation:	Napa Valley
Time in Oak:	18-20 months
Sugar at Harvest:	22.9° to 24.3° brix
Alcohol:	13.9%