

Chateau Montelena 2004 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Winemaker's Notes

The 2004 Vintage began in a very normal fashion and we had smooth sailing throughout the entire Chardonnay harvest. But by early September it became downright challenging. As Vineyard Manager Dave Vella said, "After 30 years you would think you had seen it all, but Nooo!" On September 2 a high temperature pattern set in, bringing with it strong, drying winds and exceptionally low humidity. This acted to shorten the second half of the vintage, which consisted totally of red grapes. These intense weeks tested our 'wine-growing' skills, but I am proud to say our experience produced exceptional results.

Vintage Weather

Red grape maturation and flavor development were slowed by a decidedly mild growing season. The sudden onset of September heat immediately created totally different conditions. This presented us with the challenge of achieving proper red fruit flavors before hot, dry conditions cause grapes to shrivel on the vine. It was our "Walk the Block" strategy. Every morning and evening we walked the rows to estimate how long each of the vines could hold out, plus how many dried grapes we could afford to drop before picking. It was really a day-by-day, block-by-block proposition throughout all of the red grape vineyards. For an entire two-week period we felt like firemen putting out brushfires, hitting one hot spot and then racing to the next one. At first we brought in fruit from all of the blocks, including vineyards whose harvests were usually separated by several weeks. Then we resumed a more typical harvest pattern, allowing vines in the richer Estate soils, usually picked later, a little more hang time. These blocks contribute not only big fruit flavors but also greater overall complexity to the final blend.

Tasting Notes

The wine has a nice dark, garnet Cabernet color. In the glass, the nose is primarily rich aromas of black cherry currant and menthol. It is very much fruit-dominated, and for the first few years its jammy Cabernet-berry and menthol characteristics will predominate - after which the soil's contribution and winemaking, with the hints of new wood will begin to emerge. On entry it delivers a broad mouthful of fruit with cherry and cassis, plus relatively pronounced Cabernet tannins typical, at this young stage, of a fast-ripening crop. Vintages like 2004 do tend to concentrate the juice so every flavor element comes across stronger. Think of this wine as I do, as a good "old school" example of our Napa Valley Cabernet.



Production and Technical Data

Harvest Dates:	Cabernet Sauvignon: Sept. 4 to Sept. 27/Merlot: Sept. 7 to Sept. 15
Bottling Date:	May 2006
Release Date:	Spring 2007
Production:	11,000cases
Composition/Blend:	86% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc%
Appellation:	Napa Valley
Barrels:	20% new French%
Time in Oak:	18 months
Sugar at Harvest:	Cabernet Sauvignon: 24.9-27.6 brix/Merlot: 24.7-26.5 brix

Alcohol: 14.7%