

Only four percent of the wines produced in California grow in Napa Valley. It's a pretty small place just north of San Francisco. Yet in its hills and nooks one discovers new places to grow great wines. In 2009 Winemaker Alex Cose found some vineyards on Atlas Peak that produced superb Merlot. After fermentation and barrel aging, the lot stood out as worthy of its own bottling instead of being blended into our Cabernet Sauvignon. We think you will agree with the decision.

VINTAGE: In 2009 Napa Valley winegrowers saw a later harvest once again. The dry spring with only a handful of frosty nights and a mild summer gave grapes the opportunity to develop without the threat of disease or sunburn. May rains kept the vines with water late in the season and the few days of over 100 degrees led to moderate vigor and excellent berry development. Temperate weather promotes mature flavors, lower sugars, balanced acids and tannin levels. Longer hang time into the cooler days of late September and October helped to reduce green flavors and concentrate fully mature grape flavors.

HARVEST: In late September we started harvest by picking early in the morning to insure the grapes arrived at the winery before the heat of the day. This gets the juice into a cold soak situation faster without the need for additional energy to cool the grapes in tank. After a gentle breaking of the skins, the grapes were cold soaked for a minimum of three days and then fermented in stainless steel for approximately two weeks. Twice daily the fermenting juice is pumped over the top or "cap" of floating grape skins to further extract all fruit flavors. After fermentation, the grapes received a gentle pressing and the wine aged for over nine months in French and American oak before bottling.

TASTING NOTES: Our 2009 Merlot shows its depth with a rich garnet color. Aromas of juicy boysenberries and cherry pie fill the glass. Crème brûlée and brown sugar notes from oak aging complement the ripe berry aromas. Mountain fruit characteristics show in the intensity of the fruit flavors. The entry enjoys sweet berry notes of raspberry and cherry with a finish of jammy boysenberry preserves. The oak notes of chocolate and wood smoke pair with and complement the rich fruit layers. Refined tannins support this balanced wine that doesn't show the typical alcohol component found in many Merlots. As the wine develops in the glass, one may enjoy ongoing berry notes, a touch of allspice evolving in the middle, while the wine continues to lengthen on the finish. Smooth, silky and profound berry flavors confirm this wine's birthplace as Napa Valley.

AVALON

NAPA VALLEY

MERLOT

VINTAGE 2009



Composition: 88% Merlot
6% Syrah
5% Cabernet Sauvignon
1% Petite Verdot

Stats: Alc. 13.8%, ph 3.81, TA 5.0