

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. Our second offering of Merlot builds on such a discovery on Atlas Peak in 2009.

VINTAGE: In 2010 Napa Valley winegrowers saw plenty of winter rains. The wet winter led into a dry spring and summer with cooler than average temperatures. Crop loads were good and except for a heat spike in late August, the grapes ripened long on the vines. Temperate weather promotes mature flavors, lower sugars, balanced acids and tannin levels. Longer hang time into the cooler days of late September and October also helped to reduce green flavors and concentrate fully mature grape flavors.

HARVEST: In early October 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 2010 Merlot shows its depth with a rich garnet color. Aromas of plum, peach compote, tobacco, rhubarb, and anise fill the glass. Caramelized sugar and vanilla notes from oak aging complement the ripe fruit aromas. Mountain fruit characteristics show in the intensity of the fruit flavors. The entry enjoys sweet berry notes of olallieberry followed by a finish of blackberry preserves. The oak imparted flavors of mocha and toasted brioche pair with and complement the rich fruit layers. Refined tannins support this balanced wine. As this medium/heavy weight Merlot develops in the glass, one may enjoy ongoing juicy, dark berry notes, a touch of cocoa spice evolving in the middle and a lingering finish.

AVALONWINERY.COM - T. 707.938.9129 F. 707.938.9189

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NAPA VALLEY

MERLOT

VINTAGE 2010



Composition: 87% Merlot
13% Cabernet Sauvignon

Stats: Alc. 13.8%
pH 3.70
TA 5.8