

JUSTIN

VINEYARDS & WINERY

2003 JUSTIFICATION

Vintage Summary

The vintage began with the warmest winter since 1996. As a result, our grapevines began their growing season 2 weeks earlier than normal. A warm spring followed and in early June, temperatures began to climb and the ripening followed. A few cool spikes in late August allowed the vines to slow down and rest before the critical period prior to harvest. September and October followed with warm consistent weather that ripened both Merlot and Cabernet Franc evenly. In late October, the weather cooled down, making it difficult to ripen anything remaining on the vine.

Vineyard Practices

Aggressively pruning the vines helps focus the plants stored carbohydrates on promoting strong early growth in shoots. When shoots reach around 6 to 8 inches, we remove any growth not intentionally left at pruning. To help intensify color, ripen tannins and maintain healthy vines, we increased sun exposure and air circulation by removing laterals and creating a tunnel through the middle of the canopy. Merlot clusters tend to be large and have shoulders or wings. Prior to veraison, we removed these shoulders and wings to ensure we had even maturity throughout the vineyard. In the Cabernet Franc fields, we removed any green or pink colored fruit which could result in unripe flavors. The extra crop removal resulted in yields of around 2 tons per acre. Merlot, a thin-skinned variety, was harvested September 12th, 2003. Cabernet Franc needed a little more time in the sun to ripen its thick skins, and was harvested in late October just before the weather cooled off.

Winemaking Practices

A skilled crew handpicked the grapes into ½ ton picking bins. Once at the winery, our crusher-destemmer removed all of the stems and lightly crushed the grapes. The must (crushed grapes) was then placed in a stainless steel tank. UV-43 yeast, a strain known for its intense cherry and berry characteristics, then fermented the wine to dryness over a ten-day period. During fermentation, the Merlot tank was pumped over twice a day for 1 hour and 15 minutes, twice as long as usual. The goal was to extract as much color and flavor as possible early in the fermentation, and press off just after dryness. This resulted in Merlot with great fruit expression, delicate balance and no green flavors. The Cabernet Franc was pumped over twice a day for 35 minutes. The fermentation lasted 10 days and we kept the pump over process going for two weeks after dryness. Ripe skins and seeds allowed us to extract as much as possible from the Cabernet Franc, creating a wine with great depth. 52% new French was used to soften the wine. Malolactic fermentation took place in barrel to help integrate the new oak.

Tasting Notes

Aromas of black cherry, spice and leather make up the nose of this wine. The entry is filled with red and black fruit, closely followed by a lengthy mid palate with coffee and dark chocolate flavors. The finish is layered with hints of licorice, caramel and a touch of vanilla.

Specifics

Barrel aging: 18 months in 225-L oak barrels, 52% new

Blended: 2/7-2/12 2005

Harvest dates: 9/12-10/24, 2003

Brix at Harvest: 25.7

Harvest method: 100% hand-harvested

Fermentation: 8 to 12 days

Maceration: 14 to 21 days including fermentation

Total Acidity: .64 g/100ml

Pump overs: 2 times daily during fermentation

Yeasts: UV-43

Barrel replacement: 20-30% annually on average

Racking: every 3 months

Fining: None

Filtering: None

Bottled: June 1-2, 2005

pH: 3.79

Alcohol: 15.0%

Barrels: Allier, Nevers