

JUSTIN

VINEYARDS & WINERY

2004 JUSTIFICATION

Vintage Summary

The 2004 vintage began with relatively low rainfall. Dry soils and a warm February resulted in an early bud break. Spring generated ideal weather, limiting heat spikes and allowing vines to produce full, dense canopies. In early June, we removed laterals and selective leaves to manipulate the canopy, and allow filtered light to penetrate the clusters. The warmest summer since 1997 produced consecutive months of 90-degree temperatures. Veraison came early and was very even, allowing us to drop any discolored or green fruit left prior to harvest. August was nearly perfect, with only one day jumping above 100 degrees. September and October remained generally warm, providing a perfect climate for harvesting ripe fruit while still maintaining natural acidity.

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 7th, 2004. Cabernet Franc needed a little more time in the sun to ripen its thick skins, and develop its hard green tannins into soft, supple, more palatable flavors. The Cabernet Franc was harvested September 28th.

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. The relatively early harvest of Merlot brought great acid levels, helping extract bright, intense color during fermentation. Two pump overs per day, plus occasional delestage (the process of racking the fermenting wine into another tank and returning over the top with a high powered pump) helped create the complexity and balance of this Merlot. The Cabernet Franc had a combined fermentation and maceration that lasted 3 weeks. The consistent year allowed us to extract the black fruit, earthy and leather characters from the ripe skins. Pump overs took place twice a day for all 21 days. Malolactic fermentation took place in barrel and 36% new French Oak helped add depth to this Cabernet Franc/ Merlot blend.

Tasting Notes

Aromas of blueberry, licorice and light earthy characters make up the nose of this 2004 wine. The entry is soft and lush, rich with black fruit and spice. A fleshy mid palate follows, and characterizes the ripe, powerful vintage. Slightly chalky, yet round tannins from the Cabernet Franc combine with bright acidity from the Merlot, to make this wine balanced and seamless from start to finish. Hints of caramel and cinnamon from the new French oak are the encore of this unique blend.

Specifics

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

Blended: 1/6-1/7, 2006

Harvest dates: 9/7-9/28, 2004

Brix at Harvest: 25.9

Harvest method: 100% hand-harvested

Fermentation: 8 to 12 days with UV-43

Maceration: 14 to 21 days including fermentation

Total Acidity: .61 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 5, 2006

pH: 3.74

Alcohol: 15.0%

Barrels: Allier, Nevers