

Fall-Winter 2001-2002

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE, A GLANCE AT THE PAST

BEGINNING IN 1995 AND CONTINUING until 1998, we ripped out and replanted eighty percent of our vineyards. We started with the Chardonnay in '95 and '96, continued with the Merlot in '96 and '97, and then finished up with the Cabernet Sauvignon vineyard in '98.

Last Friday, we did our first comprehensive tasting panel of the 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon (our second harvest of the new vineyard). The colors are incredible; the fruit also shows great complexity, ripeness, and classic structure that hints at great ageability. This glimpse of the future looks very bright!

Presently we are releasing two wines, the 1998 Napa Valley Merlot, and the 1998 Reserve Napa Valley Merlot, which were harvested almost exactly three years ago at the end of a very challenging growing season, the polar opposite of this season. Instead of early bud break and the tremendous spring heat that we had this year, 1998 gave us cool temperatures and rain through the Fourth of July. The summer never did develop the heat that we are accustomed to but by patiently waiting and praying, we finally got our vineyards to ripen by late November. Some credit also must be given to our unique micro-climate on Spring Mountain where we get more degree days of sunlight than other regions of Napa Valley. In 1998 this advantage of our location proved to be even more crucial than ever as other areas never did fully ripen thus explaining the wide range of quality from the 1998 vintage.

I am very proud of our '98s; the 1998 Napa Valley Merlot received the third highest score of all Merlots from Wine & Spirits Magazine in their November issue. Our '98 Cab received the award for best Cabernet Sauvignon, best red wine, best wine in the limited production category, and best label at the Los Angeles County Fair this year!

The capper for me, though, is the 1998 Reserve Napa Valley Merlot. This wine embodies everything the all-knowing critics said that the 1998 vintage could not do. They said we could not make wines of great ripeness, great intensity, great complexity, combined with firm yet round and approachable tannins that will drink well into the future but are also very approachable and delicious today--but we did!

I hope this brief glimpse of the future and glance at the past provides a better understanding of what we have to offer today. Enjoy.

--Michael Keenan