

2000 Merlot

Roumiguierie Vineyard

Clear Lake

Vineyard: The Roumiguierie Vineyard lies on the shore of Clear Lake, California's largest lake, in the shadow of the dormant Mt. Konociti volcano. Over the millennia, the mix of mineral rich, red volcanic soils and lake bottom deposits has formed an ideal soil for wine grapes. The lake draws cool air down from the surrounding Mayacamus Mountains to moderate the warm days. Northern California's dry climate provides cool nights. Considered the tourism step-child of Napa and Sonoma Counties because of its remoteness, Lake County, and the Clear Lake Appellation in particular, is considered by vintners to be one of the premier California North Coast viticultural areas and the Roumiguierie family one of its best growers.

Vintage: The vintage started out great with normal rainfall and a relatively mild summer. Harvest started timely the first week in September, and all looked good. However, it rained in early October and turned unseasonably cold from then on. The grapes picked before the rain were great, those after were not as ripe as we like. Fortunately, this Merlot vineyard, picked in prime condition on September 30th, was the last one we picked before the rain.

The Wine: We've made a lot of Merlot from various vineyards and appellations. This one, like so many of our others, is distinctive, showing richness and complexity that we have come to expect from volcanic soils. It presents multi-layered flavors unique to the climate of Clear Lake, where cold winters foster a deep dormancy that produces more robust flavors in the fruit. It has more tannin and Cabernet-like structure than our Russian River Merlot, offering a masculine approach that every Cabernet lover will appreciate. This is not one of your soft, one-dimensional, entry level Merlots. It is what Merlot wants to be: dark, full-bodied and well structured, like the great wines of St. Emilion, France.

The grapes were destemmed without crushing, leaving 50% whole berries. Fermentation took place in open-top fermenters, a labor-intensive technique. Gentle handling from picking through bottling, a trademark of Deerfield Ranch winemaking, retained the true Merlot fruit character.

Merlot is typically barrel aged for just a few months (if at all) lest extended barrel-aging cause a loss of fruitiness. Our techniques retain more of the fruit character to begin with, so we can barrel it longer. The reward of longer aging, though more costly, is better wine, more complete and more interesting. This Merlot was aged for 21 months in barrels and several more months in the bottle, a commitment to quality that few wineries make.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemakers:	Robert Rex, Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, September 30, 2000
Brix at harvest:	23.5°
Acid at harvest:	5.98g/L as Tartaric
pH at harvest:	3.38
Yeast:	Pasteur Red
Fermentation:	Open top tanks, 17 days, punched down 3 times per day
Max. Fermentation Temp:	94°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100%
Blend:	95% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon
Barrel aging:	21 months in 85% French Oak, 15% American, 35% new overall
Fining:	none
Filtration:	coarse "bug screen" at bottling
SO ₂ at Bottling:	15 ppm
SO ₂ at Release:	0 to 3 ppm
Bottled:	1,008 cases - July 30, 2002
Alcohol:	14.4%
Released:	October 15, 2002
Awards & Reviews:	Not yet submitted for review or competition

