

1998 Merlot

Russian River Vineyards
Russian River Valley
Biodynamically farmed

Deerfield Ranch Winery, in the heart of Sonoma Valley at Kenwood, is a 5,000-case winery, specializing in small lots of handmade wines from select vineyards of the California North Coast region. Visitors sample our wines at the *Family Wineries of Sonoma Valley Tasting Room* on Sonoma Highway in Kenwood. Find us on the Web at www.deerfieldranch.com, or call 707 833-5215.

Russian River Vineyards, just a stone's throw from the river in Forestville, is the oldest Merlot vineyard in Sonoma County. It is farmed using Biodynamic techniques, a step beyond organic farming, balancing the needs of the environment with the needs of the vineyard. These practices produce a better ecosystem, better-tasting grapes and a better wine. This vineyard won the Gold Medal at the 1997 Sonoma County Harvest Fair for Best Vineyard in Sonoma County, truly a great honor.

The Wine: The Merlot grapes were picked and sorted by hand and crushed, leaving about 40% whole berries. Fermented took place in an open-top tank, punching down the must manually, three times-a-day over the 11-day fermentation. Pasteur Red yeast, first isolated, by Louis Pasteur and widely used in Bordeaux, France, added complexity. The new wine was aged in French and American oak barrels for 15 months, topped every-other-week and racked 4 times. A bit of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc were blended to taste with the Merlot to create a longer, more-structured finish. The result is akin to the great wines of St. Emilion, France.

Tasting Notes: This is an elegant, well structured Merlot. The color is a brilliant red with just a hint of purple. The nose is restrained until it airs for awhile, opening up with flowers and a touch of wood. The taste, like the nose is restrained at first, but as it warms on the palate the flavors broaden and sweeten into a lovely harmony of ripe strawberries, white peaches and sweet wood. The balance is the best part, no sharp edges, no gaps, just harmony. The finish is smooth with just a touch of tannin, no sharp acids and well-integrated oak. This wine will definitely improve with bottle age. We think maybe 8 to 10 years will bring its full potential. It is a bit more French-like than the '97 Merlot RRV, more elegant and balanced. It's a great food wine, complimenting white meats, grilled vegetables, or ham sandwiches.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemaker:	Robert Rex
Harvested:	By hand, November 4, 1998
Brix at Harvest:	23° Brix
Acid at Harvest:	.69g/100ml as Tartaric
pH (composite):	3.40
Yeast:	Pasteur Red (Bordeaux variety)
Fermentation:	Open-top fermentor for 11 days, punched 3 times/day
Max. Fermentation Temp.:	85°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100%
Aging:	15 months in 90% French Oak, 10% American Oak, 30% new overall
Fining:	unfined
Blend:	90% Merlot, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Cabernet Franc.
SO ₂ at Bottling:	14 ppm free
Bottled:	244 cases - March 1, 2000
Alcohol:	13.3 %
Released:	November 30, 2000
Awards & Reviews:	Not yet submitted or reviewed.

