

1997 Merlot

Ladi's Vineyard
Sonoma County

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.

The Vineyard: Ladi's Vineyard is in the foothills east of Santa Rosa in central Sonoma County. It has repeatedly won the coveted Gold Medal at the Sonoma County Harvest Fair for Best Vineyard in the county. Lean volcanic soil, southern hillside exposure combined with Ladi Danielik's masterful viticulture techniques result in a crop of small-berried, deeply black, intensely flavored Merlot and Cabernet grapes--the source of the incredible, rich flavors in this wine. High-trellising of the vines mitigates the warming effect of the sun-heated soil and allows a longer ripening period resulting in more complex flavors. Hand picking was spread over several mornings to assure maximum attention to selection and gentle fruit handling .

The Wine: Destemming without crushing rollers, left about 30% whole berries, that were fermented in small, open-top bins so they could be manually pushed down 3 times daily over the 10-day primary fermentation. Pasteur Red yeast, originally isolated by Louis Pasteur, is widely used in Bordeaux, France. Temperature of the must was allowed to peak at 90°, to fully extract the flavors and tannins from the dark skins. The new wine was aged in French and American oak barrels for 26 months, topped every-other-week and racked 5 times. A bit of Cabernet Sauvignon was blended in to create a longer, more-structured finish. The result is an amazingly complex and full-bodied Merlot in the style of the great wines of St. Emilion, France.

Tasting Notes: This is a big, rich, full-bodied Merlot. The color is a brilliant dark garnet. The nose is full of violets, allspice, nutmeg, cedar and black cherries. The taste fills the senses with layer-upon-layer of complex flavors that leave no part of your palate unsensitized. The forward fruit is enriched by an intermingling of grape and oak tannins, balanced acid and an overall richness that waxes as it warms. The high alcohol drives the flavors without being hot or hindering the finish which seems to go on forever. There are no sharp edges or protruding points to this wine. It's all that a great Merlot can be. It drinks well now and cries out to be laid down for several years (15 years would not be too long). The 1997 vintage was great and this is one of it's best wines.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemaker:	Robert Rex
Harvested:	By hand, September 24, 1997
Brix at Harvest:	24.8° Brix
Acid at Harvest:	.69g/100ml as Tartaric
pH (composite):	3.35
Yeast:	Pasteur Red (Bordeaux variety)
Fermentation:	In small, open-top fermentors for 10 days, punched 3 times/day
Max. Fermentation Temp.:	90 °F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100%
Aging:	26 months in 90% French Oak, 10% American Oak, 35% new overall
Fining:	2 fresh egg whites/barrel
SO ₂ at Bottling:	14 ppm free
Bottled:	101 cases - December 21, 1999
Alcohol:	15%
Released:	February 15, 2000

