

1997 Merlot

Russian River Vineyards
Russian River Valley

Deerfield Ranch Winery, in the heart of Sonoma Valley at Kenwood, is a 9000-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.

Vineyard: The Russian River Appellation is ideal for Merlot. Mike Topolos' 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. 1997 was a perfect growing season, one of the best of the decade.

The Wine: The grapes were picked and sorted by hand, crushed, leaving about 30% whole berries, and fermented in an open-top tank so that they could be manually pushed down three times daily over the 12-day, extended maceration. The Pasteur Red yeast, first isolated by Louis Pasteur, is widely used in Bordeaux, France. The temperature of the must was allowed to peak at 92°. 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 Franc from Dry Creek Valley was blended in to create a longer, more-structured finish. These techniques produced an amazingly complete and full-bodied Merlot in the style of the great wines of St. Emilion, France. The low pH of the wine will give it a long life even though the acid level is low and the tannins are soft.

Tasting Notes: This is a big, full-bodied Merlot. The color is a brilliant, dark garnet. The nose is full of violets with a hint of allspice. The promise of the nose is rewarded in the taste by rich, round layers of ripe cherries, blueberries, vanilla, subtle, well-integrated oak, and a flavor that can only be described as Merlot grapes. The finish is long and smooth, imparting a lingering sense of fulfillment. The softness of the acid and tannins gives the wine a subtle elegance. Drinkable now, it will age superbly, reaching its peak in about 8 years.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemaker:	Robert Rex
Harvested:	By hand, October 1, 1997
Brix at Harvest:	23.5 Brix
Acid at Harvest:	.62g/100ml as Tartaric
pH (composite):	3.28
Yeast:	Pasteur Red (Bordeaux variety)
Fermentation:	In small, open-top fermentors for 12 days, punched 3 times/day
Max. Fermentation Temp.:	92 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:	300 cases – December 21, 1999
Alcohol:	14.5%
Released:	February 15, 2000
Awards & Reviews:	Silver Medal, Grand Harvest Awards; not yet reviewed.

