

2001 Cabernet Sauvignon North Coast

Vintage: 2001 was one of those almost perfect vintages. We are blessed in northern California with grape growing climate that is about the best in the world. It has the coolness of northern latitude, like Bordeaux, France, is moderated by the constancy of the Pacific Ocean, and is as dry in the summer as along the edge of the Mediterranean. The soils are mostly volcanic in origin, good for the trace minerals that the vines like. Vintage 2001 found all these elements in perfect harmony. Spring was mild with little threat of frost and ended dry so that we had to do very little sulfuring in the vineyards. We had very few heat waves and none during the harvest, when they can be destructive. The grapes ripened slowly and evenly. The fall rain waited until we had everything crushed. The long mild season produced an abundance of flavors with which to work.

The Wine is a blend of our three favorite Bordeaux varietals that 100s of years of winemaking have proven to make a marriage made in heaven. We've taken them from three distinct appellations from growers with whom we have many years of relationship. The Cabernet Sauvignon come from a 30-year-old vineyard farmed by the Roumiguier family in Clear Lake, Lake County. It gives the wine its structure, like a rich stock as the base for a soup. The Merlot is from Jon Peterson's vineyard in Kenwood, Sonoma Valley. The Cab Franc is from the Livingstein Vineyard near the top of Mt. Veeder in Napa, a mountain vineyard producing tough skinned Cab Franc ideal for the final touch in the "soup."

Blending is done by taste, schooled by a body of knowledge gained by tasting the grapes and wine in as many as 50 different annual lots at frequent intervals. We chose these particular vineyard lots because the flavors were so complimentary to blend. We were after a nice Cabernet flavor showing off the floral attributes of the grape built on a sound base of pigmented tannin. The Merlot, with its unique blossom like notes expanded these flavors forward and up, like a cresting wave. The Cab Franc acts like the dark chocolate, taking the flavors to the lower sides of the palate into the upper reaches of the nasal cavity. Unique fermentation protocols and barrel programs were used for each wine. The wines were blended in its second season and the blend went back in barrel for another few months before final adjustment including a polish fining with egg whites.

The result is a blend of flavors unique to each grape with just enough oak to set the stage. Extra bottle aging before release has mellowed the tannins and rounded its edges. It's full-bodied and stout without being the least bit aggressive. The Cabernet finish is long, the Merlot front-end is luscious and the Cabernet Franc is just what we were looking for, the sensation of the best dark chocolate with hints of allspice and dried vanilla bean.

Winemakers: Robert Rex & Michael Browne
Harvested: by hand, CF-10/03, MR-10/11, and CS-10/18/2005
Harvest: CS-26.0Brix, 5.85TA, 3.38pH;MR-24.4B, 6.24TA, 3.63pH;
CF-24.2B, 7.0TA, 3.47pH
Blend: 75% Cab. Sauv., 17% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc
Yeast: started on native then inoculated with Pasteur Red
Fermentation: 14 to 20 days in open topped fermenters, punched by hand.
Temperatures peaked at 85° to 94°F
Barrel aging: 16 months specially selected of barrels made from 2 to 4
year air-dried oak, 75% French, 25% Amer., 35% new
Fining: 2 fresh egg whites per barrel
Filtration: "bug" screen at bottling
Bottled: 513 cases, 5/13/03 released 2/1/05
Alcohol: 14.5%
Free SO2: 20ppm at bottling; estimated 0 to 5ppm at release
Released: February 1, 2005
Filtration: None
SO₂ at Bottling: 18 ppm free
Awards & Reviews: Gold Medal and nominated
for Best of Show,
Hilton Head 2005

