

2001 Merlot

Roumiguierere Vineyard

Clear Lake

Vineyard: The Roumiguierere Vineyard lies on the shores of Clear Lake, California's largest lake, in the shadow of the dormant Mt. Konocti 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 viticultural areas and the Roumiguierere family one of its best growers.

Vintage: The 2001 season was gentle on the winemakers. The season produced a good-sized crop of excellent fruit. We had a lot to work with. The only problem was with this Merlot and the old Cabernet Vineyard close by that went into the blend. We pulled too many leaves off of the sunny side exposing the grapes to one short heat wave in Lake County. John Roumiguierere picked only the shady side of the vine rows for the Deerfield wine, a rare honor for a farmer who makes his living by the pound delivered. Quality in now the king and homage must be made.

The Wine: We've made a lot of Merlot from various vineyards and appellations. This one 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 dark, full-bodied and well structured, like the great wines of St. Emilion, France. The addition of 10% Cabernet assures a greatly lengthened finish and added aging potential.

The grapes were destemmed without crushing, leaving 60% 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 complex and more interesting. It was aged for 16 months in barrels and a year in the bottle before release. The result is a bigger mouthful without losing the feminine character that makes Merlot so enchanting.

Harvest & Winemaking Data:

Winemakers:	Robert Rex & Michael Browne
Harvested:	By hand, September 26, 2001
Brix at harvest:	25.5°
Acid at harvest:	5.98g/L as Tartaric, corrected to 6.5g/L
pH at harvest:	3.39
Yeast:	Pasteur Red
Fermentation:	Open top tanks, 21 days, punched down 3 times per day
Max. Fermentation Temp:	94°F
Malo/Lactic Conversion:	100%
Blend:	90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon
Barrel aging:	16 months in 80% French Oak, 20% American, 35% new overall
Fining:	none
Filtration:	coarse "bug screen" at bottling
SO ₂ at Bottling:	18 ppm
Free SO ₂ at Release:	0 to 3 ppm
Bottled:	983 cases, March 18, 2003
Alcohol:	14.8%
Released:	February 15, 2005

