

L'Ecole No 41

2006 Columbia Valley Merlot Columbia Valley Appellation

Released: December 2008

Variety: 80% Merlot, 11% Cabernet Franc,
6% Petit Verdot, 3% Cabernet Sauvignon

Vineyard: The Merlot in this blend is from several premium vineyards including: Pepper Bridge Vineyard; Dionysus; Klipsun; Weinbau; Katherine Leone; Stone Tree; Loess; Estate Seven Hills Vineyard; Candy Mountain and Mirage.

Harvest: A cool spring, followed by a cool fruit set in June set the stage for lower yields than normal in 2006. Light crops tend to get lighter, and an abundance of sunshine and heat units in July resulted in small berry size and cluster weights. A mild August helped extend the late season ripening period into September and October. The overall season crop load was lower than normal, at 2 ½ tons per acre. Our traditional cool long harvest with no rainfall resulted in fabulous fruit quality, with bright clean aromatics and acidity in the whites and vibrant extraction and rich color in the red wines.

Technical: Harvest commenced in the first week of September at warmer sites with the majority of fruit harvested in the middle part of the month. Average Merlot ripeness was 24.7% Brix, with slightly lower acidity contributing to full-bodied and fruity flavors. Average acidity at harvest was 0.54 grams/100 ml and 3.60 pH.

Bottled 5,609 cases on February 18-21, 2008; pH 3.59, acid 0.61 grams/100ml, 14.3% alcohol by volume, <0.2% residual sugar

Description: *Rich with aromatic aromas of nutmeg, clove and cinnamon, this spicy Merlot shows red cherry, blackberry and dark fruit flavors encased in a peppery, cocoa, black cherry finish.*

Vinification: Each lot was harvested ripe and gently crushed into one-ton stainless steel fermenters. The must was inoculated with yeast and punched down by hand during fermentation to maximize fruit extraction. When the fermentation was complete or we were otherwise satisfied with the level of tannin and flavor extract, the must was gravity fed into the press. After a gentle pressing, the wine was racked to tank and allowed to settle. The wine was then racked to 100% small oak barrels, with approximately 33% new, and was barrel aged 18 months with four rackings.