

2006 Cabernet Sauvignon

Sonoma County

**77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Cabernet Franc,
10% Merlot, 2% Malbec**

The 2006 Vintage was a gentle one - long, even, and cool. As is usually the case with even numbered vintages in California, 2006 produced more feminine style wines than did 2005 or 2007. This was perfect for blended wines because the blends can take advantage of "sleeper" varietals that for some reason show better in a year like 2006. Cabernet Franc was one of these exceptional lots so we included more of it in the blend.

The Vineyards: Five Sonoma County vineyards supplied grapes for this blend. We've been working with each of them for years and know these vineyards intimately. The Cabernet was from Rancho Salina, Los Chamizal, Ladi and Windsor Oaks. Their varied terroir, from mountaintop overlooking Sonoma to foothills overlooking the Santa Rosa plain contribute to the complexity of the Cabernet flavors, tannins and structure. This is more than a blend of varietals. It is a blend of places, distinctive and unique, each adding an important note.

The Winemaking: Each lot, eight in total, was treated separately, like the stand-alone wine it could be. After triple sorting the hand-picked grapes a fermentation protocol, from yeast selection, to cap temperature, to feeding and oxygenation, the maceration times is implemented for each lot. The difference in the vintage plays an important role in the protocol; the same recipe cannot be automatically used every year. Despite our long experience and scientific methods we still, to an extent, fly by the seat of our pants and our organoleptic evaluations on the fly.

Élevage: Individual lots were barrel aged for 36 months before blending. The blend was then aged for an additional 9 months before bottling, 45 months in all. This is an exceptionally long time in the barrel. More than 30% of the wine is lost to evaporation, which concentrates the flavors. Special care must be provided during such long barrel aging to keep the wine happy and clean. Barrels were 30% new and 50% French, 30% American and 20% Hungarian oak. The barrels were topped every three weeks, tasted and analyzed bimonthly and racked a total of three times.

Tasting notes: The color is deep, dark and brilliant. The nose is true to Cabernet - grape skin, a bit of leather, very little earth. The taste boasts Cabernet, bold, with long linear strokes from front to back. The tannin is definitively Cabernet typical but without being obtrusive or dominant. The elements are harmonious and integrated. You have to look for the oak; it is so much a part of the whole experience. The Cabernet is modified upward by the Cabernet Franc with a tip of the hat to dark chocolate and espresso. The Merlot brings the Cabernet forward without revealing itself. It's the same for the Malbec, adding to the back palate depth. The wine is dry yet gentle for a Cab. The alcohol adds a kick without any heat and is well balanced by the fruit.

At bottling: Alc. 15.1%. pH 3.80, T.A. 6.0g/L R.S. 0.02%
Unfined. Cross flow filtered before bottling,
sterile bottled, Velcorin free.
SO₂ at bottling 24 ppm, at release less than 12 ppm.
Bottled 1,000 cases, August 2009. Released January 2011.
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