

2002 CLIFF LEDE CLARET, STAGS LEAP DISTRICT

One one-hundredth of the Napa Valley appellation in size, the Stags Leap District is noted for producing wines with a pronounced silkiness and supple tannin structure. A combination of well-drained, rocky soils warmed by afternoon sun and cooled by the influence of the San Pablo Bay produce expressive fruit with this small appellation's signature velvet-smooth texture.

Vintage

Although the vines got off to a slightly later-than-average start due to a cool spring, the shoot growth was healthy in April and flowering proceeded evenly in May. Moderate temperatures throughout the season promoted even ripening and full flavor development of a balanced crop. August heat spells accelerated ripening for a time, but excellent weather through September and October allowed for exceptionally long hang time and complete ripeness. The harvest for the grapes that would later make up this wine began on September 9 and finished on October 16.

Vineyards

Fruit was sourced from both our estate vineyard on the Yountville Cross Road and the hillside terraces of our Poetry vineyard. Many vineyard blocks, comprising a wide range of rootstocks, clonal selections and trellis systems are included in this blend.

Winemaking

Hand harvested into small 35-pound boxes, the grapes were destemmed to tank for a two-day, pre-fermentation cold soak. Selected lots underwent extended maceration to further develop the tannin structure. The free run was separated from the press wine and racked into thin-stave French chateau style oak barrels (75 percent of which were new), where the wine was aged for 20 months. In order to preserve its inherent concentration and rich texture, the wine was bottled unfinned and unfiltered.

Winemaker Notes

Our Claret is blended with ready enjoyment in mind, yet with the balance, texture and complexity to satisfy the discriminating. Merlot forms the core of the blend, highlighting sweet fruit on the palate and great richness. Cabernet Sauvignon supplies the distinctive aromas of rich plum fruit, cherry cola and fresh tobacco while retaining its Stags Leap District silkiness. The dollop of Cabernet Franc lifts the aroma with its characteristic floral notes. Certainly ready to drink now, splashing this wine into a decanter will even increase its accessibility.

Analysis

Composition:	70% Merlot, 28% Cabernet Sauvignon and 2% Cabernet Franc
Alcohol:	14.5%
Production:	1857 cases
Bottled:	July 2004
Release:	December 2004