

2003 CLIFF LEDE CABERNET SAUVIGNON, 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 nearby San Pablo Bay produce expressive fruit with this small appellation's signature velvet-smooth texture.

Vintage

A warm March brought on an early bud-break, which was followed by a wet April. These late spring rains ensured that the vines were healthy as they went into a cooler-than-average summer. Harvest started amidst a see-saw of heat spikes followed by cool stretches causing a start-stop crush. Yields were below average by twenty-five percent, but the cool pauses allowed us to wait and pick when the individual blocks were ready.

Vineyards

Fruit was sourced from 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 five-day, pre-fermentation cold soak. The juice was inoculated and the wine underwent a short (seven days) and warm fermentation in an effort to promote extraction. Selected lots were held on the skins after fermentation for nearly a month to further develop the tannin structure. The wine was racked into thin-stave French, chateau style oak barrels (seventy-six percent of which were new), where the wine was aged for twenty months.

Winemaker Notes

Marked by elegance and finesse, the 2003 Cliff Lede Stags Leap Cabernet is a pure example of the tender persona of the Stags Leap Appellation. This wine possesses a forward bouquet of rosehips, cassis, cedar, graphite, licorice and crushed flowers, which greet the senses shortly after opening. In the mouth one is met with flavors of black cherry liqueur, clove, and a delicate spice. This wine widens across the palate to reveal a rich body with very fine, smooth tannins and a pleasing acidity, which draws out with superb intensity and length.

Analysis

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Composition: | 87% Cabernet Sauvignon, 13% Merlot |
| Alcohol: | 14.6% |
| Bottled: | December 2005 |
| Release: | March 2006 |

Suggested retail price: \$50