

2005 CLIFF LEDE CLARET, STAGS LEAP DISTRICT

Established in 2002, Cliff Lede Vineyards encompasses sixty acres in the famed Stags Leap District. Owner Cliff Lede, viticulturist David Abreu, Winemaker Michelle Edwards, and consultant Michel Rolland have come together to form an unrivalled team, making the most of this remarkable property.

Vintage

In 2005 we saw a cool, dry start to the growing season, which was quickly replaced by a prolonged period of warm, wet weather throughout spring and right on into bloom. Warm, damp soils promoted continuous vine growth, while ideal temperatures during bloom ensured perfect fruit set. An excessive, if not record, crop load loomed, so early and repetitive thinning was required during the perfect summer growing conditions. A lack of excessive heat spikes or adverse weather during fall ripening allowed us to pursue record hang times, in some instances leaving fruit out to ripen on the vines into November. What resulted was an arduous harvest yielding a record crop of unusually complex berries. Creative vineyard management and winemaking practices allowed for a large harvest of exceptional quality, producing wines of unusual depth, complexity, and a clean sophisticated elegance, not seen in recent vintages.

Vineyards

Fruit was sourced from our estate Twin Peaks Ranch on the Yountville Cross Road, as well as the hillside terraces of our Poetry vineyard, in which yields are maintained at sparse levels, ranging from 0.8 to 3.8 tons/acre. The wine is composed of small batches from many of our best blocks, representing the diverse range of carefully selected rootstocks and clones.

Winemaking

Grapes were picked in the darkness of the early morning hours, and immediately subjected to rigorous selection by our three-tiered sorting and refinement process. The whole berries were gently delivered to tank by our unusual crane system, minimizing disruption of berry integrity. Cold soaks lasted three to six days, and fermentations were managed via a combination of *delestage* and pumpovers. Extended maceration ranging from three to five weeks fine-tuned our tannin profiles, allowing us to perfect mouth feel and wine complexity. The wine was aged in 69% new oak for eighteen months.

Winemaker Notes

Complex and heady aromas of fig, cacao, mulberry, and cassis are intricately layered on top of copious earthen scents reminiscent of clove, oolong tea, hazelnut, terra cotta, and iron ore. The mouth, surprisingly supple, opens with a burst of blackberries and dried cherry. The generous mid-palate of silky tannins evolves into a lengthy finish with balanced acidity and classic structure.

Analysis

Composition:	78% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 8% Cabernet Franc, 4% Petit Verdot		
Alcohol:	14.8%	Bottled:	June 2007
Production:	3,818 cases	Release:	October 2007