

2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, HOWELL MOUNTAIN

These Cabernet Sauvignons, made from only the best fruit from select vineyards, are quintessential representatives of some of Napa's most renowned appellations. Originally planted to Bordeaux grape varieties in 1877, this south-facing vineyard sits sixteen hundred feet above the valley floor. The wines of Howell Mountain are recognized for brawny tannins and a singular spiciness, characteristics this offering exudes.

Vintage

The cool, dry conditions at the start of 2005 were quickly replaced by a prolonged period of warm, wet weather throughout spring. Tepid, damp soils promoted continuous vine growth, while ideal temperatures during bloom ensured perfect fruit set. An excessive crop load loomed, so early and repetitive thinning was necessary. A lack of 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. The result was a large harvest of exceptional quality, producing wines of unusual depth, complexity, and a clean sophisticated elegance not seen in recent vintage.

Vineyard

Our fruit is sourced from an exceptional high-elevation vineyard with volcanic soils in the Howell Mountain Appellation. Boasting a strong afternoon sun influence and a southwest exposure that's moderated by late afternoon breezes, this vineyard's Cabernet expresses strong spice and blueberry characteristics with an intense purity that's unrivalled. Cooler nights permit the berries to maintain their structure and acidity throughout the ripening process.

Winemaking

Grapes were picked in the darkness of the early morning hours, and immediately subjected to rigorous selection by our three-tiered hand-sorting process. The berries were gently delivered to tank by our unique crane system, minimizing disruption of berry integrity. Cold soaks lasted approximately five days and fermentations were managed via a combination of *delestage* and pumpovers. Extended maceration from three to five weeks fine-tuned our tannin profiles, and allowed us to perfect mouth feel and wine complexity. This Cabernet Sauvignon underwent eighteen months of *elevage* in 79% new French oak and 21% neutral French oak.

Winemaker Notes

Dense and intense, this wine evokes a springtime wildflower meadow high on a jagged mountain peak. Aromas of minerals seamlessly integrate with more delicate floral aromas of violets, mulberries and plum blossoms, tied together in a coarse backbone of sarsaparilla root, cacao and vanillin. The mouth, still youthful, displays a tight core of fresh plum, cola, hazelnut, cacao nibs, dust and wet earth. This wine coats the palate with a nice combination of tightly-wound tannins, pervasive acidity and lengthy texture.

Analysis

Composition: 88% Cabernet Sauvignon, 10% Merlot, 2% Malbec
Bottled: June 2007
Alcohol: 15%
Released: October 1, 2008
Production: 366 cases