

2006 CLIFF LEDE HOWELL MOUNTAIN CABERNET SAUVIGNON

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

Weather patterns during the 2006 growing season shifted abruptly, as if on command, to meet the needs of the developing fruit. Cool and wet conditions throughout April resulted in a late budbreak, about three weeks later than average. The swift transition to warm, dry weather in May was instrumental in quick bloom and fruit set, with strong growth and great set throughout. Just at the onset of *veraison*, summer's heat intensified, resulting in many straight days of triple digits. The hottest July on record gave way to below-average temperatures in August and September, allowing even ripening and long hang times. Overall, the combination of perfect fruit set and ideal ripening has produced very concentrated wines that will mark 2006 as one of the great Napa vintages.

Vineyards

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 dark berry 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 sorting and refinement process. The whole berries were gently delivered to tank by our crane system, minimizing disruption of berry integrity. Cold soaks lasted approximately five days and fermentations were managed via a combination of punchdowns and pumpovers. Extended maceration ranging from three to four weeks fine-tuned our tannin profiles, allowing us to perfect mouth feel and wine complexity. The wine was aged in 100% new French oak for 18 months.

Winemaker Notes

This Howell Mountain Cabernet displays classic black pepper and cherry components, interlaced with a complexity of mineral, crushed rocks, and an enviable structure. Aromas of pancetta, cinnamon stick, and dried lavender escape from the glass. With some decanting, the profile evolves into exotic elegance, reminiscent of violets. Upon entry there is an early hint of dry tannin developing into a mouthful of black cherries and a hint of crushed black pepper.

Analysis

Composition: 95% Cabernet Sauvignon, 5% Merlot
Bottled: July 2008
Alcohol: 15.1%
Released: October 2009