

2008 CLIFF LEDE CLARET, NAPA VALLEY

Established in 2002, Cliff Lede Vineyards encompasses sixty acres in the famed Stags Leap District. Owner Cliff Lede, Vineyard Manager David Abreu, Associate Winemaker Kale Anderson, and Consulting Winemaker Philippe Melka have come together to form an unrivalled team, making the most of this remarkable property.

Vintage

The growing season started with low soil moisture due to an abbreviated rainy season that delivered sparse precipitation. Vintage 2008, like the previous year, would unfold under drought conditions. Spring and an early bud break were greeted by an extended cold spell through early May, resulting in delayed growth and multiple days of frost. Bloom time finally saw a warming trend, allowing berry development to progress rapidly under warm and clear summer days, with the fog absent until the onset of *veraison*. Ripening progressed slowly and evenly. Then, as summer gave way to fall, building temperatures led to an early harvest. On par with the light yields of 2007, the 2008 vintage relays balanced crop flavors and profound intensity.

Vineyards

Fruit was sourced from our Twin Peaks Ranch on the Yountville Cross Road and a few of our valued growers within the Napa Valley. Yields are maintained at sparse levels, ranging from 2 to 3.5 tons per acre. The wine is composed of small batches from a variety of blocks, representing a 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 hand sorting 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 *délestage*, pumpovers, and punchdowns. 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 37% new French oak for eighteen months.

Winemaker Notes

Aromas of cherry, clay, and tangerine zest entice the nose, evolving into nutmeg, coffee, and dark maple syrup. Balanced acidity braces the smooth, ripe tannins in the mid-palate, followed by boysenberry fruit and a lingering chocolate-based finish.

Analysis

Composition: 76% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Merlot, 2% Cabernet Franc, 2% Malbec
Alcohol: 14.4%
Bottled: June 2010
Release: December 2010
Production: 629 cases