

2009 CLIFF LEDE CABERNET SAUVIGNON, HOWELL MOUNTAIN

Vintage

The growing season started under drought conditions. Springtime rains recharged the soil, and the vines responded with moderate vigor. Set was below normal due to some warm and dry winds. Berry development progressed rapidly under warm and clear summer days, with fog blankets in the morning hours. Ripening progressed slowly and evenly. Then, as summer gave way to fall, moderate temperatures led to an early harvest. Low yields balanced the vines naturally, and contributed to intense wines. Typical of an El Nino winter, early rains soaked the Napa Valley with five inches or more precipitation in mid-October. Fortunately, all of our fruit was ripe and was harvested prior to the unseasonable rains.

Vineyards

Our fruit is sourced from exceptional high-elevation vineyards with volcanic soils in the Howell Mountain Appellation. The sun-drenched mountaintop vineyards have southwestern exposure and late afternoon breezes that ripen the fruit slowly and evenly. Cool nights promote balanced structure and acidity in the finished wines.

Winemaking

Grapes were picked in the darkness of the early morning hours, and immediately subjected to rigorous selection by our three-tiered hand-sorting system. The berries were gently delivered to tank by our distinctive crane system, minimizing disruption of berry integrity. Cold soaks lasted approximately five to eight days and fermentations were managed via a combination of *delestage*, punchdowns and pumpovers. Extended maceration from three to five weeks fine-tuned our tannin profiles. The wine underwent eighteen months of *elevage* in 80% new French Oak, of which 80% was new. It was bottled unfiltered and unfiltered.

Winemaker Notes

Wet stone, tanned leather, and rose petals evolve into raspberry on the nose. Strawberry rhubarb pie, damask plum and fresh red fruit dominates the palate. Firm tannins relax into the intense full-bodied finish. The balance of finesse and power is the “hallmark” of the Howell Mountain Appellation.

Analysis

Composition:	75% Cabernet Sauvignon, 12% Cabernet Franc, 7% Merlot, 6% Malbec
Alcohol:	14.6%
Bottling Date:	July 2011
Release Date:	October 2012
Production:	636 Cases
Picking Dates:	October 20 th – October 29 th , 2009