

2009 CLIFF LEDE CLARET, NAPA VALLEY

Established in 2002, Cliff Lede Vineyards encompasses sixty acres in the famed Stags Leap District. Owner Cliff Lede, Vineyard Architect David Abreu, and Winemaker Christ Tynan have come together to form an unrivalled team, making the most of this remarkable property.

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

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

The 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 build mouth feel and wine complexity. The wine was aged in French oak for seventeen months.

Winemaker Notes

Merlot and Malbec take center stage for the first time in the 2009 Claret. Dark purple in color, aromas of blackberry, plum, and graphite escape for the glass. A fresh beam of minerality supports the rich mid-palate while a frame-work of silky tannins, mocha, and boysenberry linger in the finish.

Analysis

Composition:	42% Merlot, 37% Malbec, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon
Alcohol:	14.9%
Bottled:	July 2011
Release:	December 2011
Production:	1154 Cases