

2012 CLIFF LEDE CABERNET SAUVIGNON, HOWELL MOUNTAIN

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

Vintage

The 2012 vintage was a glorious year for Napa Valley. A frost-free and uniform bud break was followed by steady spring weather during flowering, allowing for even fruit set. Summer conditions were moderate, with warm days, cool nights, and minimal heat spikes, ideal for slow and steady grape maturation. The wines show exceptional balance with concentrated ripe fruit, complemented by bright acidity and supple, yet intense, structure. Skillful crop thinning and an early autumn of consistently warm days helped the vineyards achieve optimal ripeness.

Vineyards

Exceptional high-elevation vineyards in the Howell Mountain appellation produce intensely concentrated grapes for this wine. Soils are volcanic in origin and consist of two main types; the first is decomposed volcanic ash called tufa and the second is red volcanic rock and clay that is high in iron. Both are nutrient poor, which stresses the vines, producing intense and structured wines from small clusters and berries. The altitude, climate, and soils combine to create a classic mountain Cabernet Sauvignon with incredible concentration, texture, and structure.

Winemaking

Hand harvested in the cool early morning hours, the fruit was immediately subjected to rigorous selection by our three-tiered sorting process, including our cutting edge optical sorter, with a goal of eliminating less-than-perfect berries. The selected fruit was gently delivered to tank via gravity by our crane system, retaining perfect, whole berries. Cold soaks lasted approximately five days, and fermentations were managed by a combination of délestage and pump overs. Extended maceration ranging from three to four weeks fine-tuned tannin profiles, allowing us to build structure and wine complexity. The wine was aged in French oak barrels, 50% of which were new, for twenty-one months.

Winemaker Notes

Patience will be rewarded with this massively structured skyscraper of a wine. Darkest ruby in color, this mountain Cabernet is loaded with crème de cassis, black cherry, fresh roses, and warm figs. Secondary nuances of ancho chile, cumin, clove, and cacao simmer beneath the surface and lend complexity to the nose. With loads of mountain concentration and extract, the mouthfeel is slow to unwind on the palate. But with time, the powerful, yet finely grained tannins build to a seamless and delectable finish that seemingly never ends. Tantalizing notes of roasted fragrant herbs, dry aged steak, and smoked cardamom linger and beg one for another taste.

Analysis

Composition:	99% Cabernet Sauvignon, 1% Merlot
Alcohol:	15.3%
Bottling Date:	July 2014
Release Date:	October 2015
Production:	518 Cases