



Teatown Cellars

2004 Napa Valley Merlot

There are some years in the winemaking business that are more interesting (read stressful) than others and the 2004 vintage of Teatown Cellars Napa Valley Merlot was one of them. Gerry Rowland and I deal with what the vineyard gives to us, or in a year like 2004 takes away. The primary source for this Napa Valley Merlot since the 2002 vintage has been Kenefick Ranch. The block contracted for Teatown 'normally' produces 20 - 25 tons of fruit. With a problematic flowering (shatter) in 2004 only 11 tons of fruit came off the block. So it was a bit of a mad scramble in a short vintage to fill out a planned 2,000 case bottling of 2004 vintage Merlot.

So in addition to the 2,340 gallons (45.8%) of Kenefick Ranch Napa Merlot here's the laundry list for 2004: Purchased Napa Valley Merlot juice from three sources totaling 2,006 gallons (39.2%.) Purchased Sonoma Mountain Merlot from one source totaling 360 gallons (7%.) Purchased Chalk Hill (Sonoma) Cabernet Sauvignon from one source totaling 413 gallons (8%.) And I thought we bought a very small amount of Petit Syrah but I can't find the records on it so if you can taste it in there let me know.

There ended the drama. Pretty much everything else about the 2004 Merlot élevage is the same as the 2003 Merlot. Aged in a mix of new, one and two year old as well as neutral Oak barrels. While we have used primarily center-of-France Oak Barrels in the past, Gerry Rowland, Teatown Cellars winemaker has been mixing in Demptos 36 month air dried American Oak barrels, Demptos 36 month air dried Hungarian Oak barrels and center-of-France Oak innerstaved barrels. Because we don't over oak this wine we have been carefully adding different barrels to introduce an array of subtle oak characteristics to this bottling of Merlot. Gerry and I strive for balance, we want to smell and taste fruit primarily, well-integrated oak secondarily. In December of 2004 after 13 plus months in oak all of the Merlot was racked to tank to marry before bottling in early December. 2024 cases produced.

The 2004 Merlot carries on the continuity of previous vintages. A dark, plum red wine bright and intense black fruits and spices (garrigue) on the nose. On the palate intense black fruits with balanced oak followed by soft tannins and good acidity. A long, ripe, lush Merlot finish of black fruits, soft tannins and oak. I love the added complexity that blending brings into the 2004 Merlot. Drink now and over the next 3-5 years. What *was* that idiot in Sideways saying about Merlot?

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