



## TASTING NOTES

Deep purple-garnet in color. Forward aromas of spice, blueberry and black cherry. Wonderfully aromatic yet subtle toasty oak complements the fruitiness in the mouth. Incredibly lush and smooth. You can look forward to cellaring a bottle or two seeing how the wine will develop in 3-5 years or enjoy it for dinner tonight.

## BENCH VINEYARD SOURCES

For our Bench Vineyards Merlot, two sites were chosen in northern Dry Creek Valley: the Pedroncelli Estate Vineyards along Dry Creek Road east of the winery, and Jasper Long's vineyard, a couple of miles down the road from our own vineyard. The name chosen for this vineyard blend describes the natural terraces that flank Dry Creek Valley and rise gradually into the steep hills. Characterized by sloped topography and gravelly/rocky residual soils, the "Bench Vineyards" offer unique growing conditions that bring out the best in several bordeaux varietals, including Merlot, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon.

## WINEMAKING

The 2002 harvest brought in ripe, clean fruit the very beginning of September. The fruit was crushed into stainless steel fermentors and fermentation took place over the next 7 days. The frequent pumping of juice over the skins (or cap) during this process brings to the wine a substantial increase in color and flavor intensity.

The young wine was aged in small American oak barrels for 12 months in order to develop smoothness and complexity. A blend of 25% new oak is used in the barrel aging program; this allows the fruit flavors to come forward while relying on a subtle backbone of oak components. Cabernet Franc (12%) adds that bit of extra fleshy fruit flavor with a bit more tannin to make this a fuller-bodied, age-worthy Merlot.

## TECHNICAL NOTES:

Appellation: Dry Creek Valley  
Composition: 88% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Franc  
Barrel Aging: 12 months in American oak  
Alcohol: 13.9%  
pH: 3.39  
Total acidity: 0.66g/100ml  
Bottled: November 2004  
Production: 6,000 cases