

STEELE MERLOT 2011



VINEYARDS

While we are not known as a Bordeaux/cabernet kind of winery, we tend to make more Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Zinfandel, our location in Lake County allows us to produce several of these varieties in styles which would make our neighbors to the south a bit jealous. This vineyard grows exceptional quality Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Our vineyard lays on a gravelly bench, which overlooks the Big Valley area of Lake County. The fruit from these vines have a great balance of flavors, structure and tannins.

SEASON

2011 was a very cool growing season with scattered rains throughout the year and harvest. A cool spring and summer were punctuated by late season heat spikes. The heat spikes did finally ripen the grapes, although special care had to be taken throughout the process for optimum quality. Harvest conditions were difficult although the conditions produced lighter and more focused wines, with typically higher levels of natural acid.

WINE STYLE & TASTING NOTES

Our typical winemaking style for red wines is a warm fermentation followed by pressing and racking. The wine is aged oak barrels and spends 12 months in a combination of American and French oak. While most producers of merlot tend toward the soft and supple wine style, we have opted, because of the quality of the grapes, to make a wine in a rich, generous style. This wine is a mouthful of pleasure: lots of fruit, medium tannins and a long lingering finish. We would recommend some cellar time for this wine if only to allow all of the great aromas and flavors properly meld.

FOOD PAIRINGS

Because we make such a generous wine, we recommend serving it with very hearty foods like beef wellington, grilled steaks, or a bowl of beef stew.

APPELLATION Lake County **HARVEST DATES** October 14th, 2011
ALCOHOL 14.5% **BRIX** Average 25.5 **FERMENTATION** Average 21 days at 86°F **pH** 3.66 **TA** .58g/100mL **BARREL AGING** 12 months in French and American oak; 30% new oak **VINE AGE** Avg. 35 years
YIELDS 3-4 tons per acre **RESIDUAL SUGAR** Dry **CASE PRODUCTION** 1,500 cases