

## 2006 MERLOT

### GROWING SEASON

- ▶ The 2006 growing season was marked by weather extremes, with near record rainfall in the Columbia Valley during the early spring and record high temperatures in the early and mid-summer.
- ▶ Although a challenging season weather-wise, exceptional sites including the warmer parts of the Horse Heaven Hills and Wahluke Slope saw early ripening and bold tannins from the high temperatures.
- ▶ In the cooler growing areas, later ripening prompted good acidity and flavor in white varieties, as well as good color, pronounced fruit flavors and less aggressive tannins in reds.

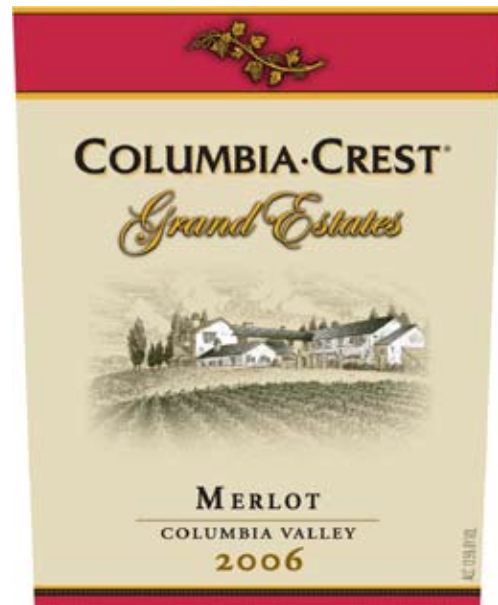
### VINEYARDS

- ▶ Grand Estates Merlot is harvested from vineyards located predominantly on the Horse Heaven Hills (which contributes texture and body) and the Wahluke Slope (for aromatics and complexity.)
- ▶ Columbia Valley vineyards are seated east of the Cascade Mountain range. Up to 14,000 feet high, the mountains effectively block eastward-moving wet weather systems from the Pacific Ocean.
- ▶ Just 6 to 8 inches of rainfall reach the growing region annually. Vineyards are 100% drip irrigated.
- ▶ The soils have low fertility and low water-holding capacity, allowing precise control of vine growth.
- ▶ Vines are planted north to south on south and southeast-facing slopes.

### VINIFICATION

- ▶ Grapes were crushed with 20% whole berries remaining.
- ▶ Grapes fermented on skins for 6-7 days with stainless steel and open top, rotary, and standard fermenters used to extract softness, complexity, and color.
- ▶ Malolactic fermentation occurred in the barrels and tanks.
- ▶ Wine aged 14-16 months.
- ▶ The oak regime featured 25% new French and American oak barrels.
- ▶ Syrah, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon contributed softness and further fruit dimension to the final blend.

- VINEYARDS ▶ 100 % COLUMBIA VALLEY
- HARVEST DATE ▶ SEPTEMBER 11, 2006
- BLEND ▶ 85% MERLOT, 7% SYRAH, 5% CABERNET FRANC, 3% CABERNET SAUVIGNON
- FERMENTATION ▶ 7-10 DAYS ON SKINS, PREMIER CUVÉE, PASTEUR RED AND D254 YEASTS.
- ALCOHOL ▶ 13.5%
- TOTAL ACIDITY ▶ 0.50G/100ML
- PH ▶ 3.74



### TASTING NOTES

*“Classic Merlot aromas of spice, blackberry and cocoa carry through the palate of this complex artisanally crafted wine. The balance of oak and black fruits creates a velvety, seductive finish.”*

*Ray Einberger*

RAY EINBERGER ▶ COLUMBIA CREST ▶ WINEMAKER