

HORSE HEAVEN HILLS

2006 MERLOT

COLUMBIA·CREST®

The vineyards in Horse Heaven Hills are the source and inspiration behind the H3 wines. The hills have been home to Columbia Crest winery for more than two decades, and it is this heritage, combined with innovative winemaking and vineyard knowledge that allow our winemaker to create wines that capture the unique terroir of the region.

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 color, pronounced fruit flavors and softer tannins in reds.

Vineyards

- The Horse Heaven Hills 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.
- The terrain consists of south-facing slopes that provide excellent sun exposure for grape ripening, and good air drainage which protects the vineyards during the winter months.
- Well-drained sandy soils have low fertility and low water-holding capacity, allowing precise control of vine growth patterns.
- Strong wind patterns, which are unique to the Horse Heaven Hills, reduce canopy size and density, create better sun exposure, and contribute to even ripening by moderating temperature extremes.

Vinification

- Grapes were crushed at 30% whole-berry to retain the fruit quality.
- Fermentation lasted 7-14 days on the skins to extract optimum fruit and structural components.
- Various yeasts were used to maintain fruit flavors and complexity.
- Malolactic fermentation occurred in stainless steel tanks and oak barrels.
- Blending occurred shortly after malolactic fermentation.
- The wine was barrel aged in 40% new American and French oak, and 60% older oak for 14-18 months.

Tasting Notes

"This classic fruit-forward Merlot presents aromas of blackberry and spice with a perfect balance of slight earth, dusty cocoa and ripe berry flavors. The wine closes with a rich, velvety, dark chocolate finish." -Ray Einberger, Winemaker



Vineyards:	Horse Heaven Hills
Harvest Date:	Sept. 30, 2006
Blend:	83% Merlot 16% Cabernet Sauvignon 1% Cabernet Franc
Fermentation:	7-14 days on skins
Yeasts:	Premier Cuvee Enoferm CSM Premier Cuvee
Alcohol:	14.1%
Total Acidity:	0.51 g/100ml
pH:	3.77