

COLUMBIA-CREST *Reserve*

2003 Merlot

GROWING SEASON

- ▶ Vintage 2003 began with a typical bud break in early April.
- ▶ Bloom followed in early June. Warm, dry weather conditions during this phase (the start of fruit maturation) contributed to the uniformity of berry maturation at the end of the season.
- ▶ High heat accumulation during late summer created excellent ripening conditions.
- ▶ Very modest precipitation in August and September cooled the vineyards and slowed the ripening process.
- ▶ At harvest, vineyards across the Columbia Valley had excellent physiological maturity and flavor development across varieties.

VINEYARDS

- ▶ Fruit was handpicked from the top 10% of the vintage's best vineyards for Columbia Crest's Reserve Merlot.
- ▶ Vineyard sites are located on the Wahluke Slope, offering aromatics, texture and complexity; in the Cold Creek area, adding to flavor and fruitiness; and on the Horse Heaven Hills, contributing balance and body to the finished wine.
- ▶ The balance between the growing season's warm daytime temperatures and cooler nights, particularly during the ripening period, concentrated aromatics and enhanced complexity.
- ▶ Low rainfall stressed the vines, and irrigation was applied judiciously to create concentrated varietal expression.

VINIFICATION

- ▶ Grapes were crushed with 30% whole berries remaining.
- ▶ Cold soaking on the skins for two days extracted soft tannins and intense color.
- ▶ Fermentation, including twice-daily pump overs, lasted to 10 days, depending on the lot.
- ▶ Malolactic fermentation occurred in new French oak barrels.
- ▶ The wine aged in barrels for 28 months.

VINEYARDS ▶ COLUMBIA VALLEY

HARVEST DATE ▶ SEPTEMBER 6, 2003

BLEND ▶ 75.2% MERLOT, 18.1% CABERNET SAUVIGNON, 4.4% SYRAH, 1.8% CABERNET FRANC, 0.5% PETIT VERDOT

FERMENTATION ▶ 7 DAYS ON SKINS, PREMIER CUVÉE, CSM, PASTEUR RED, L2226, AND D254 YEASTS

ALCOHOL ▶ 14.2%

TOTAL ACIDITY ▶ 0.57G/100ML

PH ▶ 3.61

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RESERVE MERLOT
COLUMBIA VALLEY
2003

TASTING NOTES

"This classic Washington State Merlot offers aromatics of spice, blackberry, and chocolate which lead into a balanced palate of velvety-textured fruit and tannins."

Ray Einberger

RAY EINBERGER ▶ COLUMBIA CREST ▶ WINEMAKER