

# HORSE HEAVEN HILLS 2005 MERLOT COLUMBIA · CREST®

The vineyards in Horse Heaven Hills are the source and inspiration behind the Horse Heaven Hills wines. The hills have been home to Columbia Crest winery for more than two decades. 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

- August 15 marked the beginning of the earliest harvest on record.
- Warm summer months contributed to the uniformity of berry maturation.
- A temperature drop in late summer cooled the vineyards and allowed the grapes extra hang time to enhance flavor and aromatic development.
- The warmer areas of the Horse Heaven Hills saw early ripening with mature fruit and intense flavors with slight dust and earthy undertones. The cooler locations saw later ripening with bright fruit, light mineral and herbal qualities.

## Vineyards

- The Horse Heaven Hills vineyards are located 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, bold Merlot delivers aromas of spice and blackberry, 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:	October 20, 2005
Blend:	82% Merlot 13% Cabernet Sauvignon 5% Cabernet Franc
Fermentation:	7-14 days
Yeasts:	Premier Cuvee CSM Pasteur Red
Alcohol:	14.1%
Total Acidity:	0.55 g/100ml
pH:	3.69