



## Teatown Cellars

2005 Napa Valley Merlot

What does every grape vine want to do? Reproduce. How does a grape vine reproduce? By producing as much fruit as it possibly can. So when you have a severely short crop the year before the vine comes roaring back and produces three times as much fruit. The block I buy at Kenefick Ranch produced 33 tons in 2005 versus 11 tons in 2004. What do you do with 33 tons of fruit? You make a lot of wine.

Teatown Cellars winemaker Gerry Rowland and I deal with what the vineyard gives us and in 2005 it gave us a huge crop of perfect fruit. The primary source for this Napa Valley Merlot since the 2002 vintage has been Kenefick Ranch. The block contracted for Teatown Cellars Merlot 'normally' produces 20 - 25 tons of fruit. Some simple wine math tells us that 33 tons of fruit gives us about 5,000 gallons of wine or about 2,200 finished cases.

Our protocol for Napa Valley Merlot doesn't change much from year to year. Crushed, fermented and laid down in barrel to age in a rotation of new, one and two year old as well as neutral Oak barrels. While we have used primarily center-of-France Oak in the past at we have been mixing in Demptos 36 month air dried American Oak, Demptos 36 month air dried Hungarian Oak and center-of-France Oak. Because we don't over oak this wine we have been carefully adding different barrels to introduce an array of subtle oak nuances to this bottling of Merlot. Gerry and I strive for balance, we want to smell and taste fruit primarily, well-integrated oak secondarily. In January of 2006 after about 14 -15 months in oak all of the Merlot was racked to tank and married with about 10% Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon before bottling in early February 2006. 1,200 cases produced. The 2005 Merlot carries on the continuity of previous vintages. A dark, plum red wine. On the nose vibrant and bright black cherry and black berry fruits with just a touch of toasty oak. In the mouth a very Bordeaux like structure with intense black cherry flavors, bramble, herbs and underbrush, great acidity and a very reserved background of oak. Good power and length. A long, intense, slightly tannic and minimally oaky finish. This wine will drink well with heavier fish, particularly Salmon and Tuna and will pair well with lamb, beef, pork and wild game grilled and roasted. Don't forget braises and stews and with minimal oak it pairs beautifully with smoked (BBQ) meats. Drink now and over the next 3-6 years. Forget Sideways and put this bottle into a brown paper bag and shock and awe your friends.