

ST. FRANCIS WINERY & VINEYARDS

2005 MERLOT

Behler SONOMA COUNTY

AGING Twenty-four months
STORAGE French Oak, 50% new
BOTTLING June 2008

ALCOHOL 15.5% by volume
AGING POTENTIAL 7 to 10 years
CASES PRODUCED 600 cases

VINTAGE

2005 was a vintage for the record-books. For most winemakers, it provided real challenges from start to finish. Winter was incredibly wet, but spring brought intense heat and bud break and the growing season began earlier than expected. Nail-biting ensued as rain showers showed up sporadically through June, and larger than expected crops had vineyard crews working constantly. However, with August came temperatures in the mid to high eighties, which was enough to fully ripen most of the varieties. It was all worth it, as 2005 gave us some of our best wines ever.

WINEMAKING

Recognized as St. Francis' original Estate Vineyard, this vineyard is named in honor of the Behler family, who first cultivated a portion of the rich Sonoma Valley floor land in the early 1900's. The roots of these vines run very deep in mostly gravel soil, because it is so well-drained, the Merlot grapes need plenty of sunshine and even some extended vine maturity. Hand-picked on October 25th, this fruit was fermented in stainless steel for fourteen days, and malolactic fermentation was complete 20 days later. The must was then pressed and racked into 50% new French oak and 50% one-to-two year old French oak barrels. To complement the plum and strawberry flavors and the luscious mouth feel of the Merlot, 8% Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petit Verdot were blended into the final cuvée two months prior to bottling in June of 2008. The wine was then bottle-aged for an additional 12 months before release.

TASTING NOTES

Heavier than traditional Merlots, this wine is reflective of why we are known as "the house of big reds." Characteristic cherry & cassis light up the palate of this wine, and adding Cabernet Sauvignon and Petit Verdot solidify its structure while giving it depth.