

# The Making of Our 1991 Truchard Merlot

We are happy to announce the release of a wine we believe is helping redefine the potential both of Carneros as an appellation and Merlot as a variety: our 1991 Truchard Vineyard Merlot provides a wonderful reprise to the splendid 1990. We are sure it will find many fans among the growing number of Merlot lovers.

The 1991 growing season began cool and dry--only the rains of the "March miracle" saved us from potentially disastrous water shortage. A mild but steady Spring set a good crop with little shatter (failed pollination of the grape flowers). The rest of the Summer was the coolest ever recorded here. Weather leading up to harvest on October 5 was warm and even, allowing the plants a long period for the flavor-developing final ripening. When the sugars finally rose to ripe levels, the fruit character was unusually high.

The resulting wines are what we would expect from this weather: classically balanced, bright, and vibrant on the palate, yet with an unmistakable chocolatey ripeness. As usual, we have followed the tradition of blending 25% Cabernet Franc in this Merlot, and it has provided its usual components of round, fleshy texture and subtle aromas of earth and plum.

After fermentation, the wine opened more slowly than the 1990, but married quickly with the oak. We had to use no fining agents for softening or clarification, since the wine had supple, broad tannins from the start. The vintage has now surprised us with its concentration of flavor. In the tradition of our Truchard Vineyard Merlot, the 1991 is soft and approachable, with a grace and charm that makes Merlot such an inviting wine early in its life. Its aromas of ripe blackberry, dusty cocoa, hints of mint, and its round, plump texture make it appealing now, though we anticipate this wine will give great pleasure for many years to come.

Retail price: \$18 bottle

# The Making of our 1991 TRUCHARD MERLOT

- Vineyard:** Truchard Vineyard, northern Carneros District - steep hills of clay loam, fractured shale, and sandstone
- 75% Merlot (crest of hilltop, rocky soil)  
25% Cabernet Franc (West-facing hillsides)
- Harvest:** October 5-14, 1991  
21.5 tons produced 1310 cases  
Sugar: 23.4° produced 13.2% alcohol
- Fermentation:** Pasteur Institute yeast inoculum - temperature up to 88° then ~78° to dryness - Extended maceration, 19 day average
- Aging:** 20 months in 60-gallon oak barrels (Never, Allier)  
40% new wood - no fining or filtration