



Conn Creek

N A P A N V A L L E Y

1998 LIMITED RELEASE MERLOT

Winemaker's Tasting Notes: "This is the first time since 1993 that we have felt fruit quality has merited a bottling of Conn Creek Limited Release Merlot. Like other Conn Creek wines, it is crafted in a bold style that reflects the richness of character that is born of classic Napa Valley vineyards in outstanding years."

—Tom Montgomery, Winemaker

Nose: A core of bright cherry-berry aromas is surrounded by layers of blueberry, bittersweet chocolate and the sweet vanilla-spice of new French oak.

Palate: Notes of vanilla bean and caramel accompany vibrant flavors of raspberry and cherry, all of which linger through the warm, silky, oak-laced finish.

Grapes: This fruit was sourced from established merlot vineyards in the fabled Oakville appellation of the Napa Valley. The 1998 growing season was cool, with delayed ripening, a very late harvest, and low crop levels. The resulting fruit displayed a unique combination of bright acidity, firm tannins, and the remarkably nuanced varietal fruit character associated with extended "hang-time" on the vine.

Winemaking: We employ an even softer touch in the vinification of our Merlot than we do in that of our Cabernet Sauvignon. The fermentation process is gentler, for instance, as a result of less rigorous cap saturation and increased carbonic (whole berry) maceration. This allows us to avoid the extraction of overly-harsh tannins, while retaining optimal fruit expression in the finished wine. The individual lots of this young wine were aged separately in new and one-year-old French oak barrels for 18 months prior to blending. The blended wine was then transferred to bottles, unfiltered and unfiltered, for an additional 8 months of aging prior to its debut.

FERMENTATION & AGING DATA

Yeast *Assmanshausen*
Length of fermentation *11 days*

BOTTLING DATA

Total acidity *0.62 g/100 ml*
pH *3.54*
Alcohol *13.5%*

