

The Making of our  
**1990 TRUCHARD MERLOT**

The Truchard Vineyard, the northernmost vineyard in Napa Carneros, lies on steep hills of clay loam, underlaid by fractured blue shale and occasional sandstone. The fruit for this Merlot, including Cabernet Franc, is dark in color, with deep, full flavors, tending toward black fruits like plum and blueberry, with broadly-textured tannins.

The 1990 season was as perfect as a winegrower could ask for: even warmth throughout the Spring and Summer, followed by day after day of perfect ripening weather at harvest. As a result, we could harvest each lot at just the moment of ripeness without being overwhelmed by too much at once. Sugars and acids were ideal, and the wines told us even in the fermenter that this would be a great vintage. It's usually tough work tasting the young wines, since they are still coarse and hard in the tank, but in 1990 the fruit was so luscious that each sample was an occasion for excitement.

In the cellar it opened more quickly than the previous vintage, developing the distinctive cocoa-powder aromas and textures it now shows, while evolving the fruit character consistently. After one year in barrel, we evaluate the wines and make the blend that will be bottled; in 1990, that includes 13% Cabernet Franc with our Merlot. The Franc is slightly less aromatic than Merlot, but has a full, round mouthfeel that adds plumpness and fills out the entire palate, making a more complete wine.

A crucial part of our aging program is the use of top quality oak cooperage to complement and accentuate the fruit. In this very fine vintage, we used 40% new barrels, selected from the Bordelaise coopers Vicard, Mercier, and Seguin Moreau. Putting the wine to barrel very early in its life allows a gradual marrying of wood and fruit flavors, actually resulting in a fruitier, broader palate feel at the end of its 20 months in barrel.

The rich fruit of this wine is right in line with previous vintages: plums, blackberries, and cassis, all especially ripe and full this year. The tannins are substantial, but broad and soft, suggesting improvement in bottle for 10 to 12 years, holding easily to 15 years in good form. In short, we think the 1990 is among the best Merlot vintages we have seen at Truchard Vineyards, and this wine will provide pleasure at each of many stages in a long life.

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**Vineyard:** Truchard Vineyard, northern Carneros District - steep hills of clay loam, fractured shale, and sandstone

87% Merlot (crest of hilltop, rocky soil)  
13% Cabernet Franc (West-facing hillsides)

**Harvest:** September 12-20, 1990  
7.25 tons produced 435 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