



CHATEAU MONTELENA
ESTABLISHED 1882

2011 Montelena Estate Cabernet Sauvignon

Notes from the Winemaker, Matt Crafton, December 2014

INTRODUCTION

Nature never fails to tuck a few rough diamonds into each vintage in the Napa Valley, especially here on our Estate. However, it can be easy to overlook the cool, foggy years that are sporadically peppered among the consistent march of temperate growing seasons we're fortunate enough to experience in Calistoga. These years reward experience, expertise, and patience in recognizing these hidden diamonds for what they are and what they can become. Although they are rarely darlings of the press, cool vintages such as 1998—and more recently 2006—have a way of surprising people in the way the wines develop as they mature, both in their complexity and depth of flavor. In the right hands, fruit from these vintages can turn into gorgeous, long-lived, and wonderfully expressive wines—emblematic of the fact that every year brings something special.

2011 was the most enigmatic in the string of three cool vintages beginning in 2009, as warm weather teased us for much of the season but never permanently settled in. By April, we had an inkling that a late harvest was on the horizon—everything from the flowers, insects, and trees here on the Estate were weeks behind in their life cycles. July arrived and a cautious sense of optimism materialized along with some sorely missed sunshine; however, the cold nights continued to persist, the fog lingered, and the heat from the Nevada desert stayed far, far away. With harvest approaching, we recognized the textbook Bordelaise flavor profile in the developing fruit and embraced the bright acid profile and soft textures that would come to be hallmarks of this vintage.

Aromatically, this is one of the most elegant Estate Cabernets that we have released in the last decade. Notes of strawberry, rhubarb, and vanilla jump out of the glass, closely followed by lavender, bay laurel, and allspice that gradually increase in intensity as the wine breathes. On the palate, the rich minerality is balanced by ripe raspberry and earth, all of which are tied together by silky, fine tannins that frame and enhance the soft texture, rather than overwhelm it. A vein of bright acidity is present from start to finish and, coupled with subtle toasted oak undertones, accentuates the splendor of Old World and California flavors integrating seamlessly. As would be expected, the finish is almost Bordelaise in its subtlety and grace, with hints of cranberry, mint, and cocoa.

Technical Information

HARVEST DATES

September 29 to October 29, 2011

ALCOHOL

13.5%

BLEND

99% Cabernet Sauvignon,
1% Cabernet Franc

BARREL AGING

22 months, 100% French, 33% new

BOTTLING DATE

December 2013

RELEASE DATE

Spring 2015

WINEMAKER

Matt Crafton