



CHATEAU MONTELENA  
ESTABLISHED 1882

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## 2018 Napa Valley Merlot

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### Notes from the Winemaker, Matt Crafton

#### INTRODUCTION

It's been more than 20 years since we last bottled Merlot, but this wine has been worth the wait. We now farm Merlot just adjacent to our Chardonnay vines in Oak Knoll, where it has quietly driven the surge in popularity of the Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon over the last decade. The 2018 Merlot, however, was something special in its own right; special enough that we saved 3 barrels, bottled exclusively for our Montelena members. Who knows when we'll make this wine again but unlike the 1997, this one required no arm-twisting.

#### VINTAGE WEATHER

After a slow start to the growing season, a classic Napa Valley summer materialized in June. Warm days and very cool nights arrived in soldierly succession, albeit in more moderate patterns through Oak Knoll compared to Calistoga. Consistent, methodical ripening through July and August stimulated a marked purity of flavor and remarkable complexity in this Merlot, justifying a special, members only release.

#### NOSE

Intense aromas of Asian Plum and dried cherry fill the glass initially. In true varietal form, however, it's the bewitching, delicate notes of clove, licorice, and lavender, continuously evolving, that genuinely define this wine.

#### PALATE

Fine-grained and tense, the mouthfeel strikes a sublime balance between density and elegance. This isn't Cabernet. Fresh blueberries rule here, in harmony with powdery cocoa and black pepper plus additional baking spices lurking below the surface.

#### FINISH

The wine finishes where it began as once again dark fruit emerges. This time, however, the blackberry tones are more candied. The acidity, which up until this point had played a supporting role, streams to the surface with the freshness of ripe cranberry and boysenberry.

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### Technical Information

#### HARVEST DATES

October 14

#### ALCOHOL

14.2%

#### BLEND

100% Merlot

#### BARREL AGING

22 months in French oak

#### BOTTLING DATE

August 11, 2020

#### WINEMAKER

Matt Crafton