



CHATEAU MONTELENA
ESTABLISHED 1882

2021 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Notes from the Winemaker, Matt Crafton

INTRODUCTION

What is a *food-friendly* wine? The term is bandied about to the point it's become intentionally vague and is used more for hollow advertising than as a meaningful characteristic. Moreover, it connotes that some wines are inherently food-unfriendly. And maybe that's true. But, for our purpose, Robert Mondavi's belief in wine that harmonizes with food is what sets the standard. Classical wines like Montelena complement food not only in flavor, but in tying one to the land and the individuals who work it. So yes, it is about flavor and it is about elevating the experience. But it's bigger than that: food-friendly wine should bring together people, the place and the future.

VINTAGE WEATHER

A warm, dry spring led to early budbreak and the risk of frost. Thankfully, the weather remained mild and the growing season leaped forward with the first significant heat arriving in May. Bloom was punctuated by very warm temperatures, which reduced fruit set and the overall size of the crop. Despite the low yields, what remained was excellent. As harvest approached, temperatures remained in the low to mid-90s, exactly what's needed to ripen Cabernet Sauvignon at the end of the season.

NOSE

The density and richness of this wine are teased right from the start. Pomegranate, plum and dried blackberry lead a lavish charge of ripe, dark fruit. In the midst, there's a hint of barrel toast, first as charcoal and then as fresh wood. The aromas remain elevated, with potpourri and black pepper initially, and then concluding with fig jam and cherry tobacco.

PALATE

This Cabernet has all of the markers of a great Montelena wine. The palate is bursting with a dynamic and seemingly haphazard array of fruit, acid and tannin, all tied together with fresh mint and graphite. Rest assured, all of these elements will settle into place over time. There's a beautiful, almost velvety, softness from the Merlot that rounds off most of the coarse edges and lends refinement. Best of all, this wine is approachable now but will build complexity with time in glass.

FINISH

The baking spices really come into focus here along with notes of earth and toasted almond. The tannins are chalky, rather than angular, and roasted hazelnut complements the fresh raspberry and black tea. This is truly an elegant, restrained, food-friendly wine.

Technical Information

HARVEST DATES

September 6 – October 1

ALCOHOL

14.1%

BLEND

89% Cabernet Sauvignon
10% Merlot
1% Cabernet Franc

BARREL AGING

16 months in French and Eastern European oak, 26% new

BOTTLING DATE

April 2023

WINEMAKER

Matt Crafton