

Cakebread Cellars



2003 Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon Napa Valley

Vintage 2003

In 2003, a warm early spring gave way to cool, wet weather in April, which set back vine development. Seasonally temperate weather prevailed from May through July, but a cool pattern returned in August, delaying ripening. By early September, warm, sunny days and clear, cool nights were again the norm, and hot weather during the latter half of September sent us scurrying to harvest early-ripening varieties. October, however, brought classic autumn weather, with crisp mornings, warm afternoons and cool evenings, which extended the harvest by several weeks, enabling us to harvest our Cabernet Sauvignon grapes at ideal sugar levels. Red wines from the topsy-turvy 2003 harvest are rich and deeply colored, with excellent concentration and balance.

Vineyards

The grapes for our 2003 Benchland Select Napa Valley, which is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, came from vineyards in Oakville (75%) and Rutherford (25%) that lie on Napa's gently sloping western benchlands. The eastern exposures of these well-drained hillside vineyards enjoy cooler afternoons than many Napa vineyards, allowing the grapes to mature at a slow, even pace. Each vineyard block is hand-harvested and the fruit processed separately to maximize its singular character, enabling us to craft a blend boasting an exceptional concentration of color, fragrance and flavor. In 2003, the grapes were harvested at optimal ripeness between October 16th and 21st.

Winemaking

The fruit from each vineyard was processed separately, so we could employ the tank size, yeast strain, fermentation temperature, and maceration technique best suited to each lot. During fermentation and maceration, the wine was tasted daily to assess color and flavor extraction and tannin levels. The 2003 Benchland Select was aged 22 months in French oak barrels, 40% new, with the barrels for each lot carefully selected to maximize that wine's character, development and expression of *terroir* prior to blending. The finished wine was bottled in August, 2005.

Tasting Notes

Our 2003 Benchland Select Cabernet Sauvignon displays a warm, inviting aroma of coffee, dark chocolate and ripe black fruits, with subtle hints of earth, tar and sweet oak. Plump and round on the palate, it offers lush, broad flavors of black figs, currants, plums and chocolate, balanced by supple tannins and a long, luxurious finish. Precocious, yet beautifully structured, this plush, generous Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon is delicious to drink now, but will handsomely reward another 7-10 years of cellaring.

Grape varieties: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon
Vineyards: Oakville and Rutherford districts
Harvest dates: October 16-21, 2003
Fermentation: 100% in stainless steel
Barrel aging: 22 months in French oak,
40% new

Alcohol: 14.3%
Total acidity: 0.65 g/100 ml
pH: 3.80
Bottled: August 2005
Winemaker: Julianne Laks