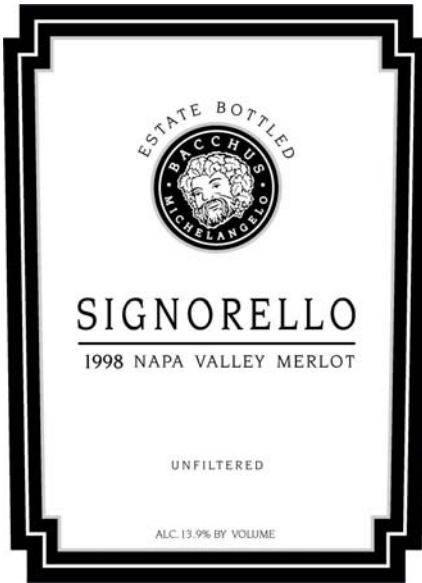


1998 MERLOT ESTATE



90% Napa Valley Merlot
5% Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
5% Cabernet Franc
Harvested at 24.4 Brix, on between October 11-13,
1998
13.9% Alcohol
0.54 TA/ 3.66 pH
252 cases produced
Release Date: February 2001

Harvest Notes: The 1998 Napa Valley growing season began with a cool, wet spring. Late rains caused a reduction in crop size, which ultimately allowed for greater quality in the grapes. The 1998 wines will have excellent balance with good acidity, low pH and ripe flavors. Mild temperatures in the early fall allowed a gradual ripening that has brought greater varietal intensity and complexity to the wines. Yields averaged 2.7 tons/acre in 1998.

Winemaking notes: Our Estate program follows traditional French winemaking practices. Native yeast induce fermentation. Techniques include the use of extended maceration (each lot averaged 35 days on the grape skins) and frequent pumping-over (three to four times a day for thirty minutes). The 1998 vintage aged for 22 months in 60% new Tronçais, Nevers and Alliers oak (thin-staved, medium-plus toast Chateau Ferre barrels). Tonnelleries: 75% Seguin Moreau and 25% Radoux. Barrels were topped monthly and racked every four to six months. To preserve fruit intensity and body, the wine was not filtered prior to bottling in August 31, 2000.

Tasting Notes: The complex nose offers an enticing blend of vanilla, black cherry and currant aromas. Hints of cedar and tobacco combine with the layers of fruit to form a rich but perfectly balanced wine. The finish displays an intense purity of fruit and soft velvety tannins. Drinkability and Maturity: 2000-2011

Vineyard Notes: Our estate vineyards planted in 1990 on the Napa Valley hillsides east of the Silverado Trail provided the grapes. A variety of exposures increased the wines complexity. Western slopes: Cabernet and Merlot. Eastern slopes: Cabernet Franc and a second Cabernet vineyard. Crop level and vine growth were closely monitored to achieve balance and intensify fruit character. The vineyards are densely planted (1240 vines per acre) and vertically trellised. Rocky soil with moderate amount of clay averaging three feet in depth provides excellent drainage.