

TAPANAPPA

A U S T R A L I A

TAPANAPPA WHALEBONE VINEYARD 2005 MERLOT

Vintage Notes

Tapanappa acquired the thirty year-old Whalebone Vineyard in 2002 and completely renovated the vines onto a new trellis supporting a shoot thinned vertical canopy.

The Merlot vines at Whalebone Vineyard were among the very first plantings of this variety in South Australia, and they have responded magnificently to works carried out since 2002, including both re-trellising of the vines and improving the Terra Rossa soil with organic matter.

There is only 0.8 hectares of thirty year-old Merlot at Whalebone Vineyard producing just 200 cases of wine in an average year. The Merlot has too much ripeness and lushness to fit comfortably into the more structured Whalebone Vineyard Cabernet Shiraz blend. We have therefore decided to bottle it on its own as one of Australia's finest examples of Merlot from an especially suited terroir.

After a thirty-year struggle, the Merlot vine roots have penetrated the deeper limestone layers and are extracting a balance of moisture and nutrient capable of sustaining a meagre crop of 4 tonnes/hectare as a maximum yield. The vines have sufficient canopy and root systems to fully ripen the harvest relying only on natural rainfall.

The 2004/2005 growing season was normal and moderate until the first two weekends in April when successive un-seasonal heatwaves arrived. In 2004/2005, the heat summation for Whalebone Vineyard for the 7-month growing season was 1340°C days. In nearby Coonawarra, the 2007 heat summation was 1455°C days – only pushed above the long-term average of 1376°C days by the very hot April events.

Whalebone Vineyard has consistently proven to be cooler than Coonawarra in both prior and subsequent vintages (for a comparative table, please go to our website: <http://www.tapanappawines.com.au/Whalebone.Climate.aspx>). The paradox is that despite being cooler, Whalebone Vineyard ripens each variety earlier and more completely than Coonawarra. This is probably because of the protection it receives from the crest of the Naracoorte Ranges to the west and the much reduced wind speeds from the Great Southern Ocean from the southwest.

The low temperature summation of the Whalebone Vineyard and the still air ripening conditions particularly suit the fastidious Merlot variety and provides one of the truly “distinguished sites” for this variety. In 2005 the Merlot at Whalebone Vineyard was harvested on the 7th of April before the first of the un-seasonal early April heat waves.

The sugar level at harvest was 25.6 Brix, the pH was 3.49 and the acid 6.2gpl as tartaric acid.

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Winemaking Notes

The Merlot grapes from the Whalebone Vineyard were hand harvested. They were destemmed, partially roller crushed and the must was chilled to 3°C into 1 tonne fermentation tubs.

A 3-day cold maceration preceded the beginning of fermentation with selected native yeasts, followed by twice daily hand plunging to break up the cap of skins. At the peak of fermentation, the temperature of the fermenting juice reached 35°C before exhausting all sugar after 14 days. The fermented wine and skins were sealed down for a further week of post fermentation maceration before draining and pressing directly to French oak barriques (70% new and 30% 1 use).

After malo-lactic fermentation in barrique, the wine was racked and sulphured followed by a racking each 6 months until after a total of 4 rackings and 20 months in barrique the wine was clear.

The Whalebone Vineyard 2005 Merlot was given a light egg white fining before being bottled without filtration in March of 2007.

The in bottle analysis of the Whalebone Vineyard 2005 Merlot is:

Alcohol	14.2%
pH	3.48
Total acid	5.4gpl
SO ₂	76ppm
Volatile Acid	0.56gpl

The Taste of the Wine

The Whalebone Vineyard terroir exerts its strength across all four of the varieties grown there, and the Merlot develops the smoky Eucalyptus, anise and fresh earth aromas and flavours that are the signature of this distinguished site.

The Tapanappa Whalebone Vineyard 2005 Merlot has the ripe plum and exotic spice of Merlot from the warm 2005 vintage. The very sweet fruit middle palate is matched by a significant bulk of tannin providing a fine grained and savoury finish.

This is a rich and ripe wine, which will best accompany dishes based on braised ox cheeks or slow cooked veal shanks.

Winemaker

Brian Croser

200 cases produced