

# TAPANAPPA

## A U S T R A L I A

### TAPANAPPA WHALEBONE VINEYARD 2006 MERLOT

#### *Vintage Notes*

Tapanappa acquired the 30 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 of this variety planted in South Australia and they have responded magnificently to the re-trellising of the vines and improvement of the Terra Rossa soil with organic matter since 2002.

There is only 0.8 hectares of 30 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 30-year struggle the Merlot vine roots have penetrated the deeper limestone layers and are extracting a balance of moisture and nutrient to sustain a meagre crop of 4 tonnes/hectare as a maximum yield. The vines have sufficient canopy and root system to fully ripen the harvest relying only on natural rainfall.

The 2005/2006 growing season was normal except for a hotter than average January. After veraison in January, the ripening months were moderate and cooler than average. In 2005/2006 the heat summation for Whalebone Vineyard for the 7-month growing season was 1394°C days against the average of 1377°C days. In nearby Coonawarra the heat summation for 2005/2006 was 1431°C days.

Whalebone Vineyard has consistently proven to be cooler than Coonawarra in prior and subsequent vintages (see [www.tapanappawines.com.au](http://www.tapanappawines.com.au) and scroll down from *Vineyards* to *Whalebone Vineyard*, *Wrattontully* to *Climate*).

The paradox is that despite being cooler Whalebone Vineyard ripens each variety earlier and more completely than Coonawarra, 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 2006 the Merlot at Whalebone Vineyard was harvested on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March.

The sugar level at harvest was 24.2 Brix, the pH was 3.39 and the acid 6.42gpl as tartaric acid.

### Winemaking Notes

The Merlot grapes from the Whalebone Vineyard were hand harvested. The grapes were de-stemmed, 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 wines were clear.

The Whalebone Vineyard 2006 Merlot was given a light egg white fining before being bottled without filtration in March of 2008. The in-bottle analysis of the Whalebone Vineyard 2006 Merlot is:

Alcohol	14.3%
pH	3.38
Total acid	5.56gpl
SO <sub>2</sub>	82ppm
Volatile Acid	0.39gpl

### The Taste of the Wine

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

The Tapanappa Whalebone Vineyard 2006 Merlot has the ripe plum and exotic spice of Merlot from the warm 2006 vintage. The very sweet fruit middle palate is matched by a significant bulk of tannin providing a fine grained and savoury finish. 2006 is a vintage defined by its tannins.

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

*Bottled on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. Only 240 cases produced. RRP \$75/bottle.*