1999 Merlot
Walla Walla Valley

Winemaker Notes:

Sometimes circumstance leads you to alter your plans to take advantage of opportunity. Such is the case with our 1999 Merlot. Though we had originally planned to use the Merlot for blending, the grapes were so outstanding, we had to add this varietal to our portfolio to complement the Cabernet Sauvignon.

This classic bottling of Merlot is extremely concentrated and ripe with juicy black cherry, currant, chocolate and spice flavors.   A balanced touch of oak, from mostly new French oak barrels, adds a note of vanilla and toast in the background. The wine is supple and polished with a long and elegant finish. The Merlot aged 18 months in 90% French oak barrels and six months in the bottle before release.

- Jean-François Pellet, Winemaker

The 1999 Vintage:

The 1999 vintage worried us early on with cool spring and summer weather, but September warmed up and the grapes matured quickly. Verasion started around August 10 and was 100% complete two weeks later. Harvest began with Merlot on September 24 at Seven Hills Vineyard, and finished October 18 with Cabernet Sauvignon from Pepper Bridge Vineyard. Due to variable weather conditions and a late growing season, we decided to lower the crop levels severely by dropping fruit in early August, which assisted in the grapes reaching full maturity. We vinified each lot separately and fermented in small bins, punching down three times a day. After pressing and primary fermentation, we racked each lot into oak barrels and inoculated for malolactic fermentation. The 1999 vintage shows dark color, bright fruit and nice complexity.

Wine Specifics:

Varietal(s):	94% Merlot, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon
Vineyard(s):	85% Pepper Bridge Vineyard, 15% Seven Hills Vineyard
Appellation:	Walla Walla Valley
Harvest Date(s):	September 24 through October 8, 1999
Brix at Harvest:	24.3
Total Acidity:	0.61g/ml
pH:	3.70
Finished Alcohol:	13.5
Total Production:	861 9-liter cases
Release Date:	September 4, 2001

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