

DASHE CELLARS

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*Merlot*

1998

POTTER VALLEY

ALC 13.5% by VOL.

## *1998 Dashe Cellars Potter Valley Merlot*

### HISTORY

This is the first Merlot we have made for release on the Dashe Cellars label. We had never expected to produce a Merlot, but when one of our favorite growers asked us to make wine from the grapes he planted and tended at his home in Potter Valley, we couldn't refuse. The vines are some of the best maintained we've ever seen—picture-perfect rows of vines sporting a small crop of tiny, jet-black grapes. When I tasted the grapes I knew that these could make a wine that was more reminiscent of the elegant wines of St. Emilion than a typical California Merlot.

### PRODUCTION

The spring of 1998 arrived late and, therefore, the vines started maturing later than usual, virtually ensuring that harvest would go into October. Luckily the set was small, which helped make for higher-quality, lower-yield fruit that would ripen a bit faster in the fall. The threat of rain made us sweat in September—but we wanted to pick at optimum ripeness so we kept waiting for the grapes. The rains never materialized and we picked the grapes in mid-October.

We fermented the wine in small fermentation vats, pumping the wine over the skins twice a day to extract the maximum flavor and color from the grapes. The fermentation was conducted using only the natural yeast population on the grapes. During aging we blended in ten percent of Cabernet Sauvignon to add structure, tannin, and a note of chocolate and coffee to the nose. The wine is unfinned and received minimal handling on the way to the bottle.

The resulting wine shows a nose of black cherry, cassis, chocolate, vanilla, sweet oak, and a hint of the green olive aroma that is characteristic of this varietal. In the mouth the wine is luscious and elegant—a smooth mixture of black cherry fruit, raspberry, black pepper, clove, green olive, and coffee. The balance of the wine is almost perfect, with a lovely firm acidity balancing the sweetness of the fruit, and a long, elegant finish of fruit and sweet chalky tannins. The flavors last for minutes after swallowing, showing the complexity and structure of a great food wine. This Merlot will continue to improve over the next eight years and will last for many years afterwards.

### PRODUCTION NOTES

Varietals: 90% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon

Appellation: Potter Valley  
Mendocino County

Alcohol: 13.5% by vol.

Production: 300 cases, 750mL

Release date: April 1, 2000

Sugg. retail price: \$26.00 bottle, 750mL

Optimum time for consumption: 2000-2008

### TASTING NOTES

**Color:** Lovely deep red.

**Aroma:** Intense black cherry, cassis, clove, black pepper, green olive, and floral notes.

**Taste:** In the mouth, the sweet black cherry and raspberry fruit dominates, with cassis, chocolate, and vanilla highlights. The structure is balanced and elegant with firm acidity and firm tannins. Shows an extremely long and sweet finish of red fruit, chocolate and luscious tannins.