



*The Joy of Wine*

*“Merlot deserves a place on the table of any serious wine lover. Its rich, silky texture, supple tannins and versatility with food make it an approachable alternative to Cabernet Sauvignon.” — Winemaker Richie Allen*

## CARNEROS MERLOT

# PERFECT MATCH OF VARIETAL, SITE CREATES WINE WORTHY OF ITS NOBLE HERITAGE



**WIDELY PLANTED IN BORDEAUX**, especially in the Pomerol and Saint-Émilion regions of the Right Bank, Merlot is one of the five noble grape varieties found in the finest red Bordeaux wines. In fact, Merlot is the dominant varietal in some of Bordeaux’s most revered red wines, including Chateau Petrus, a highly prized Merlot that can be found in the most discriminating wine cellars internationally. In California, the Rombauer family noted early on that the Carneros region shares many attributes with the Right Bank of Bordeaux, including a cool, marine-influenced climate and clay soils. These conditions in our Carneros vineyards allow Merlot’s finest qualities to emerge: luscious fruit and silky texture balanced by supple tannins and bright acidity. With an appreciation for the varietal’s noble lineage, approachability and food-friendly nature, the Rombauer family produced its first Merlot in 1983.



### IN THE VINEYARD

Noted for outstanding Chardonnay, the cool, wind-swept Carneros region is equally suited for high-quality Merlot. During the growing season, heat rises to the north in the Napa and Sonoma valleys, pulling fog and cold air in from San Pablo Bay and allowing the thin-skinned Merlot grapes to gradually develop flavor and tannin while retaining plenty of natural acidity. The clay soils that dominate our Carneros vineyards are similar to the vineyard compositions of France’s Right Bank, where some of the world’s most revered Merlot-dominated wines are grown. Each block under our care is micro-farmed, with soil analysis and aerial photos produced using NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index) technology guiding vineyard management decisions throughout the growing season. All grapes are picked at night — cool temperatures retain cluster integrity and preserve fruit intensity — hand-sorted, and delivered to the winery.

### IN THE WINERY

As each lot of grapes arrives at the winery, the fruit is sorted again using an optical sorter that eliminates all but the finest Merlot berries. About a third of the wine is barrel-fermented to provide a richer, more textured palate. The remaining grapes are placed in small tanks and allowed to cold soak for 10 days, a practice that extracts rich flavor and dark color. During fermentation, the wine in tank is pumped over two to three times a day using gentle peristaltic pumps (larger versions of the pumps used to move blood during surgery); similarly, wine fermented in barrel is rotated several times a day. As each lot goes dry, the wine is pressed from the skins using a modern, hydraulic basket press that results in high-quality press wine. Our Carneros Merlot ages in 100% French oak barrels for about 17 months. Winemaker Richie Allen works with 10 different coopers each vintage and up to 20 different barrel types, as the differences in wood species, seasoning, toast and grain allow him to choose the perfect barrels for each wine lot. As the wine lots age, they are evaluated monthly; those not meeting our standards are sold off as bulk wine.



## AT A GLANCE

# CARNEROS MERLOT

Our Carneros Merlot is produced using the same attention to detail that characterizes our family's approach to all of its wines. Years of experimentation and refinement have gone into perfecting our Merlot, to ensuring it delivers on the promise of a serious, yet approachable wine. Beginning in the vineyard, where each block is micro-farmed and harvested, Winemaker Richie Allen produces our Carneros Merlot on a lot-by-lot basis, determining the best fermentation and aging technique for each block as it moves its way through the winery.



## 2013 CARNEROS MERLOT

Varietal composition: 88% Merlot, 12% Cabernet Sauvignon

Harvested: Sept. 10–Oct. 21, 2013

Average Brix at Harvest: 26.2

Cooperage: Aged 17 months in French oak barrels (30% new)

Alcohol: 14.5%

**90 points, Wine Spectator**

## FOOD PAIRING

Our Carneros Merlot is the ideal food-pairing partner, with medium body, plush tannins, silky texture and mouthwatering acidity that make it a versatile choice for many types of foods. Here are some of our favorite pairings:

- Seafood: Seared Tuna Steaks; Grilled Planked Salmon; Sautéed Scallops or Prawns
- Meat: Oven-Roasted Chicken; Chicken Cacciatore; Braised Veal Shanks; Grilled Pork Tenderloin;



Beef Braciolo; Pate de Campagne

- Sauces: Meat and Mushroom Red Wine Sauce; Roasted Garlic Herb Sauce; Dried Fruit Sauce
- Cheese: Mild Cow, Goat or Sheep Milk Cheeses

## KEY POINTS

Merlot comprises some of the greatest red wines of Bordeaux

Grapes are sourced from outstanding Rombauer-owned and grower-partner vineyards in the prized Carneros AVA

Micro-farming approach is based on NDVI aerial photos and personal interaction with the vines

Night-harvested fruit is sorted in the vineyard by hand and again in the winery using our state-of-the-art optical sorter

Gentle handling of thin-skinned Merlot includes a 10-day cold soak, gentle pumpovers and basket-pressing; a portion of the wine is barrel-fermented

Aged in 100% French oak barrels for 17 months

All lots are kept separate until blending and bottling; less-than-perfect lots are sold off as bulk wine