



2006 HOWELL MOUNTAIN

MERLOT NAPA VALLEY

HISTORY

Built of stone in the late 1800's, the La Jota winery tells the story of Napa Valley's winemaking history. Here, Frederick Hess, a Swiss immigrant, founded the La Jota Vineyard Co. With vines planted in the 1890s, he made wines that won medals in the Paris Exposition of 1900 and brought fame to Howell Mountain. The winery's name comes from its location on the 1844 Mexican land grant, Rancho La Jota. The four estate wines capture the intense fruit and mineral complexity of La Jota's unique, cool-climate vineyard site.

VINEYARD

Our Howell Mountain Merlot comes from two vineyards located high upon a Howell Mountain plateau overlooking Napa Valley. The majority of the blend was grown on our La Jota vineyard estate—a unique spot surrounded by pines, firs, oak and madrone trees, with a cool, windy climate and lean volcanic soils. These estate grapes, selected from our meadow blocks, provide the wine with a serious cocoa/chocolate element. We added a little Merlot from Keyes Vineyard, a mile down the road and with very different terroir, to give it a “pop” of bright fruit character and broader tannins. La Jota gets more fog, while Keyes tallies more sunshine hours, which accounts for the different vineyard personalities.

WINEMAKING

We hand-harvested the grapes into small, 30-pound boxes to prevent crushing, and then brought them to our winery for hand sorting. After destemming and light crushing, the must was cold soaked for gentle color, flavor and tannin extraction. To bridle the “mountain tannins”, Winemaker Christopher Carpenter added small amounts of oxygen with three “splashing pump-overs” a day during the primary fermentation in stainless steel tanks. In-barrel malolactic fermentation rounded the acidity and softly integrated the vanillin character of the new French oak barrels. To further enhance the wine's elegance, we racked the wine five times during its 22 months of barrel aging.

WINEMAKER'S COMMENTS

“A combination of two unique vineyard blocks creates a Merlot that hits at every level. The aromatics present rich tones of cocoa, blackberry, and smoke, while the sweet tannins, minerality, and tremendous length carry overtones of dark chocolate and deep dark fruit on the palate.”

CHRISTOPHER CARPENTER, WINEMAKER

TECHNICAL NOTES

BLEND COMPOSITION	VINEYARD INFORMATION	HARVEST DATES	TYPE OF FERMENTATION	LENGTH OF MACERATION
98% Merlot 1% Cabernet Sauvignon 1% Petit Verdot	La Jota Estate Vineyard and Keyes Vineyard	October 26, 2006	Stainless Steel tanks with three pump-overs per day	18 to 20 days including cold soak
BARREL AGING	ALCOHOL BY VOLUME	WINE pH	WINE ACIDITY	CASES PRODUCED
22 months in French Oak	14.5%	3.45	0.63 g/100ml	190