

# ABEJA



2007  
MERLOT

**VARIETAL COMPOSITION:** 91% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Franc

**VINEYARD SOURCES:** Sagemoor: Bacchus & Dionysus; Gamache Vineyard

**APPELLATION:** Columbia Valley

**HARVEST DATES:** September 8, 2007 – September 25, 2007

**OAK COMPOSITION:** 80% French, 20% American;  
60% new, 40% one & two year old

**BARREL AGING:** 14 months

**CHEMISTRY:** Alc. 14.6%, pH 3.68, TA .54 g/100ml

**BOTTLING DATE:** November 24, 2008

**RELEASE DATE:** November 1, 2009

Merlot, the golden girl of the early nineties, fell out of favor for a time, but truthfully, I'm not sure why. Maybe it was that everyone jumped on the bandwagon and planted Merlot with less consideration for the location, leading to an ebb in quality. Maybe, too, folks were ready to move "sideways" for Pinot Noir. I don't blame the interest in Pinot Noir. I enjoy the varietal, especially when it truly tastes like Pinot Noir, but I still really like Merlot for its versatility and approachability in its youth. Merlot is also how I received a ticket to come to Washington State, and I have enjoyed making it, since moving to Walla Walla in 1994. I am very fond of the area and have had a great time working with our growers and the other winemakers in our region.

The 2007 vintage is special to me, as it follows closely on the heels of 1999 in quality. The temperatures were average to slightly above average during the growing season. Fall was long and moderate, allowing flavor maturity – and not weather concerns or sugar content – to influence picking decisions.

The nose of this wine is genuine Merlot, not like the sea of Merlot that crashed on to the wine shelves in the nineties. I promised myself that if we were to make Merlot, it had to taste like this. This wine is packed with dark fruit: boysenberries and dark cherries. It also has a nicely integrated aroma of oak married with red currants. I really like the layered flavors in the mouth, and it seems developed and generous in its youth. The tannins have richness and balance that surpass many I've seen in vintages past.

Food pairing with Merlot is fun; the beauty of the varietal is that it goes with almost anything. We enjoy it on many occasions with a caesar salad, just be careful with the amount of vinegar in the dressing. In fact, substituting Meyer lemon juice will soften the acidity and make the salad an even better companion to the wine. Try this Merlot with marinated, grilled, or seared tofu using firm, and if you can find it, locally made tofu. Salmon with andouille sausage and roasted veggies would work nicely, too. I also like grilled skirt steak with spuds topped with jalapeños, the spiciness of which the Merlot can handle.

The music that comes to mind for me is *You're My Best Friend* by Queen, or a fun 1980's song *What's On Your Mind* by Information Society. Earth Wind and Fire is also high on my list and the first album I ever bought. Download *The Best of Earth Wind and Fire Vol. 1* and enjoy a 1970's classic.

John Abbott – Winemaker