



AIRFIELD ESTATES

2016 RESERVE MERLOT



Marcus Miller, Winemaker
Travis Maple, Winemaker

TECHNICAL DATA

14.5% Alcohol
3.82 pH
6.1 g/L TA
294 Cases

Airfield Estates is a fourth generation family farm based in the Yakima Valley cultivating a wide range of premium grapes and crafting estate grown wines of exceptional quality. As the name suggests, Airfield Estates has ties to aviation. A portion of the family property operated as a training base for hundreds of Army Air Corps pilots during World War II. The pride, passion, and dedication of these heroes provide a great source of inspiration as we strive to pay tribute to them with our wines.

VINEYARD

Established in 1968, our estate vineyard was one of the first commercial vineyards in Washington State. Our first plantings were Riesling, Gewürztraminer, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Over the years, we have expanded to over 20 varieties spanning approximately 830 acres. Nestled on the foothills of the Rattlesnake Mountains in the heart of the Yakima Valley AVA, our vineyard has one of the most spectacular views of Mount Rainier and Mount Adams. These sunny slopes are blessed with a long growing period, extended summer daylight, and cool evenings that yield well-balanced, world-class wines.

VINTAGE

The 2016 Vintage had a very early start with bud break in the vineyard about two weeks ahead of 2015 (the warmest vintage on record). A very mild and warm end to winter plus an exceptionally warm spring, lead to faster and earlier growth in the vineyards. This allowed our farmers to achieve better canopy management and adjust crop size earlier on in the growing season. Once the summer months were upon us, we quickly thought we could surpass 2015 as the warmest growing season ever. 2016 calmed down a bit in late July and early August returning to more moderate eastern Washington Temperatures. With a warm but not hot August days and cool nights, the white wine varietals flourished. Most white wine varietals in the state experienced some of the earliest harvest dates on record. These warm days and cool nights allowed for these varietals to achieve optimal ripeness and balanced acidity. These wines should show fresh, ripe, and rounded fruit with beautifully balanced acidity for years to come. Washington State did experience a slight phenomenon in 2016 with a cooler than average start to autumn. Temperatures from late September through the middle of October were a bit below average and precipitation was higher as well. This slowed down the rapid ripening rate we were seeing, and it really helped. It allowed us to have the fruit spend more time on the vines and for the fruit to achieve exceptional ripeness without the worry of having higher alcohols. The acidity will be more noticeable in 2016 but the extended hang time the fruit had in the vineyards, plus the extraction protocols in the cellar, make these wines very balanced with lush tannins. The wines made in 2016 will be emblematic of a warm vintage with trademark characteristics of a cooler finish to the 2016 harvest.

WINEMAKING

Our 2016 Reserve Merlot from our Estate Vineyard located in the Yakima Valley comes from our best reserve tier blocks of Merlot our vineyard has to offer. Harvested in early October at optimal ripeness, we hand harvest the grapes where the grapes we again sorted then destemmed but not crushed before being sent to small fermenters. After a cold soak for 72 hours, the grapes were then warmed up and inoculated with a specific yeast strain. Our extraction protocol was aggressive early on, giving the grapes the most extraction before noticeable alcohol was present and keeping temperatures around 88 degrees. Later in the fermentation, the extraction was tapered off to be gentler and have more time on the skins. Once dry on the skins, the juice was drained from the skins, then sent to a press to press out the remaining juice from the grapes. Sent directly to a French Oak Barrels with 65% being new French Oak Barrels and 35% Neutral Oak then inoculated for Malo-Lactic Fermentation. Once MLF was completed, the wines lees were then stirred for about 4 months, this process rounds the wines out and naturally softens them while doing so. Aged for approximately 20 months in oak before taken out of barrels and prepped for bottling.

TASTING NOTES

Aromatics of blackberry, chocolate-covered cherries, and roasted espresso beans with undertones of anise. The silky texture leads to flavors of plum, black truffle, and a hint of sandalwood exiting the palate with soft tannins.