



AIRFIELD

ESTATES

2020 MICHAEL L. MILLER



Marcus Miller, Winemaker
Travis Maple, Winemaker

TECHNICAL DATA

14.4% Alcohol
3.90 pH
5.7 g/L TA
263 Cases

*Produced in a Vegan Manner
(No animal by-products used
in production of this wine)*

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.

VINEYARD

Established in 1968, our estate vineyard was one of the first commercial vineyards in Washington State. 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.

FOUNDERS SERIES

This wine pays tribute to our father, Michael L. Miller, who founded Airfield Estates Winery and also expanded our estate vineyard into the large-scale operation it is today. The pride, passion, and enthusiasm that he expressed for our vineyard, grapes, and wine is something that we hope to continue to share with others.

VINTAGE

The 2020 vintage will go down as a very memorable year. The growing season was exceptional with a mild winter, warm spring, and moderate summer. Bud break occurred two weeks earlier than normal, and veraison was also well ahead of schedule. Just as we were preparing for an early start to harvest, wildfires in the Northwest created a thick cloud of smoke over Washington State. Concerns arose about exposure to smoke. Taking a cautious approach, we delayed harvest until the smoke cleared and conducted trials to determine the effect of smoke on our grapes. Fortunately, results showed no sign of smoke taint as our vineyard was a long distance away from the fires. Another major event in 2020 was an early frost that occurred the second week of October. Our winemaking team worked tirelessly for long hours leading up to the frost. By the time our vineyard was impacted by the cold spell, harvest was 95% complete. All remaining grapes were then hand-harvested and sorted with an optical sorter to remove any excessive M.O.G. or bad grapes. Overall, we were very pleased with the results of the 2020 vintage. The wines showcase an abundance of ripe fruit aromatics, low tannin profiles, and exceptionally balanced finishes.

WINEMAKING

Handcrafted for exceptional balance, richness, depth, concentration, and complexity, this full-bodied Rhone-style blend is comprised of 80% Syrah, 10% Grenache, 9% Mourvedre, and 1% Viognier. Each varietal was sourced from the best of the best reserve tier blocks on our estate vineyard, which is situated in the Yakima Valley AVA. Harvested in early October, the grapes were destemmed, sorted using an optical sorter, and sent to concrete tanks for fermentation. 35% of the Syrah grapes were left on the stems and sent to the fermenter as whole clusters – having stem inclusion in our Rhone blends creates structure and complexity. We also added a small amount of Viognier to co-ferment with the Syrah, giving the Syrah more robust dark fruit flavors. Each lot was fermented in concrete for an average of 16 days, going dry on the skin before pressing. Fermenting in concrete adds additional layers of complexity, giving the wine multi-dimensions of minerality and lifting the wine's fruit aromatics. Giving this wine even more special attention, we fermented each varietal using the grapes' native yeast. A native yeast fermentation brings out each varietal's characteristics with more lifted fruit aromatics. Our extraction was aggressive to begin fermentation, with aerated pump overs giving the ferment lots of oxygen early on. This approach allows us to have optimal color and flavor extraction early on. Once alcohol becomes prevalent, we taper off to a gentler approach with less frequent pump-overs to maintain the wine's naturally silky tannin structure. After fermentation, each wine was sent to large format French oak barrels for aging. After malolactic fermentation was complete, the lees were stirred twice a month for 3 months to naturally soften the wine while creating a more seamless and rounder palate. After 6 months of aging, we meticulously rated each barrel and chose the best of the best barrels from each lot to create this masterpiece of a blend. The blend was then put together and sent to large format French oak barrels for an additional 16 months of aging. Final aging in exclusive 500L French Oak barrels consisted of 85% new French oak and 15% neutral French Oak. After aging in French oak for a total of 22 months, we then finished the wines aging for an additional month in concrete tanks to create more lifted aromatics and more finesse before the wine was bottled.

TASTING NOTES

This full-bodied Rhone-style blend displays luscious aromatics of black cherry, red currant, and sweet plums with savory undertones. The entry is remarkably smooth with interwoven flavors of blackberry, strawberry preserves, and barbecued meat. The wine exits the palate with a silk-like tannin structure showcasing tertiary flavors of toasted beechwood, graphite, and generous layers of sweet toasted oak providing a long, lush, and elegant finish. Enjoy now through 2038 with optimal maturity in 2033.

