



AIRFIELD

E S T A T E S

2017 RESERVE MERLOT



Marcus Miller, Winemaker
Travis Maple, Winemaker

TECHNICAL DATA

14.3% Alcohol
3.89 pH
6.0 g/L TA
295 Cases
Bottled 9/24/19

*Produced in a Vegan Manner
(No animal byproducts 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. 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

To begin 2017, Eastern Washington was in the midst of a brutal winter that lingered on into early March. Our concerns of winter damage to the vines were alleviated towards the end of April when our vineyards came back to life with bud break. Bud break was a bit behind a normal Washington vintage, but not by much. Spring of 2017 was warm, and this led to rapid growth in the vineyards. The spring led into a perfect Eastern Washington summer with warm days and cool nights that we are keen on for a great growing season. Veraison happened around the first of August, and with all the last-minute adjustments to crop size we were very pleased. Wildfires were a great deal of concern for us, but as damaging as these fires were, thankfully our estate vineyard was not impacted by the excessive smoke we experienced in the state. Very similar to the 2016 vintage, we had a much cooler than average September that slowed the ripening process down quite a bit. This allowed the grapes to hang on the vines much longer to achieve optimal ripeness for flavor development and sugar content. This meant a later harvest season for us as we brought in the last of our grapes in early November.

WINEMAKING

Sourced exclusively from reserve tier blocks in our estate vineyard, the caliber of this wine begins in the vineyard. The crop size is managed with winter pruning, then extra thinning in the spring all the way up until summer. During summer, our management of these blocks is even more meticulous with proper water stress and canopy management to ensure the grapes have ideal growth and exposure. Harvested by hand in early October at optimal ripeness, the grapes were then hand sorted and destemmed before being sent to small stainless-steel fermenters. The grapes were then cold soaked for 72 hours to help extract color without the interference of alcohol. After the cold soak, the grapes were warmed and inoculated with two special yeast strains, one to help develop varietal characteristics, the other for more fruit and structure. Extraction was more aggressive early on with lengthy pump overs and a delastage to achieve optimal extraction. Once alcohol levels were around 7%, our extraction methods were a gentler approach with less pump overs and more punch downs as to not over extract the wine. The wine was fermented on the skins until dry, about 13 days, then drained with the grapes being sent to a press for a gentle pressing to extract the remaining juice from the grapes. The wine was then sent to exclusive French oak barrels for Malo-Lactic Fermentation and aging. After MLF was completed, the wine's lees were stirred twice a month for three months. This process helps naturally soften the wines and creates more roundness on the palate. Aged for approximately 20 months in 55% New French Oak, 25% 1-4 year old French oak, and 20% Neutral oak before being prepared for bottling.

TASTING NOTES

The 2017 Reserve Merlot expresses aromas of sweet cassis, toasted cedar, and dark espresso evolving into more complex aromas of licorice and baking spices. The palate is smooth with a fine tannin structure and flavors of sweet plums, smoked fig, and salted caramel. The finish is elegant with lingering flavors of sweet toasted oak. Enjoy now through 2032, optimal maturity should peak around 2028.

