

Calluna Vineyards, Merlot, Aux Reynauds

- A Merlot of substance—not your typical jelly doughnut!
- Cool climate, exposure and farming geared towards elegance in expression
- Skillfully blended Pomerol-style expression of Sonoma County Merlot

The Producer

Many California producers look to Bordeaux for inspiration as the great wines of France have long been the reference points for Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot. Unfortunately, most wines that claim to emulate Bordeaux bear little resemblance to like their French counterparts; with many producers masking varietal characteristics under veneers of ripeness and oak, while others pursue mono-varietal planting in ever more precise vineyard blocks that is modeled more after Burgundy than Bordeaux. David Jeffrey takes a purist Bordeaux approach matching varieties to the site and using the art of blending to express the voice of the place. The results are wines of balance and elegance, a fresh and welcome example of Californian Bordeaux.

David Jeffrey has always loved Bordeaux so when he decided he wanted to make wine it was clear to him that he needed to learn from the best. He went to Bordeaux to learn from renowned oenologist Alain Raynaud, whose innovative practices elevated Ch. Quinault L'Enclos up the ranks of St. Emilion's classification. Working with Raynaud, Jeffrey learned the full spectrum of winegrowing from vineyard design and training to cutting edge fermentation and tannin management to get the most from each vineyard block.

Armed with the knowledge he needed and a solid vision, Jeffrey's next task was to find the site that would fit his vision. He knew that the most important task was to match the varieties with the appropriate site. After concerted search in Napa and Sonoma, he found his ideal spot on the Western slopes of the Chalk Hill AVA. In Chalk Hill he found a spot not unlike the Cote of St. Emilion, home to the great Chateaux such as Ausone and Pavie.

Calluna Estate sits on a Western facing slope overlooking the Russian River Valley. The hillside provides outstanding exposure and drainage while the elevation prevents the grapes from being baked by the afternoon sunlight. Cool air from the Russian River sweeps up the slope keeping the acid levels fresh. The soils are very diverse including marine Franciscan formations and Goldridge sandy loams well as volcanic and metamorphic rocks. Jeffrey plants each variety in its ideal place. Vines are planted in dense rows and cane trained just as in Bordeaux using the canopy to protect them.

After harvesting perfectly ripe fruit, slightly ahead of his neighbors, Jeffrey employs cutting edge methods used in top Chateaux in Bordeaux including barrel-fermenting the Colonel's Cabernet, a technique also used Harlan and Dana Estates. The early integration of oak into the wine softens the tannins and diminishes the impact in the finished wine.

The Wine

Aux Reynauds is a single vineyard wine made from a 1 acre hillside block of Merlot named in honor of David Jeffrey's mentor, Alain Reynaud and his family. This block is planted using a Bordeaux clone of Merlot with a small section of Cabernet Franc and is located on a Southwest facing slope with the rows oriented at 45 degrees to the heat of the afternoon sun. The vineyard is sheltered from the most direct sun exposure that nearby Colonel's vineyard receives and the soils are heavier retaining more moisture that favors Merlot. The wine is vinified using Reynaud's techniques and incorporates 15% Cabernet Franc to add complexity and structure to the wine. This is not the typical plush jelly donut Merlot but rather one with substance and is worthy of aging. This special wine is a unique expression of Merlot from Chalk Hill and is released in very limited quantities.



Region: Sonoma County

Appellation: Chalk Hill AVA

Vineyards: Calluna Estate

Altitude: 500-700ft

Soil: Franciscan formation over volcanic base

Varietals: 85% Merlot, 15% Cabernet Franc

Vine age: 2005

Planting system: VSP, cane trained Cordon

Vine density: 1560-4150 vines per acre

Production: 100 cases

Vinification: Vinified in open-top tanks with twice-daily pump overs at a controlled temperature. 3 week fermentations before pressing to barrel.

Aging: 21 months in French oak, 25% new

Tasting Notes: Delicious!