

LADERA

2004 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon
Howell Mountain

Blend: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon, 100% Howell Mountain

Vineyard and Vintage

When Ladera acquired this Howell Mountain property in 2000, it was very much in keeping with the Ladera philosophy of sourcing grapes from high quality, hillside locations. The Ladera Howell Mountain vineyard is a perfect compliment to Ladera Lone Canyon Ranch. The Howell Mountain vineyard is located at an elevation of 1600 to 1800 feet, with gently rolling terrain. The soils are iron-rich, red, clay loam soils with an abundance of gravel for excellent drainage. Because of the elevation, the climate is very different from the valley floor of Napa. It tends to be above the fog line in the summer and so receives sun for a longer duration during the day. Because of the higher elevation, the temperatures are cooler in the day and warmer at night than the valley floor. The longer sun exposure and warmer nights allow Cabernet Sauvignon to ripen every year. The resulting wines are soft and elegant, with a finesse reminiscent of wines from Bordeaux.

The primary Cabernet Sauvignon blocks for the 2004 Ladera were first planted in 1997. Subsequent plantings in 2001 also produced grapes for this wine. There are 9 Cabernet Sauvignon clones on 5 different rootstocks, giving a multitude of combinations to suit every soil and microclimate on the ranch. These blocks were trained as vertical shoot positioned vines on 5x8 and 4x7 spacing.

The 2004 vintage was ideal, with early budbreak after the winter rains stopped in late February, a warm growing season and an early harvest with moderate temperatures and no rain. It was a classic Napa Valley harvest which produced premium Cabernets. As always, it was a low yielding year at Howell Mountain at less than 2 1/4 tons per acre—normal for Howell Mountain, but low for most of Napa Valley.

Winemaking and Tasting Notes

The grapes were fermented with mostly native yeasts and averaged 13 days for length of fermentation. The wines were pressed at dryness with little extended skin contact and were neither fined nor filtered. The wine was barrel aged for 22 months in new (61%) and used (39%) French oak barrels and was bottled August 21, 2006.

The 2004 vintage will be known for rich, ripe and concentrated wines with an abundance of flavors. The 2004 Ladera Howell Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon is a stunning wine totally in keeping with the excellent vintage and with the previous Ladera Howell Mountain Cabernets. It is fruit forward, with ripe aromas of the classic Howell Mountain black cherry, blackberry and plum hints which are intertwined with subtle oak nuances. On the palate, this wine is weighty but not flabby. The tannins are long, velvety and wet and are especially present in the wines mid-structure.