



## Don Raffaele Estate

*Fran and I invite you to enjoy the newest vintage of our Bordeaux-style Merlot. We grow our own grapes from which we produce our own wine. In this way, we are able to nurture the fruit as it grows, generating the intense taste and consistency that Napa wine lovers expect year after year. Our vineyard is in a choice location on a hillside in the western hills of Napa, on the southeast instep of Mt. Veeder. We have grown grapes and made wine here for sixteen years. To us, wine is passion. It's an integral part of our lives. It's what drew us to the Napa Valley.— Peter Chiarella, owner*

### THE VINEYARD

We have been making our estate wines for seven years, despite the much longer existence of the Don Raffaele vineyard. In 1999, we experimented with producing a wine using only the Merlot grapes from the vines at the top of our hill. The soil in that vineyard area is very sparse and the vines are under constant stress during the growing season. As a result, fewer clusters appear on those hilltop vines than on the rest of the vineyard. The grapes are smaller and more concentrated. The fruit is remarkably intense and the resulting wine is a delight. The experiment worked!

### THE WINEMAKING

Each year, under the supervision of winemaker Alison Doran, our field crew carefully prunes and grooms each vine to yield the best fruit possible. We hand pick and sort each cluster on the day of harvest and deliver the fruit to the crush pad that day. We carefully control the yeast fermentation to ensure the wine is completely dry. Following the initial fermentation, the wine is kept in contact with the skins and pulp and a second, bacterial fermentation is induced to generate softness and viscosity. The new wine is placed in an assortment of the best quality French and American oak barrels. Our procedures require very gentle handling of the wine from vineyard to bottle, a process we consider vital to our standard of quality. The Don Raffaele Estate Merlot is our premiere product and is made in the style of the Pomerol region of France.

### TASTING NOTES - 2004 Merlot, Don Raffaele Estate

2004 was an outstanding year in which to grow wine grapes in the Napa Valley. It was a long, mild growing season, with few heat spikes; but because of unusual, intermittent rain, we dusted the crop with sulphur to prevent mildew. There were great swings in temperature from day to night, resulting in a small, ripe and balanced crop.

This vintage Merlot was blended with 4% of our own Cabernet Sauvignon and 4% Petite Syrah.

### THE WINE

Dark purple color with aromas of coffee, tobacco and vanilla give way to the complex taste of black cherry and cola with overtones of black pepper. Gentle tannins pinch the back of the throat, creating a long and wonderfully silky sensation on the palette.

### TECHNICAL DATA

**Harvest Date:** October 11, 2004

**Average Sugar at Harvest:** 25.3

**Average pH (Harvest / Bottling):**  
3.51 / 3.70

**Average Total Acid (Harvest /Bottling):**

0.53 / 0.60g / L

**Fermentation Method:** Cold Soak, Traditional Red Yeasts, Malolactic, Extended Maceration

**Alcohol by Volume:** 14.5%

**Residual Sugar:** Dry

**Cases Produced:** 148