



# WINEMAKING AT MERRIAM VINEYARDS

*Wines for the Moment at the Edge of the Russian River Valley*

In the less-is-better tradition of winemaking, Merriam Vineyards' wines are crafted with minimal intervention in the winemaking process. Extreme care is taken with every step—harvest is done by hand, and the grapes are hand-delivered to small fermenters. After fermentation, the wine goes into medium-toast, 100% French oak barrels, where it is racked throughout the year on what is known as a Bordeaux schedule—three or four times in the first year and twice in the second year. Racking is a labor-intensive process, and most new world wineries tend to rack less frequently.

## Our Philosophy

Why Bordeaux varieties? While honeymooning in France, Peter and Diana Merriam fell in love with the country and all things French. The theme carried through first with their love of entertaining family and friends with the perfect food and wine pairings, and, in 2000, with the production of small lot, handcrafted wines from their own estate vineyard, and from grapes grown in the Dry Creek and Alexander Valleys by some of the most highly esteemed growers in Sonoma County.

## The Winemaking Team

After receiving a degree in Viticulture and Enology, Winemaker David Herzberg moved to Santa Cruz and became the Enologist at Clos LaChance Winery; surfing in mornings and evenings and learning how to perfect wine during the day. Eventually, David returned home to Healdsburg and started a Consulting Winemaking business for local wineries. After meeting Peter Merriam, he realized there was a niche he could fill at Merriam Vineyards taking care of the day to day winemaking activities and watching over the wines. He is very happy to work with some of the best Bordeaux vineyards in Sonoma County.

David is looking forward to using his extensive knowledge and sharp intuition to craft flavorful wines from the complex soils on Merriam's estate Windacre Vineyard and the vineyards of their grower partners. This year, he is avidly "learning" the vineyards with help from John Grace, Merriam's vineyard manager.

## Blending

In the creation of Merriam Vineyards' Bordeaux-style wines, blending is the most important practice after the wines have undergone fermentation. At Merriam Vineyards, wines benefit from the added complexity provided by sourcing diverse grapes from a number of premium Sonoma County vineyard sites. "Each grape variety is grown from differing terroirs and therefore brings a distinct flavor or mouthfeel to the finished wine," says Peter Merriam. "For



## WINEMAKING AT MERRIAM VINEYARDS

*Continued*

us blending is a spice rack, where we combine fruit, spice and color to create more dynamic blends. Blending allows us to include varying percentages of different varieties from diverse vineyard sites with the result being perfectly balanced wines where power is restrained by elegance.” The Merriam winemaking team of Peter Merriam, Winemaker David Herzberg and members of the sales team gathers to evaluate each individual blend four times a year. These roundtable-blending sessions consist of tasting each wine twice and making decisions about different cooperages, degree of toasts, color, flavors and varietal balance, among other important considerations. Once the final decisions are made, each wine goes back into barrel for the next six to twelve months prior to bottling, a process that encourages harmony in the finished wines.

**Library Wines are available in the tasting room and can be tasted on a rotated schedule.**