

VINTAGE
2001

VARIETALS
85% Merlot, 8% Malbec
6% Cabernet Franc
1% Cabernet Sauvignon

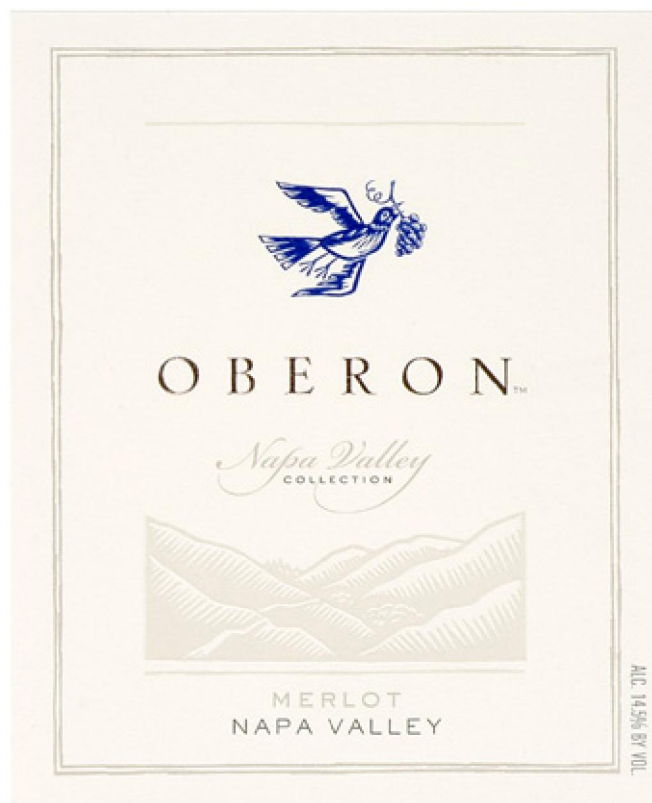
APPELLATION
Napa Valley

BARREL AGING
16 Months in Chateau barrels

CLARIFICATION
Barrel-to-barrel racking and fresh
egg white fining

ALCOHOL
14.5%

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE
\$19.99



WINEMAKING After gently destemming and crushing the hand-harvested grapes, we fermented the must (juice and skins) in stainless steel tanks. To naturally soften tannins and enhance varietal complexity, we gave the wine 17 days of skin contact. We then pressed the wine and transferred it to French oak barrels to undergo a long malolactic fermentation for roundness and depth. During the 16 months of aging in chateau barrels, we clarified the wine with barrel-to-barrel racking and then gently fined it with fresh egg whites to sculpt the tannins. A blend of Malbec, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon added interesting nuances to the lush berry flavor profile of the Merlot.

VINEYARDS Merlot vines like cool temperatures and have a special affinity to the Stags Leap District. Here the volcanic, gravelly loam soils, with an overlay of old Napa River sediment, are caressed by gentle marine breezes. We complemented these grapes with Merlot grown in the even cooler Los Carneros AVA, at the southern tip of Napa Valley, by San Pablo Bay. The Malbec and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes were grown further up the valley, in the Yountville and Oakville AVAs, where the warmer temperatures are perfect conditions for these varieties.

VINTAGE Napa Valley's 2001 growing season experienced one of the longest bloom-to-harvest periods in recent history. We began crushing the grapes August 8, one of the earliest onsets to harvest in 20 years. Then the weather changes and harvest became one of the longest in duration, with the last grapes picked at the end of October. Flavor maturity lagged behind sugar accumulation so we played a waiting game, delaying harvest until the flavor maturity caught up. We harvested these grapes from mid-September through October. The long hang-time on the vine resulted in rich flavors, exceptional balance and mature tannins in the Merlot, Malbec, Cabernet Franc and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes.