



STAG'S LEAP WINE CELLARS 1997 CASK 23

Vineyards ~ CASK 23, the proprietary red wine blend made only in select vintages, comes from S.L.V. and FAY, our two estate vineyards located in the heart of the Stags Leap District. Although FAY and S.L.V. are adjoining, subtle differences in *terroir* express different fruit characteristics. S.L.V., the vineyard that produced the famous Paris Tasting winner, offers complex, multilayered Bordeaux-like fruit elements. FAY vines produce radiant berry perfumes and voluptuous flavors. While soils in both vineyards are rocky, alluvial and volcanic, the volcanic influence predominates in S.L.V., while FAY tends to be more variable in makeup. Our farming of these two magnificent vineyards has led to the application of different viticultural techniques on an increasingly small scale. We went from farming by section, to farming by row, by vine, and now, we farm shoot-by-shoot. Each vine is groomed throughout the growing and ripening season from initial canopy structure, to leaf count and location, and to cluster formation. The 1997 is a stunning addition to our CASK 23 portfolio. Like its predecessors, it is like a classic piece of literature that will ring true to all cultures and generations. To experience this wine is to go on a great journey, showing to perfection the greatness in the land from which it comes.

Vintage ~ Heavy rains in the 1996/1997 harvest year fell primarily from December through April. The moisture and mild temperatures warmed the soil, initiating early budbreak and flowering. Although the summer was relatively cool, fruit ripening was steady and persistent. A flurry of rain in August caused little concern, when the return of warm days at summer's end gave the fruit an opulent richness. While the ultimate determination of fruit ripeness is the winemaker's taste, the large yield in 1997 required daily vine-by-vine analysis. There are areas of the vineyard in which we stopped the pickers in the middle of a row since, beyond that point, full flavor development had not yet occurred.

Wine ~ Like colors on the canvas from one of the great impressionistic painters, the perfumes of the 1997 CASK 23 evolve like an aromatic landscape; truffle, black currant, allspice and sandalwood beguile through layers of roasted herbs, violets and rose petals. The entry is at once imposing and round. Deep, concentrated flavors reflect those in the aroma, resting on a podium of elegant, fine-grained tannins. The finish magnifies the whole, allowing for one glorious moment, absolute contentment. The stature of this wine deserves foods with rich, dark sauces such as roasted duck with truffle-flavored potatoes or a portobello and roasted root vegetable shepherd's pie.

Harvest Dates ~ August 29–September 10
Harvest Brix ~ 24.2°(average)
Titrateable Acid ~ 0.55g/100ml
pH ~ 3.65
Blend ~ 94.95% Cabernet Sauvignon
5.05% Merlot

Barrel Aging ~ 22 months French oak
Appellation ~ 100% Napa Valley
Release Date ~ September 1, 2000
Suggested California Retail Price ~ \$150.00

Michael Silacci

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Winemaker

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