

VINEYARDS

Grown in the Columbia Valley in south-central Washington State.

THE BLEND

85% cabernet sauvignon
15% merlot

VINTAGE

The 1996 vintage was characterized by unusual weather. A harsh winter was followed by cool temperatures early in the growing season, delaying bud break and flowering by two weeks. However, the ripening period was extended by a similar amount of time and fruit matured during a warm, dry period throughout July and August. Harvest yielded grapes rich in varietal character and of exceptional quality, the result of small berry size and an excellent sugar-to-acid ratio, though total tonnage was somewhat below that of a typical year.

VINIFICATION

Crop thinning in early summer following veraison reduced yields to less than two tons per acre. Following harvest, the lots were individually fermented in stainless steel tanks on their skins at 85° F for 13 days. The lots were individually aged for 18 months in 70% new and 30% one-year-old oak barrels, primarily from the Alliers and Nevers forests of France, and were gently racked with gravity every three months. Chateau Ste. Michelle winemaker, Mike Januik,

and enologist-managing director of Marchesi Antinori, Renzo Cotarella, selected the finest lots of the vintage for the final blend. The wine was bottled, unfined in June, 1998, and cellar aged for 10 months prior to release. 13.5% alcohol, total acidity .55, pH 3.55, production 2,869 cases.

WINEMAKERS' NOTES

Deep, dark purple, inky color with plenty of red fruit aromas up front as well as classic black currant cabernet notes and hints of green olive and cedar. In the mouth, flavors include tobacco, black pepper, vanilla, and cedar. This is a massive, lush wine, strongly structured, with plenty of dimension.

VINTNERS

Col Solare is a winemaking partnership that began in the vineyards of the Columbia Valley with Piero Antinori's enduring attraction to unique viticultural regions. The idea for the wine took root when Antinori met Allen Shoup of Chateau Ste. Michelle and the similarities between the two vintners proved to be as strong as their differences. Known for their eagerness in charting unexplored territory and for challenging conventional thinking, both Antinori and Shoup are acknowledged today for having pioneered wine Renaissances that have led to worldwide esteem for the wines of Tuscany and Washington State, respectively. With the strength of the Columbia Valley as the foundation, along with each vintner's demonstrated willingness to step outside his proven perspective to try to create something unique, Col Solare was born.

