



2009 Mule Skinner Merlot

WALLA WALLA VALLEY

NAME ORIGIN

The names given to Spring Valley Vineyard wines are a tribute to the family members who have struggled and succeeded in farming the same land where the vineyard and winery now flourish.

This 100% Merlot is named for Frederick Corkrum's job as the ranch's head Mule Skinner, the person who cared for and drove the mules in all aspects of the farming operation before the advent of the Caterpillar tractor.

A FAMILY TRADITION

Following the tradition of Uriah, Katherine, Frederick, and Nina Lee Corkrum, Shari Corkrum Derby and her husband Dean Derby continue to operate the wheat fields, vineyard, and winery. The hard work, traditional values, and deep family ties that have kept the ranch going for over 100 years are mirrored in Spring Valley Vineyard's signature offerings.

THE VINEYARD

Spring Valley Vineyard is situated 12 miles northeast of Walla Walla, amid the picturesque wheat fields of southeastern Washington with the Blue Mountains providing the backdrop. The initial block of Merlot was planted in 1993 on a south-southwest facing hillside. The vines follow the north-south slope of the hills in vertical rows, an orientation that, combined with the declination of the slope, allows the vines to take optimal advantage of air drainage, sunshine, and the reflective nature of the surrounding wheat fields.

Great care is taken when caring for the vineyard. Every grape is tended by hand, including crop thinning, leaf pulling, and harvesting, as well as hand-burying individual canes to protect them from the cold winters of southeastern Washington.

VINTAGE

A long winter and cool spring in the Walla Walla Valley delayed bud break to early May, but nice weather in June and hot temperatures in July and August accelerated ripening and led to fruit with bright acidity and good sugar levels. Harvest began relatively early, in the second week of September, and was effectively finished before a fall freeze hit the valley in early October.

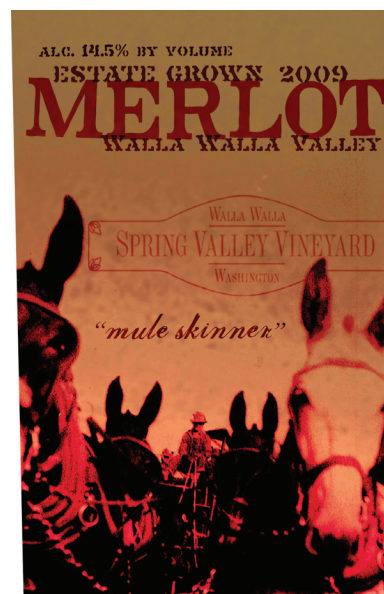
WINEMAKING

Spring Valley Vineyard fruit is hand-picked, hand-sorted, and gently de-stemmed by gravity. During the 10-20 day fermentation, each tank is tasted daily until Serge decides it is time to press using wooden cage basket presses. In keeping with Spring Valley tradition, originally instituted by founding winemaker Devin Corkrum Derby, hand punchdowns occur twice a day until the end of alcoholic fermentation. The wine is transferred by pump into barrel for secondary fermentation, and then gets racked several times for clarity. Finally, the different lots are blended to create our six distinctive labels.

WINEMAKER TASTING NOTES

Aromas of red summer fruits, thyme, and cherry pit lead into a bright, fresh, and rich palate of raspberry, strawberry, and cherry. The finish is creamy and velvety with vanilla pastry notes.

~ Winemaker Serge Laville



TECHNICAL DATA:

Blend:

100% Merlot

TA: 0.58 g / 100 ml

pH: 3.77

Alcohol: 14.5%

Aging:

18 months in

100% French oak,

40% new

Appellation:

Walla Walla Valley

Vineyard:

100% Spring Valley Vineyard

Estate Bottled