



2023 MALBEC

TASTING NOTES

Just when you think you've got Malbec figured out, in walks this dark ruby-purple draught and upends everything. It's cast off its usual cherry cloak and instead wears something so exotic as to be nearly indescribable. Purple and black fruits (is that... salal?) mingle in the nose with hints of citrus and red pepper. In the mouth, these are joined by baking spices and tropical sensations heretofore unseen in this varietal. The finish is smooth, but with the heat that implies ageability and will transform into texture over time.

Full bodied, medium-plus acid, medium tannin

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Eleven has been producing Malbec since 2005. Our Founding Winemaker, Matt Albee, was looking for a variety to add to our portfolio when one of our growers mentioned having some Malbec available, so he considered it as an option. Then he received a mailing from the Washington Wine Growers Association addressed to "M.Albec", a misspelling of his last name that he took as a sign that we should definitely make some Malbec! In another remarkable coincidence, World Malbec Day falls on Matt's birthday. The variety is known as "the black grape" in France, where it is grown in Bordeaux to add color to their blends. Matt loves the way the variety is expressed in Washington, with relatively soft tannins and delightful black cherry flavors. He particularly likes the fruit we get from Sugarloaf Vineyard, which doesn't have the bell pepper note that characterizes some Malbec from Horse Heaven Hills, where we sourced Malbec for many years.

Composition

100% Malbec

Vineyard

Sugarloaf Vineyard

Appellation

Rattlesnake Hills, Yakima Valley

Harvest Date

September 26, 2023

Harvest specs

23.2 brix, pH 3.6, TA 3.8 g/l

Crush Pad

Destem and light crush

Saignee

10%

Yeast

D254

Fermentation

Small open-top fermentors, punched down by hand

Malolactic Fermentation

Yes

Time on Skins

16 days

Aging

20 months in barrels

Oak

21%

Fining/Filtration

Cross-flow filtration

Alcohol

14.5%

Production

296 cases

Bottled

April 12, 2025



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PAIRINGS

Pairs with simmered beans with sausage, lamb, cedar-planked salmon – sensing a theme? Earthy, smoky, meaty, these are Malbec’s metier.

VINTAGE DETAILS

The 2023 vintage got off to a late, cool start, but then raced ahead with warm temperatures, making up ground throughout the growing season and even tracking slightly ahead of average by mid-July. A brief heat spike in August caused issues in some varieties but didn’t slow down the speeding train of ripening. Harvest started off with a fury, bringing home one variety after another day after day. Yields were widely variable, and things were changing so quickly that yield forecasts sometimes turned out to be significantly higher or lower than expected when the grapes were harvested. This means that we got more of some varieties than expected, and less of others. The good news is that the quality was very good in nearly everything, so we are expecting some great wines from the vintage.

GRAPE VARIETY INFO

Malbec, known as “the black grape” for its dark color, was once widely planted in its native France. Finickyness and susceptibility to rain have led to its decline there, but it’s become a favorite in drier climates like Argentina and eastern Washington.

FUN FACTS

Our Malbec gets the all-American treatment! We only use American oak barrels, which give the wine its signature touch of vanilla, coconut, and a hint of spice. It’s like wrapping our bold Malbec in a cozy oak blanket that brings out its rich, fruity flavors.

AWARDS

Silver, SavorNW Wine Awards; 86 points



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