



JUDGE PALMER

2021 Merlot – Star Springs Ranch, Alexander Valley

Tasting Notes: “This deeply colored Merlot brings aromas of concentrated raspberry and dark cocoa on the nose. The palate brings an edge of herbaceous mint, pencil lead and black pepper in a powerfully tannic format. Give this a few years in the cellar and enjoy with grilled steaks or burgers.” – **91 points**, Tom Capo, *Wine Enthusiast*

Vineyard: Star Springs Ranch sits at an elevation of 1500 feet along the sun-drenched western slopes of the Mayacamas Mountains in the Alexander Valley – an area known as Pocket Peak. Isolated within a sprawling 4,000 acre ranch, the 200 acres of vines enjoy a pristine growing environment, above the fog line and sheltered from wind, frost, and negative pathogens. Merlot is planted in volcanic soils on a gentle south-facing hillside, stressing the vines and yet soaking up sunlight, producing small crops of incredibly concentrated grapes.

Vintage: The 2021 growing season began with a dry, cold winter but saw a swift rise in spring temperatures, fostering robust vine growth and successful flowering. Summer remained temperate, and the calm growing season and drought conditions enabled grapes to reach phenolic ripeness at lower sugar levels while preserving aromatics and bright acidity. Merlot harvest at Star Springs Ranch occurred on October 1st and produced a small crop with concentrated flavors, ideal conditions for a superb vintage.

Winemaking: Our Merlot from Star Springs Ranch was destemmed into one open-top tank, and was cold-soaked for several days. Fermentation started spontaneously with wild yeast and the must was punched down manually twice per day for two weeks followed by pressing and racking into barrel. The wine aged for 24 months in once-used French oak barrels.

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