



NORTHSTAR

2002 Merlot
Walla Walla Valley

VINTAGE OVERVIEW

- ✦ The 2002 growing season began cool, then warm temperatures in the high 90's put the crop ahead of schedule in some areas.
- ✦ Harvest began in early September. Cool weather hit in late September, slowing down activity and allowing fruit to mature and intensify flavors.
- ✦ Fruit characterized by small berries and well-balanced flavors contributed to the state's fifth outstanding vintage.

VINEYARDS

- ✦ This is the third vintage for the Walla Walla blend and it showcases Merlot and Cabernet from the best vineyards in the appellation.
- ✦ Spring Valley Vineyards, located in the middle of rolling wheat fields, was planted in the early 1990s on land that the family has farmed for more than 100 years. These vineyards have loamy soils and are planted on a steep south-facing slope, allowing vines to absorb more of the sun's energy.
- ✦ Planted in 1995, Birch Creek (formerly Vanessa) Vineyards is located on the Oregon side of the appellation and contributed both Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon grapes to this vintage.
- ✦ Cabernet Sauvignon grapes were sourced from Windrow Vineyard, also on the Oregon side of the appellation. This is one of the earliest vineyards in Walla Walla, established in 1985.

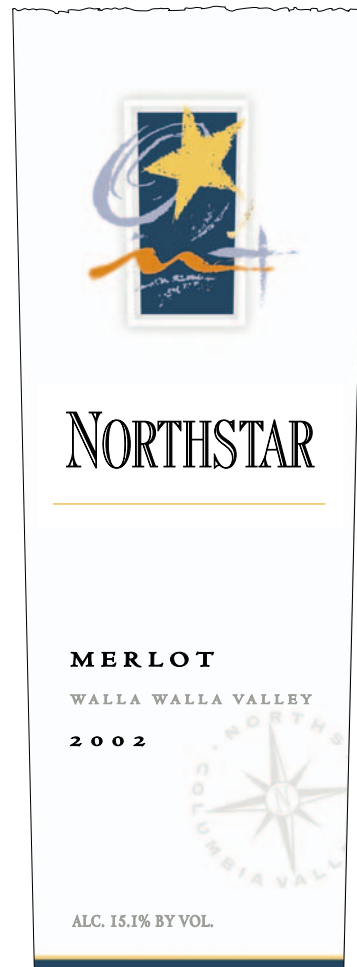
WINEMAKING

- ✦ Ripe grapes were destemmed and crushed, leaving 25% whole berries intact, then inoculated with *Premier Cuvée* yeast.
- ✦ Lots were fermented separately in 2.5-ton open top fermenters and punched down 2-4 times per day to extract optimal flavor, tannins and color during the 6-day fermentation on the skins.
- ✦ After primary fermentation, the lots were racked into barrels and underwent malolactic fermentation.
- ✦ Aged for 19 months in primarily French oak and some American, using 68% new barrels and 32% one-year-old barrels.
- ✦ Type and age of barrel used for each individual vineyard lot was hand-selected.
- ✦ Individual lots were racked every three months for clarity, with a total of six rackings.

TASTING NOTES

"The impact of smaller berry size created in the 2002 vintage is evident in this wine. It is highly extracted with a significant tannin structure at bottling - a bit atypical for our version of this Merlot. While the mocha character that is a signature of Walla Walla Valley fruit is apparent, this wine also displays classic black fruit aromas and flavors. Complexity is gained with toasty sweet oak. In its youth, this wine will pair well with hearty fare, but will best reward patient cellaring for years to come."

Gordon Hill
Gordon Hill, Winemaker



Technical Data

Total Acidity	0.66/100 ml
pH	3.72
Alcohol	15.1%
Bottling Date	July 2004
Blend	79% Merlot, 21% Cabernet Sauvignon

CONTRIBUTING VINEYARDS

VINEYARD	APPELLATION	VARIETAL
Spring Valley	Walla Walla	Merlot
Vanessa	Walla Walla	Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon
Windrow	Walla Walla	Cabernet Sauvignon