

80 Block Merlot

**2011 80 BLOCK MERLOT****(St. Jakobi Vineyard)**

In the early 1980's Barossa grape growers were introduced to a new grape variety called Merlot. Uncle Ken (Semmler) being a pioneer of the day was one of the first to put it to the test by planting a small patch on the St Jakobi vineyard in 1980. It was from this block that the "Vine Improvement Society" took cuttings each year to propagate and grow more Merlot vines for others to plant in the neighbourhood. Over the years this '80 Block Merlot had been used by us to blend with Shiraz and Cabernet to produce our WillowBend red blend, with the 1990 vintage being the first to be released.

Each vintage we are faced with challenges. The Vintage of 2011 presented us with something new. It's very rare that the Barossa receives continual showery weather during harvest but in 2011 this is what we were faced with. Regular showery rain meant daily visits to the vineyard to closely inspect the grapes to keep an eye on the fruit's progress and choose which blocks were priorities to be harvested. Good things came from these challenges.

During our regular vineyard visits we were intrigued to see how well the Merlot stood up to these unusual conditions. The range of fruit flavours just continued to develop and the colour of the juice became denser each day. Grapes (and grape growers) of course prefer dry warm growing conditions during ripening, but good ol' Merlot and Cabernet, when faced with it manage damp conditions a little better than some other varieties. This is mainly through having loose bunches and tough skins. It's no wonder the "Frogs" planted Cabernet and Merlot in regions such as Bordeaux where it rains a little more frequently during harvest than it does here in the Barossa.

Once the Merlot was harvested and fermentation had kicked into gear, the deep colour and intense flavours once again became obvious and showed a direct correlation to the depth of colour and flavour seen in the vineyard. We followed the progress of this wine as it aged in oak. We were quite confident that it would continue to show good things and allow us to bottle this as a straight varietal wine.

The colour is a wonderful deep purple red and the perfumed dark red berry fruit aromas and flavours continue to shine. The 2011 Vintage, although testing at times has resulted in some great outcomes, this Merlot being just one of them.

We trust you'll enjoy it!

Winemaker:	Wayne Dutschke
Vineyard:	Ken Semmler's "80 Block" Merlot on the St Jakobi Vineyard
Region:	Lyndoch, Barossa Valley, South Australia
Harvest Date:	29th March 2011
Alcohol:	14.8%
Oak Maturation:	15 months new & one year old French hogsheads
Case make:	400 dozen
Cellaring potential:	3-8 years cellaring will result in a more complex wine