



2002 Blankiet Estate Merlot, Paradise Hills Vineyard

Review by Robert Parker

Wine Advocate # 162 (Dec. 2005)

Rating: 94 points

The 2002 Merlot was aged 18 months in new Taransaud barrels and bottled unfiltered. Its dark purple color is followed by a lovely bouquet of fudge, caramel, black cherries, plums, and smoke. Full-bodied, opulent, and rich, it is one of the finest Merlots made in California. The deep, rich 2002 Merlot is not up to the level of the 2003, although it does possess fabulously complex notes of scorched earth, chocolate, espresso roast, and meaty black cherries, currants, and plums. A broodingly backward, concentrated, full-bodied, dense, and super-rich Merlot, it should drink well for 15 or more years.

As I have written before, the only way readers are going to get any of this wine is to be on the mailing list or check out one of the few restaurants that receives an allocation.

This is an amazing operation on the hillsides overlooking the huge Dominus/Napanook estate. A complex set of caves and a remarkable, nearly surreal chateau grace the property. Winemaker Helen Turley, working with her viticulturalist husband, John Wetlaufer, is fashioning some spectacular wines from these hillsides of volcanic ash and basalt. These are big, structured, potentially long-lived wines that will need some cellar time for those lucky enough to latch onto a few bottles. Everything to date has been aged in 100% new Taransaud barrels for 18-19 months and then bottled unfiltered.