



## Merlot

Livermore Valley

*This incredibly rich Merlot shows great depth and jammy undertones. Its bold mouthfeel is rounded by soft tannins and complex flavors. A flavorful finish of berry and toasted oak complement roast beef, vegetable lasagna or heavy meat sauces.*

### Technical Data

**Appellation:** Livermore Valley

**Varietal content:** 99% Merlot, 1% Cabernet Franc

**Yield:** two tons per acre

**Finished alcohol:** 15.7%

**pH:** 3.39

**Total acid:** 6.1g/L

### The Vineyards

Situated in the rolling hills of southeast Livermore Valley, Rios-Lovell Winery has been providing DeRose Vineyards with Merlot grapes since 2000. The quality fruit is exchanged for Cienega Valley viognier in a friendly trade agreement between the artisan producers.

Livermore Valley's west portal lies fully open to San Francisco Bay.

The resulting maritime influences, combined with a temperate Bay Area climate, are particularly good for grape growing. Spring weather is typically mild and accompanied by periods of morning fog. Summers are marked by clear, warm days, occasional heat spikes, and afternoon breezes that lower overnight temperatures. Vines favorably respond to these conditions—the extended sunlight slowly ripens grapes; the cool nights allow them to retain proper acidity.

Named after the youngest daughter of founders Max Rios and Katy Lovell, Julie's Vineyard was planted with four acres of merlot in 1994. The land is highly contoured with challenging slopes that have south-to-southwest exposures and elevations up to 760 feet. Soils mostly consist of a reddish-brown clay-loam. The vineyard was ripped to a depth of four feet during development because of an existing hardpan layer.

Vines were originally trained to a Scott Henry system, but later converted to bilateral cordons because the clone and rootstock were less vigorous than originally anticipated. Rows were arranged in a north-south direction on broad spacing to utilize sunlight most effectively.

### Fermentation

Clusters were destemmed leaving much of the fruit intact. The must was transferred to open-top 1/2-ton macrobins where fermentations started with native yeasts. Temperatures were kept under 88° F. for the 15-18 day process. Caps were managed with punchdowns three to four times daily. Lots were pressed, allowed to undergo secondary fermentation, settled for about two weeks, blended, and finally aged in French and Hungarian oak barrels for 14 months.

