

2020 LINDEN VINEYARDS HARDSCRABBLE RED

STYLE

Hardscrabble Red has been of a certain style, an emulation of Bordeaux, for decades. A combination of climate change and our own maturity, self-discovery and confidence has changed the equation. During blending trials the Cabernet Sauvignon was impressive and attempts to introduce other varietals in the wine took away from the élan, its drive, its specialness. Ultimately it was a flight of 2008 Barolos that showed us that power didn't have to come from ultra-ripe fruit, alcohol and oak. The resulting blend is 95% Cabernet Sauvignon. The wine is elegant, restrained, but concentrated. An iron first in a velvet glove.

FOOD PAIRING

Seared Tuna, classic lentil dishes, mushroom risotto, baked polenta with cheese

VINEYARD

Hardscrabble Vineyard is on top of the Blue Ridge at 1,200 to 1,400 feet with an eastern to southern slope. Moderately shallow, well drained rocky, granite soils give depth, structure and length to the Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc while more clay-based soils are dedicated to Merlot. Most of the vines are 10 to 20 years old and planted at 1,500 to 2,500 vines per acre.

VINTAGE

Spring came in gently and predictably. A cold February was followed by a dry, mild March. Bud break was in late April, right on time. May did not follow suit as hail on May 7 damaged some emerging shoots. Fortunately the damage was mostly cosmetic to only the base of the shoots as the clusters had not yet unfolded.

May was dry as was June and July. This made for a good crop (excellent pollination conditions) with small berries (water stressed vines), but young vines were beginning to show signs of excessive water stress (stunted growth and yellowing basal leaves).

Veraison began in late July under ideal conditions: hot and dry. Color change was quick and uniform setting the stage for high quality. Mid-August presented a big shift with humid, wet nights and frequent quick, hard showers. This slowed the ripening process and elevated disease pressure.

The Cabernet Sauvignon was picked on October 1 and finished picking on October 3 along with Cabernet Franc.

WINEMAKING

Sorted and destemmed. Fermented warm with gentle pump-overs early and then punch downs once the cap formed. Pressing took place after about 20 to 28 days. The wine was aged for 12 months in used and new French oak barrels. 95% Cabernet Sauvignon and 5% Cabernet Franc. Bottled in January 2023. 2,530 bottles produced. Alcohol 12.9%. Drink 2025 through 2031.