

Santiago Canyon Winery

2008 Merlot

Suscol Ranch Vineyard
Carneros AVA, Napa, California

Vineyard: Suscol Ranch Vineyard is found in the Jamieson Canyon, located in the southeastern edge of the Carneros AVA in Napa Valley. Jamieson Canyon has a unique micro-climate created by the narrow, sunny canyon, and cooled by nearby Carneros breezes. Planted in 1987, the Laird Family's Suscol Ranch Vineyard Merlot grapes embody the fruit and complexity of a mature vineyard located in the Carneros.

Carneros is a 90 square mile region located along the low lying hills of the Myacamas range across the southernmost edge of both Sonoma and Napa counties. The close proximity to the cool fog and breezes from the San Francisco bay makes the climate in Carneros cooler and more moderate than the regions further north in Napa Valley and Sonoma Valley, perfect for producing award winning wines including Merlot.

Vintage: The exemplary 2008 growing season commenced with a dry, mild winter and unusually warm spring, which prompted early bud-break and bloom. The summer was consistently mild, which enabled our modest crop of small-clustered Napa Valley Merlot grapes to ripen slowly and evenly, developing rich, distinctive varietal flavors. Warm temperatures in early September, followed by classic California Indian Summer weather, allowed us to harvest our Merlot fruit at optimum sugar and acid balance and phenolics maturity on October 15th.

Winemaking: Winemaker "JT" Jon Theurich says: "It's been a long time coming, but our unforgettable Suscol Ranch Merlot is here." The 2008 vintage produced the best Merlot fruit we've seen in a long time from Napa's Carneros AVA. Because cooler climate Merlot grape fermentations are notoriously challenging to complete, we fermented the wine for 15 days with extended maceration in small batches to carefully control temperature and enhance flavour. Once the primary fermentation was complete we transferred the wine into 100% new Hungarian oak barrels for malolactic fermentation and nine months of aging. **Technical Data:** Alcohol 15.5%, Brix 27.8, pH 3.74, TA .72g/100ml, yeast strains BDX and VQ15.

Tasting Notes: The aromatics of our Suscol Ranch Merlot lead with an abundant offering of cherry, cranberries, and pomegranate. A velvety and rich mouthfeel supplies subtle hints of molasses and caramel to complement the essence of black cherry pie. The polished finish lingers with well formed tannins, and pairs well with hearty pork tenderloin, Filet Mignon, New York Strip, red pasta dishes, and barbecued turkey or chicken. Enjoy now, or cellar for up to ten years. We hope you enjoy this magnificent Merlot as much as we enjoyed making it. – **Jon Theurich**