



RELEASE DATE: Fall, 2006.

HARVEST DATE: Sept. 25 – Oct. 1, 2003.

BLEND & GRAPE SOURCE: 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from the estate-owned Backus Vineyard in Oakville.

WINEMAKER'S NOTES: Grapes were harvested at an average 25.5° Brix, fermented in stainless steel tanks, then aged 23 months in new Taransaud and Vicard French oak barrels before being bottled in January, 2006. Production was limited to 1000 cases.

Our first Backus Cabernet Sauvignon was produced in 1977 from a 6.75 acre parcel leased from Marian Backus. We believed this steeply-terraced hillside vineyard with its brick-red soil was capable of producing outstanding wines, and this was confirmed in subsequent vintages, especially during the 90's. When the entire 45-acre parcel (which included 21.5 plantable acres) was offered for sale in 1996, we enthusiastically bought it.

Still, even we were unprepared for the extraordinary quality that has come out of this vineyard in the last few years.

The 2003 Backus Cabernet is saturated in color with a dark purple, ruby red hue. The aromas of mocha, minerality, black fruits and graphite are characteristic of this unique, *grand cru* vineyard in the Oakville appellation. The incredible nose is framed by robust tannins, bright fruit flavors and subtle French oak notes, with a depth and concentration that follows through on the palate.

2003 VINTAGE NOTES: A cool, wet spring seemed to forecast a vintage that would have difficulty ripening, but July and August were unusually warm without the fog-shrouded mornings typical of Napa Valley summers. Clear skies provided a complete daily dose of solar radiation to the vines and fruit, allowing for good photosynthesis and grape development, and hot weather in mid-September provided additional heat accumulation.

After the heat spell broke, it was replaced by near-ideal weather conditions of overcast mornings, warm, sunny afternoons and temperatures in the low to mid eighties.

Actual crop harvested was significantly lower than estimates with less than two tons per acre from many vineyards as a result of earlier crop removal to mitigate mildew. Berry size was small with excellent acid balance; and overall quality -- less variable than '02 -- appears excellent.



Robert M. Parker, Jr.'s
The WINE ADVOCATE

2-28-05

**2003 CABERNET SAUVIGNON
BACKUS VINEYARD (91-93)**

The 2003 Cabernet Sauvignon Backus Vineyard . . . possesses a deep ruby/purple color as well as strong aromas of burnt earth, smoke, black currants, and cassis. Dense with good sweetness . . . it should be at its finest between 2008-2022.

