

Merlot

Red Wine - - - - - 12% ABV Vintage 2021

GRAPE	Merlot
REGION	Kanou Vineyard, Tomi, Nagano

WINEMAKERS: *Yutaka and Michiru Nakajima*

ABOUT THE WINE:

BOTTLES PRODUCED: 1,080

— Domaine Nakajima farms this Merlot from the Kanou Vineyard, one of their estate vineyards, on a steep hillside overlooking the town of Tomi, with the broad Chikuma river cutting through the volcanic valley below. It sits at 750m above sea level, composed mostly of clay and volcanic ash, with schist and sand, and is planted mostly to Loire varieties. Winters are cold here and lush and humid in the summer, though this area of Nagano sees relatively less rain than other areas of Honshu. No sprays were used, except for bordeaux mixture, and no tillage in the vineyard. The cover crop was mowed down and left in the rows between the vines. Merlot goes through veraison early, about two weeks and a half weeks earlier than Cabernet Franc, and veraison occurred this vintage around August 20th, in the midst of a summer heat wave with heavy rains. The grapes easily took up the water, getting quite large, but the good sunshine and warm weather led to exceptional color development and easy sugar production. The extra water did result in slightly lower acidity, but the wine still shows beautiful concentration and depth of flavor, with moderate acidity backing it up.

Harvest happened earlier than past vintages, due to the good weather, and the picking period stretched from September 13 to 27 according to ripeness. The grapes were very healthy and saw no issues from disease or set. The grapes were sorted at the winery, before manual destemming using homemade wooden destemming boards. The grapes began fermentation anaerobically for three days in plastic tanks, before starting twice a day pumpovers before giving way to twice a day punchdowns. After 19 days on the skins, the berries underwent a half day pressing in a manual vertical basket press. The wine then aged for 10 months in used barrels. 25ppm of sulphur was added at bottling, and the wines were left unfinned and unfiltered.

On the nose, you'll find intriguing aromas of red shiso—a Japanese herb with a bright, slightly minty flavor—alongside juicy huckleberry, confected cherry chocolate cake, and subtle earthy hints like lotus root and licorice. The palate is smooth and silky, with noticeable, well-integrated tannins that give it structure without overpowering the fruit. Flavors are fresh and vibrant but still nuanced, balancing bright red fruits with a subtle earthiness. At a modest 12% alcohol, this Merlot feels light and approachable, refined but easy to drink. It's a lovely example of how traditional European varieties can express themselves beautifully in Japan's unique terroir—offering both freshness and complexity.



PRODUCER

Domaine Nakajima
Tomi, Nagano Prefecture

GROWING REGION

