

2010 Roanoke Vineyards Merlot

The 2010 Merlot was aged in French oak for 21 months and comes in at 13% alcohol. Quite a mouthful, this is a big Merlot with lots of classic Bordeaux-like fruit flavor that engulfs the palate on first taste. Complex, bright and very elegant despite that first assault of beautiful fruit, this also has a real backbone with lurking tannins underneath. There is plenty of support for the long-term. It seems very rich and ripe, yet it is surprisingly graceful and not a fruit bomb at all. This will be released in August of 2015, just a few months before the 2012, which is a statement for the power that this vintage had. At that point, it should be drinking pretty well, although it certainly could use a couple of more years to evolve. It is approachable now, even if not at peak. At the moment, it is running neck-and-neck with the more youthful 2...

- Mark Squires (June, 2015)

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2012 Roanoke Vineyards Merlot "Single Acre"

The 2012 Merlot "Single Acre" is basically the same wine as the 2007 and 2010 also reviewed. It is just differently branded these days. The winery has three acres each of Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and but one acre of Merlot. Hence the name. There is also 1.9% of Petit Verdot blended in, but this is obviously about the Merlot. The juice was aged for 21 months in French oak. It comes in at 13% alcohol. If the 2012 vintage might not be quite as heralded as 2007 or 2010 (both reviewed this issue), this proves it can't be disregarded, either. This hangs with the winery's other Merlots quite well, but obviously it is not as evolved and needs time. Beautifully focused, this has a certain elegance in the mid-palate, a hint of herbs and a bright, sunny feel. Like its 2007 and 2010 siblings, it opens with big fruit, filling the mouth and c...

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2012 Roanoke Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon

The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon also has 11% Merlot and 1.6% Petit Verdot; all aged 20 months in new French oak. It comes in at 13.2% alcohol. It is hard to say which is better: this or the 2012 Hill Block, also reviewed this issue. The Hill Block is certainly different, seeming richer but also more backward. This, however, seems more focused, more evolved and more expressive, with classic Cab flavors right off the bat. They both become a bit aggressive with some aeration, proving that they have real backbones. Overall, it's a very nice duo. Reasonable minds might differ as to which is better. I suspect this will drink better a bit earlier, but the Hill Block will eventually win. I won't be surprised if they keep flip-flopping and dueling through the years, though.

This is owned by Rich Pisacano, who is also the vineyard manager at Wölffer...

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2012 Roanoke Vineyards Prime Number

The 2012 Prime Number is a Bordeaux blend of 43.4% Cabernet Sauvignon, 25.3% Cabernet Franc and 31.3% Merlot, aged for 20 months in French oak and coming in at 13% alcohol. Compared to the monovarietal Merlot bottlings, this adds some bite, showing more tannic pop and more focus. It is not necessarily better, though, neither as lush nor as complex. Nor does it seem to have quite the promise of the Cabernet Sauvignon reviewed. Overall, this has potential and as it aired out I liked it more and more. As it evolves in the cellar, it should become more interesting, but I'm not yet convinced it will ever quite match the rest of the best output reviewed from the winery this issue. Maybe time will tell another story when this is released in December of 2015.

This is owned by Rich Pisacano, who is also the vineyard manager at Wölffer Estate. R...

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2007 Roanoke Vineyards Merlot

The 2007 Merlot (the first vintage was 2003) has become a beauty in the cellar. This also has about 2% Cabernet Sauvignon. It comes in at 13.2% alcohol. From a very fine vintage, it shows its stuff. Laced with slate, a touch of earth and the fine, complex flavors of gracefully maturing Merlot, this is beautifully balanced. It starts off with big fruit, feeling full-bodied on the palate, and then shows off its elegance and crispness while always seem complex and intriguing. There is tension and grip on the finish. It has plenty of life still. It should continuing aging gracefully for the next decade or so, at the least.

This is owned by Rich Pisacano, who is also the vineyard manager at Wölffer Estate. Roman Roth, winemaker there, is also his winemaker. Roanoke's oldest vines, Chardonnay, were planted in 1983 and the Merlot, Cabernet S...

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2012 Roanoke Vineyards Cabernet Sauvignon "Hill Block"

The 2012 Cabernet Sauvignon "Hill Block" is 82.3% Cabernet Sauvignon, actually, with most of the rest being Merlot (plus, less than 1% of Petit Verdot). It was aged in new French oak for 20 months and comes in at 14% alcohol. Scheduled for release later this year, this unevolved Cabernet looks like a well-balanced winner if given some time to develop. Reasonably full in the mouth for the vintage, with a bit of a hard edge as it airs, this shows fine structure and ripe fruit. When it is finally released, it would certainly help if you can give this a couple of years in the cellar to acquire some complexity and smooth out. Even when it calms down a bit and becomes more approachable, it will be nowhere near peak, I suspect, until it gets 4-6 years of rest. There were 150 cases produced, scheduled for release as of this writing in August, 201...

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2012 Roanoke Vineyards Gabby's Cabernet Franc

The 2012 Gabby's Cabernet Franc also has 17% Merlot and 1% Petit Verdot blended in. It was aged for 20 months in French oak. Rather creamy in texture, this is a smooth Cab Franc that is enlivened by a burst of acidity on the finish. As it opens and airs, it becomes very elegant, with hints of spice and some green olive to go with the rest. It finishes with some tightness after aeration, the fine backbone providing support to the fruit. There is not a lot of concentration in the mid-palate, but there is enough and its impeccable balance makes it enticing. I'd like to see it absorb a bit of cream, demonstrate more complexity in time and show a bit more Cab Franc typicity. It is a pretty good bet to do so. This was scheduled for release on September 23, 2015.

This is owned by Rich Pisacano, who is also the vineyard manager at Wölffer Est...

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