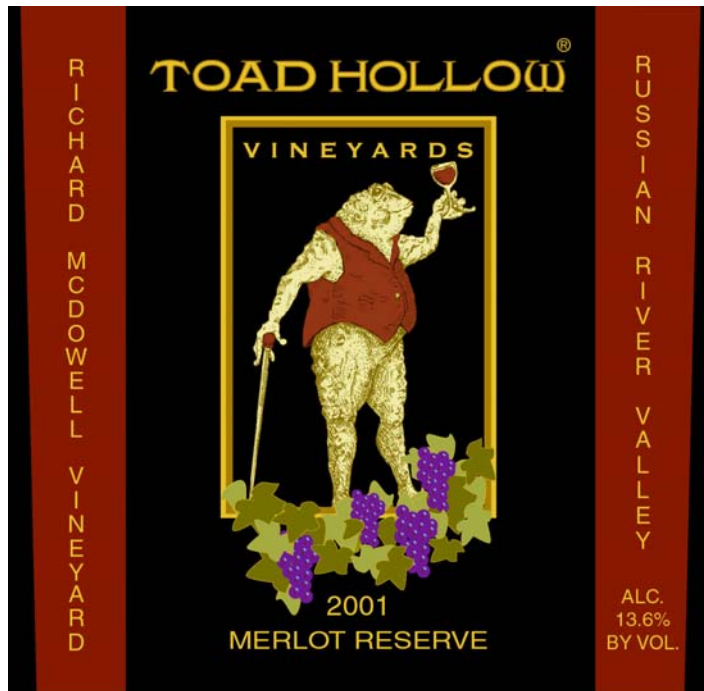


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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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TOAD HOLLOW VINEYARDS

**2001 Merlot Reserve
Richard McDowell Vineyard
Russian River Valley**

Price: \$17

Body: Medium-full

Dryness: Dry-semidry

Comments: Cedar and plum aromas with menthol hints; bright plum, cassis and coffee/cocoa flavors; good grip.

What the Good Doctor Toad has to say about the 2001 Merlot Reserve...

In 1995 we pulled out 16 acres of Golden Delicious apples and planted the soil to Merlot. Although the Russian River Valley that we call home is known for its ability to grow stellar Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, we decided that we would plant the grape that gave the mighty Petrus its center—this grape is Merlot!

Rodney and I knew that Merlot, unlike Cabernet Sauvignon, was supposed to be a supple, sexy and elegant red wine and not a big, tannic bomb. Thanks to Richard McDowell, our vineyard manager, and for whom the vineyard is named, we have nurtured this vineyard and the grapes that it produces into the consummate benchmark of the Merlot style.

This Merlot Reserve was planted, grown and bottled by Toad Hollow Vineyards. This is the fourth vintage of our first reserve wine. As we have explained in the past, Merlot does best in sandy, clay-like soils as proven in the Province of Pomerol in France where the mighty Petrus is produced—the pinnacle of all Merlots! We had the soil, we had the cuttings, and we had the perfect medium temperature range preferred by the Merlot grape to do its best!

This is a gentle but sinuous noble red wine that welcomes most company with a warm generosity of taste as well as the versatility of filling many sensory needs on many levels.

This is a wine that will cellar and age beautifully for ten to fifteen years, but also sports the spontaneity of a young thoroughbred raring to run now or to carry easily back into the next decade.

We hope that you enjoy drinking this beautiful wine as much as we did making it!