

**Jekel Vineyards****2005 Merlot
(Arroyo Seco)**

All too often, moderately priced Merlot is thin, astringent and downright unattractive. Not exactly the “Cabernet lite” that you might be in the mood for. Merlot drinkers looking for something a little friendlier should consider this \$15 wine from Jekel. The major grape source for this wine (and for other red Bordeaux grape varieties used by Jekel) is the winery’s Sanctuary Vineyard, which sits on an alluvial fan in the Arroyo Seco AVA. Although the site is somewhat sheltered, and thus warmer than some parts of the appellation, this is still a cool-climate style of Merlot, rather than a big fruit bomb.

It offers ripe black cherry fruit, along with some nice spice and a subtle herbal note. There’s plenty of structure, but the tannins are fine and polished rather than aggressive. The blend for this wine includes 7.5 percent Cabernet Sauvignon and 1.5 percent Petit Verdot. At this price, you could drink the Jekel Merlot with a simple weeknight supper (any meat- or poultry-based dish would be a good choice), but you could also serve it to guests and know that you didn’t have to pay a bundle.

Reviewed May 23, 2008 by [Laurie Daniel](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Jekel Vineyards](#)

Vintage: 2005

Wine: Merlot

Appellation: [Arroyo Seco](#)

Grape: [Merlot](#)

Price: \$15.00

THE REVIEWER**Laurie Daniel**

Laurie Daniel, wine columnist for the *San Jose Mercury News*, has been reviewing wine for more than 10 years. She doesn’t use numbers, preferring to describe her recommended wines and let consumers decide for themselves.

Laurie believes that bigger isn’t necessarily better; she’s partial to wines of balance, finesse and character. Her particular interests are Pinot Noir (versions that really taste like Pinot, that is) and aromatic whites like Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling and Gewürztraminer.