

**Sandhill****2005 Malbec - Small Lots, Phantom Creek Vineyard  
(Okanagan Valley)**

An increasing number of wineries in the Okanagan have begun to produce Malbec, a variety that might do as well here as in Argentina if the Okanagan were not already crammed with Merlot vines. Malbec ripens later than Merlot but has the potential to produce fuller, more intense reds (perhaps because it is not so often overcropped in the Okanagan, as is Merlot).

The 2005 vintage suited Malbec well. The cool, wet spring generally reduced fruit set, naturally thinning the crop loads. The fewer berries per cluster yielded more intense flavours across the board in the Okanagan. The summer was consistently warm, leading to a long, slow ripening through September and October. Phantom Creek picked its Malbec on October 21.

Sandhill winemaker Howard Soon relied on open top fermenters and thorough hand punch-downs to extract flavours during fermentation. The wine was aged for 18 months in a combination of new American and used French barrels. Only 211 cases were produced. The wine begins with aromas of spice, cedar and red berries, leading to bright, peppery flavours of black cherries and chocolate, finishing with a touch of liquorice. 89 points.

Reviewed February 22, 2008 by [John Schreiner](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Sandhill](#)

**Vineyard:** Phantom Creek Vineyard

**Vintage:** 2005

**Wine:** Malbec - Small Lots

**Appellation:** [Okanagan Valley](#)

**Grapes:** Malbec (85%), Cabernet Sauvignon (10%), Petit Verdot (5%)

**Price:** \$29.00

**THE REVIEWER****John Schreiner**

John Schreiner has been covering the wines of British Columbia for the past 30 years and has written 10 books on the wines of Canada and BC. He has judged at major competitions and is currently a panel member for the Lieutenant Governor's Awards of

Excellence in Wine. Both as a judge and as a wine critic, he approaches each wine not to find fault, but to find excellence. That he now finds the latter more often than the former testifies to the dramatic improvement shown by BC winemaking in the past decade.