

WINE RECOMMENDATION



Steltzner Vineyards

**2003 Merlot, Estate
(Stags Leap District)**

The first thing that one is compelled to do after tasting this wine is to look at the price. I don't know of any red wine of this quality from the vaunted Stags Leap District that is priced at \$26. In fact, I don't know of many reds from this AVA that are under \$50. But then again, there isn't much Merlot that is grown in the district. Estimates have it as high as 15 percent.

So, boys and girls, run out now and order this wine because at twice the price, it's wonderful. There are some blueberry aromas along with a hint of smokiness, no doubt from the small percentage of American and/or Hungarian oak. In the front of the palate we find tar and minerality, most likely from the three blocks selected for this wine from Steltzner's vineyard, which is along the Silverado Trail. The fruit is lovely with gritty tannins and good acidity (as testament to the latter, the pH is 3.45). Hold onto it for a year and then drink it over the ensuing dozen.

The grapes were picked at 24.8 brix (fairly low these days for a Napa Valley red), which translated to a finished wine with a listed alcohol count of 13.9 percent (also a reasonable number). The wine spent 19 months in French oak, 20 percent of which was new.

Reviewed April 11, 2007 by [Alan Goldfarb](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Steltzner Vineyards](#)

Vineyard: Estate

Vintage: 2003

Wine: Merlot

Appellation: [Stags Leap District](#)

Grape: Merlot

Price: \$26.00

THE REVIEWER



Alan Goldfarb

Alan Goldfarb has been writing about and reviewing wine for 17 years. His reviews have been published in the *St. Helena Star*, *San Jose Mercury*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Decanter*, and *Wine Enthusiast*, among others. Not once has he used a point system, star

system, or an iconic symbol to quantify a wine. What counts in Mr. Goldfarb's criteria when judging a wine is: how it tastes in the glass; is it well-constructed; its food compatibility; and presence of redeeming regional attributes.