



MELKA WINES

October 2005



Winemaker of the Year Philippe Melka

It may raise eyebrows to name a Frenchman as the American Wine Awards' Winemaker of the Year, but Philippe Melka is an honorary native of the Napa Valley. "I bring my French roots," he says, "but I don't have a French conservatism in winemaking; I have an American open-mindedness." In addition to creating his own tiny-production, Bordeaux-style Métisse and CJ wines for the past nine years, Melka is currently the winemaker of and consultant to 12 first-rate small Napa wineries, including Lail Vineyards, Hundred Acre and Vineyard 29. (Add to that Washington State, where Melka's new Bordeaux-style blend, Pirouette, was just bottled.) His most publicized coup came in 2002, when he seamlessly succeeded the legendary Helen Turley at über-cult-winery Bryant Family Vineyard. This University of Bordeaux-trained soil geologist was enticed by the Bryant family's exquisite Pritchard Hill Vineyard. "My clients are not blind dates," says Melka. "They represent some of the greatest vineyard sites of Napa Valley." Melka believes in strictly noninterventionist winemaking, designed to let the fruit produced by a great vineyard—not the art of the winemaker—shine through. "I don't use any tricks," he says.

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