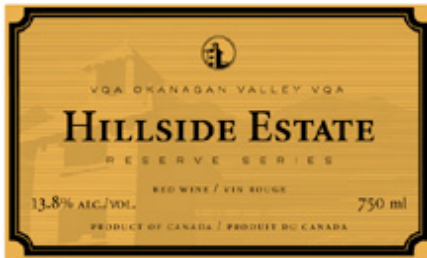


**Hillside Estate Winery****2004 Reserve Merlot
(Okanagan Valley)**

Hillside first added a reserve Merlot to its extensive portfolio in the 2002 vintage when the winery was able to buy grapes that showed "intense fruit concentration and fabulous ripeness levels". That was a muscular wine with 15 percent alcohol and a concentration of flavours that marked Hillside's emergence as a red wine producer worthy of notice.

The 2004 reserve Merlot is also made from grapes purchased from several south Okanagan vineyards. Individual lots were kept separate until the final blend was put together. The wine was aged for nine months in a combination of newer French and American oak barrels.

The finished wine has 13 percent alcohol, much more appropriate for a food wine than the huge 2002. The current release (950 cases) has all the power it needs.

The wine has a rich, chewy texture, with aromas and flavours of black currants, blackberries and chocolate. The long, ripe tannins give the wine, while it is ready now, the structure to age for five to seven years. 88 points.

Reviewed December 7, 2007 by [John Schreiner](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Hillside Estate Winery](#)

Vintage: 2004

Wine: Reserve Merlot

Appellation: [Okanagan Valley](#)

Grape: Merlot

Price: \$29.95

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.