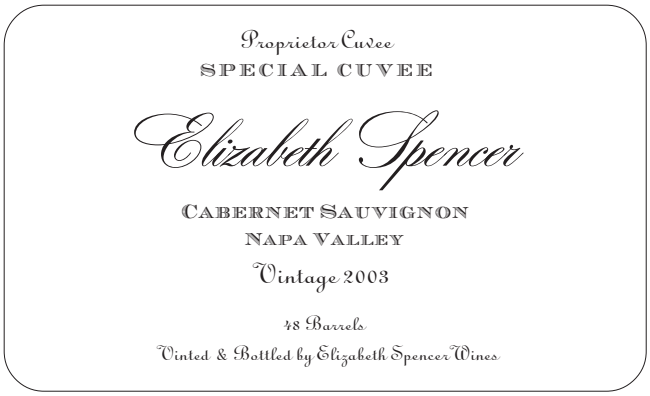

Appellation:	Napa Valley
Varitetal Blend:	93% Cabernet; 5% Merlot; 2% Malbec
Barrels:	40% New French Oak
Production:	1152 cases
Winemaker:	Spencer Graham
Release Date:	Spring 2005

Winemaker's Notes

Bright ruby red color. The nose exhibits notes of fresh cranberry, black plum, toasted oak and nutmeg. Cassis and brambly blackberry fruit flavors are highlighted by subtle oak. This flagship Elizabeth Spencer Cabernet is a classic, well-structured wine with a smooth texture, rich flavors and moderate tannins.

Winemaking

Grapes for 2003 Cabernet were harvested over the course of several early mornings in late September and October. We hand-selected only the ripest berries and vinified each vineyard lot separately. After primary fermentation was completed, the wine was carefully racked into small, 60-gallon French oak barrels. The wine was aged for 18 months in a selection of French oak from a variety of coopers with medium to medium-plus toast levels.

Vineyards

Our Cabernet Sauvignon fruit is sourced from different Napa Valley growers with whom we have established long term relationships. Most of our fruit, 80% of the blend, comes from vineyards located in Yountville and Napa and are planted on the valley floor and on a gently sloping rise. The balance is from mountain vineyards on Mt. Veeder and Howell Mountain chosen for their classic hillside intensity. The mountain vineyards impart dense, dark intense fruit, firm tannins and a focused purity. The lush fruit from the valley floor and slope contributes opulence and richness.

Vintage

The 2003 growing season was challenging but ultimately bore excellent fruit. A mild winter with normal rainfall was followed by an unusually cold, damp spring. Sporadic heat spells in early summer further impacted bloom and set, causing the naturally light crop load to be even lower. An unusual Napa Valley rainstorm in late August was quickly followed by warm weather, thwarting any major problems in the vineyards and speeding up ripening. Harvest began in earnest the second week in September when a heat spike intensified ripening in all varieties. The fog returned and temperatures abated until the third week in September when another heat spike pushed temperatures. Then, the weather flipped from hot to cold overnight, staying foggy and cool —70's and 80's high daytime temperatures — for two weeks, giving the red grapes that were still maturing the perfect "hang-time" to develop flavors and color. This late summer weather was an ideal end to a demanding growing season.

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