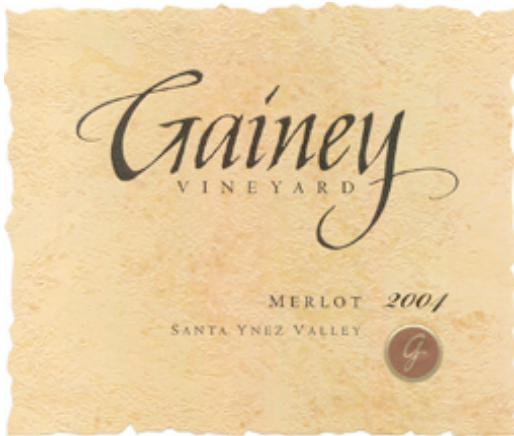


WINE RECOMMENDATION

**Gainey Vineyard****2004 Merlot, Estate
(Santa Ynez Valley)**

Notwithstanding Miles' comment in *Sideways* about not drinking no #%&*#! Merlot, quite a few wineries in Santa Barbara County produce this varietal, although it seems like a secret the locals keep to themselves (and drink for themselves). The eastern end of the Santa Ynez Valley, the sites that are the farthest from the transverse west/east ocean influence, and thus the warmest areas, are ideal for bringing Merlot to its full ripeness.

Gainey Vineyard has a long standing reputation for Merlot, dating back to the years when Rick Longoria was the winemaker. Current winemaker Kirby Anderson has refined the Gainey approach to Merlot, making it even more layered and balanced. The dark and extracted 2004 version (aged 18 months, half in new French oak) shows a profuse nose of blackberries, with distinct notes of cinnamon, chocolate and herbs. It's already supple and expressive in the mouth, with blackberry jam, cassis, sweet herbs and a distinct sense of slate/minerality. Rich and elegant, this Merlot glides as well as expands across the palate. With resolved tannins, it's very silky and approachable now, and yet could easily age another three years...but why wait?

Reviewed September 5, 2007 by [Dennis Schaefer](#).

THE WINE

Winery: [Gainey Vineyard](#)

Vineyard: Estate

Vintage: 2004

Wine: Merlot

Appellation: [Santa Ynez Valley](#)

Grapes: Merlot (86%), Cabernet Sauvignon (14%)

Price: \$20.00

THE REVIEWER**Dennis Schaefer**

Dennis Schaefer has been tasting and writing about wine for over 30 years, propelled by a continuing curiosity and burgeoning enthusiasm for discovering what's in the bottle. Blessed with catholic tastes, he enjoys everything from the obvious to the sublime. A

major requirement is that the vineyard, winery and winemaker consistently perform well and fulfill their potential. Balance, concentration and complexity are key to the tasting experience but, in the end, the purpose of wine is simply to give pleasure.