

**Mission Hill Winery****2005 Reserve Merlot  
(Okanagan Valley)**

Merlot is the most widely planted Bordeaux red in the Okanagan, with more than twice the acreage of either Cabernet Sauvignon or Cabernet Franc. Because it is relatively easy to grow abundant yields, the quality of the resulting wines has been all over the place. Until recently, Okanagan Merlot has suffered in comparison with the more concentrated Merlots on which Washington State is fashioning a great reputation.

Well, chalk one up for Mission Hill. This winery grows a lot of Merlot in its vineyards in the south Okanagan and, judging from this, grows it very well. Considering that the “reserve” designation at Mission Hill ranks behind its Special Lot Collection wines, this is a substantial Merlot with the structure to age up to 10 years. The 2005 SLC Merlot has yet to be released. It should be a stunner.

This Merlot is firm and concentrated, with robust jammy and brambly flavours with spicy and cassis highlights, all framed by the oak that comes from being fermented and aged 17 months in French barrels. The spicy, berry-dominated aroma also shows off attractive notes of clearly expensive new oak. 88, rising to 90+ points with cellaring.

Reviewed February 22, 2008 by [John Schreiner](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [Mission Hill Winery](#)

**Vintage:** 2005

**Wine:** Reserve Merlot

**Appellation:** [Okanagan Valley](#)

**Grape:** Merlot

**Price:** \$24.99

**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.