

**RayLen Vineyards****2005 Eagle's Select  
(Yadkin Valley)**

This Bordeaux blend is an excellent example of how mature grapes on more established vines can make a difference in producing stylish, well-balanced reds with appealing flavor. **RayLen Vineyard's** Merlot-dominated Eagle's Select comes from a vintage that produced ripe, sound fruit - and it shows in the rich warmth of red fruit and dark berry flavors, with a bit of cinnamon and vanilla in aroma.

Winemaker Steve Shepard used a certain amount of microoxygenation in making the wine, which reduces some of the herbaceousness of the fruit. It spent 18 months in French oak, much of it new and medium toast. "Our regular Merlot is too light for new oak, but the concentration we got in some of the 2005 reds really called for it," he said. Eagle's Select ("Eagle" is owner Joe Neely's nickname) has a firm structure but soft, ripe tannins that make it approachable for current drinking, particularly roast lamb or beef. It should gain complexity in flavor and aroma with two to four years in bottle.

Reviewed December 7, 2007 by [Barbara Ensrud](#).

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**THE WINE**

**Winery:** [RayLen Vineyards](#)

**Vintage:** 2005

**Wine:** Eagle's Select

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

**Grapes:** Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petit Verdot

**Price:** \$25.00

**THE REVIEWER****Barbara Ensrud**

Barbara Ensrud has been writing about and reviewing wines since 1979, with a nationally syndicated column for the *New York Daily News* and numerous other publications. Her "no numbers" approach to evaluating wine is simple: how does it taste – on its own, as well as with particular foods? Is it good value, whether \$10 or \$210? Does it measure up in terms of varietal character and regional identity? ...*"When I taste a good wine, I can't wait to share it with fellow wine lovers."*