

ANCIENT PEAKS

2017 | **MERLOT**

PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA | SANTA MARGARITA RANCH



MERLOT

OVERVIEW

Merlot excels at our estate Margarita Vineyard and has been a mainstay in our small family of wines since day one. Here, ancient sea bed soils combine with a long growing season to yield a Merlot with silky dark fruit flavors and a luscious texture, resulting in what has become one of the Paso Robles region's most notable Merlots.

VINEYARD

We blend fruit from multiple Merlot blocks that exhibit a range of distinct qualities, bringing added natural complexity and dimension to the finished wine. These blocks are situated along the slopes of an uplifted ancient sea bed, where the well-drained, calcium-rich soils are distinguished by decomposing oyster fossils. Block 15 is a new planting that delivers dark, velvety black fruit flavors. Block 7 yields deep, intensely flavored fruit with both softness and power, while Block 5 offers a blend of black and red fruit characteristics. Margarita Vineyard stands alone as the southernmost vineyard in the Paso Robles region, nestled into the rugged Santa Lucia Mountain range just 14 miles from the Pacific Ocean in the new Santa Margarita Ranch AVA. The mountain peaks act as a gateway for cool marine air, resulting in an extended growing season that yields fruit with uncommon depth and structure. The peaks are also testaments to the tectonic forces that created Margarita Vineyard's rare diversity of soils, ultimately fostering natural complexity in our wines.

WINEMAKING

Our aim is to capture the signature velvety fruit character of Merlot while showcasing the fine structure inherent to Margarita Vineyard. The 2017 growing season was excellent for Merlot at Margarita Vineyard, with steady harvest weather that delivered rich, balanced fruit. After destemming, the lots were cold soaked for 48 hours prior to fermentation for a gentle extraction of initial color and flavor. After fermentation and light pressing, the lots were aged for 20 months in a combination of French (60%) and American (40%) oak barrels, 25 percent of which featured new oak. A small lot of Zinfandel from Margarita Vineyard was incorporated into the final blend to amplify mid-palate fruitiness.

TASTING NOTES

The 2017 Merlot opens with dusty aromas of boysenberry, black cherry, vanilla and toasted oak. A soft, rounded texture delivers mouthfilling flavors of blueberry, blackberry, cinnamon, dark chocolate and cola. Velvety tannins are finely integrated into a rich, chewy finish.

CUISINE PAIRING

The full-bodied character of the 2017 Merlot is a fine match for rich, flavorful fare. Recommended pairings include beef tenderloin, pasta with lamb ragu, mushroom risotto and red wine-braised brisket.

VINEYARD:

Margarita Vineyard

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

Merlot 93%
Zinfandel 7%

SOIL TYPE:

Ancient Sea Bed

HARVEST DATES:

October 11 (Merlot Block 15)
October 17 (Block 5 and Block 7)
October 10 (Zinfandel)

AGING REGIMEN:

20 months in French and American oak barrels

FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 14.8%

SRP:

\$20

