

# Merlot

# ANCIENT PEAKS

## V 2013 Merlot

SANTA MARGARITA RANCH | PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA



### 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 three different 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 7 yields dark, intensely flavored fruit with both softness and power. Block 4 produces lighter red fruit qualities with lively acidity, while Block 5 splits the difference with 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. After destemming, the lots were cold soaked for 72 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 (70%) and American (30%) oak barrels, 25 percent of which featured new oak. Small lots of Malbec and Zinfandel were incorporated into the final blend. The Malbec contributes a raspberry juiciness to the wine, while the Zinfandel brings a layer of dark fruit richness.

### Tasting Notes

The 2013 Merlot opens with deep aromas of blueberry and plum with notes of cinnamon spice and cigar box. A rich, chewy texture unfolds with juicy flavors of black cherry, blackberry and cassis, followed by trailing notes of mint and toasty oak. Luscious acidity joins sleek tannins on a smooth, structured finish.

### Cuisine Pairing

The juicy, full-bodied character of the 2013 Merlot appeals to boldly flavored fare, including pan-seared sirloin steak, rosemary pork tenderloin, roast duck and lamb chops with mint aioli.

**Vineyard:**  
Margarita Vineyard

**Varietal Composition:**  
77% Merlot  
16% Malbec  
7% Zinfandel

**Soil Type:**  
Ancient Sea Bed

**Harvest Dates:**  
September 27  
(Merlot Blocks 4&5)  
October 2 (Merlot Block 7)  
October 18 (Malbec)  
October 9 (Zinfandel)

**Aging Regimen:**  
20 months in French and  
American oak barrels

**Final Analysis:**  
Alcohol: 14.5%  
TA: .72  
pH: 3.50

**Cases Produced:**  
4,790

**SRP:**  
\$18



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