

# ANCIENT PEAKS

2016 | **MERLOT**

PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA | SANTA MARGARITA RANCH



## 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. Blocks 3 and 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. In 2016, steady weather and small yields produced fruit with excellent evenness and concentration. 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 15 months in a combination of French (65%) and American (35%) oak barrels, 25 percent of which featured new oak. A small lot of Petite Sirah from Margarita Vineyard was incorporated into the final blend for added color intensity and tannin structure.

## TASTING NOTES

The 2016 Merlot is loaded with bold aromas of violets, dried cherries, toasty oak and spice. This is a Merlot of depth and dimension on the palate, offering rich, layered black fruit flavors interwoven with nuances of blueberry, pomegranate, vanilla and sweet tobacco. A velvety texture is framed by sturdy yet supple tannins on the finish.

## CUISINE PAIRING

The deeply structured 2016 vintage is favorable match for rich, flavorful fare. Recommended pairings include beef tenderloin, braised short ribs, grilled lamb chops, pan-seared duck breast and mushroom risotto.

## VINEYARD:

Margarita Vineyard

## VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

Merlot 88%  
Petite Sirah 12%

## SOIL TYPE:

Ancient Sea Bed

## HARVEST DATES:

September 29 (Merlot Blocks 4 and 5)  
September 30 (Merlot Block 15)  
October 15 (Merlot Block 3)  
October 22 (Merlot Block 7)  
October 13 (Petite Sirah)

## AGING REGIMEN:

15 months in French and American oak barrels

## FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 14.4%  
TA: .68  
pH: 3.83

## SRP:

\$20



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