

ANCIENT PEAKS

2014 | **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 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. For the second straight year, the Santa Margarita Ranch AVA enjoyed ideal growing conditions through harvest, yielding ripe Merlot fruit with intensity and structure. 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 18 months in a combination of French (75%) and American (25%) oak barrels, 25 percent of which featured new oak. Malbec from Margarita Vineyard was included in the final blend to add bright fruit character and bring juiciness to the texture.

TASTING NOTES

The 2014 Merlot delivers rich black and red fruit aromas with intriguing hints of cedar, mocha and eucalyptus. The palate is juicy and rounded, offering a flavor tapestry of black cherry, raspberry, vanilla and brown spice. Firm tannins and luscious acidity take this Merlot to the next level, finishing with a refined heft that is rooted in its Margarita Vineyard terroir.

CUISINE PAIRING

The 2014 vintage appeals to classic Merlot pairings while also holding its own against heavier weight dishes. Recommended matches included pan-seared duck breast, bacon-wrapped filet mignon, grilled veal chops and pasta with savory lamb ragu.

VINEYARD:

Margarita Vineyard

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

Merlot (83%)

Malbec (17%)

SOIL TYPE:

Ancient Sea Bed

HARVEST DATES:

September 24 (Block 5)

September 26 (Block 4)

October 1 (Block 7)

October 10 (Block 45)

AGING REGIMEN:

18 months in French and American oak barrels

FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 13.9%

TA: .68

pH: 3.54

CASES PRODUCED:

7,660

SRP:

\$18



MERLOT