

ANCIENT PEAKS

2015 | **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 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 48 hours prior to fermentation for a gentle extraction of initial color and flavor. After fermentation and light pressing, the lots were aged for 17 months in a combination of French (70%) and American (30%) oak barrels, 25 percent of which featured new oak. A small lot of Cabernet Franc from Margarita Vineyard was incorporated into the final blend for added complexity, including floral aromatics and notes of spice.

TASTING NOTES

The 2015 Merlot offers warm aromas of blueberry and plum with enticing notes of clove, caramel and cigar box. A chewy, velvety texture delivers mouthfilling flavors of red cherry, cassis, cedar and vanilla bean. A touch of minty cocoa emerges on the finish, where bold tannins and luscious acidity conclude the wine on a resounding note.

CUISINE PAIRING

The robust character of the 2015 vintage is favorable match for rich, flavorful fare. Recommended pairings included sautéed veal cutlets with mushrooms, pan-roasted duck breast, lamb chops with rosemary, New York strip steak and aged Gouda cheese.

VINEYARD:

Margarita Vineyard

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

Merlot 95%
Cabernet Franc 5%

SOIL TYPE:

Ancient Sea Bed

HARVEST DATES:

September 24 (Merlot Block 5)
September 24 (Merlot Block 4)
September 28 (Merlot Block 7)
October 8 (Merlot Block 7)
October 27 (Cabernet Franc)

AGING REGIMEN:

17 months in French and American oak barrels

FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 14.1%
TA: .76
pH: 3.58

SRP:

\$20

