

# ANCIENT PEAKS WINERY

## 2009 MERLOT

MARGARITA VINEYARD | PASO ROBLES, CALIFORNIA



### OVERVIEW

We proudly include Merlot in our small family of wines as a varietal that excels at our estate Margarita Vineyard. Here, well-drained soils and reliable coastal breezes guide the grapes to optimal intensity and structure. The result is a wine that truly captures the essence of Merlot, with silky fruit flavors and a luscious texture.

### VINEYARD

The 2009 Merlot comes primarily from Block 7 at Margarita Vineyard, with a contribution from neighboring Block 5. Both blocks unfold along the slopes of an uplifted ancient sea bed, where the well-drained, calcium-rich soils are distinguished by decomposing oyster fossils. These soils yield small, intensely flavored grapes with fine texture and firm natural acidity. Both blocks are also planted to two Merlot clones for enhanced complexity, specifically Clone 03 and Clone 181. Margarita Vineyard is situated along the top of the Cuesta Grade, approximately 22 miles south of the city of Paso Robles and just 14 miles as the crow flies from the Pacific Ocean. Here, the surrounding peaks of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range act as a gateway between the ocean-cooled environs below the grade and the warmer climes above the grade. When the days heat up in the areas north and east of Margarita Vineyard, the air rises to create a vacuum that pulls marine breezes and fog inland over the peaks, and right through the vineyard. This phenomenon creates one of the coolest growing environments in the Paso Robles appellation, resulting in fruit of uncommon depth and structure.

### WINEMAKING

After destemming, the must was cold soaked for 48 hours prior to fermentation for a gentle extraction of initial color and flavor. The wine was then fermented in stainless steel tanks with a blend of wild and commercial yeasts. The wild yeasts brought complexity and mid-palate richness to the wine, while the commercial yeasts fostered the vivid natural fruit quality. After fermentation, the lots were aged for 16 months in a combination of French (60%) and American oak (40%) barrels, 25 percent of which featured new oak. Small lots of Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc from Margarita Vineyard were incorporated into the final blend for enhanced depth and structure.

### TASTING NOTES

The 2009 Merlot offers elegant red fruit aromas with hints of cinnamon and vanilla. The palate is layered and seamless, unfolding with velvety flavors of cherry, plum and cassis. Accents of dark mocha and cola join polished tannins on a smooth, structured finish.

### CUISINE PAIRING

The deep, silky flavors and fine structure of the 2009 Merlot are an excellent match for rack of lamb, slow-roasted duck, pan-seared rib eye steak, rosemary pork tenderloin and aged cheddar cheese.

### VINEYARD:

*Margarita Vineyard (100%)*

### VARIETAL

#### COMPOSITION:

*Merlot (95%)*

*Cabernet Sauvignon (4%)*

*Cabernet Franc (1%)*

### HARVEST DATE:

*October 4*

### AGING REGIMEN:

*16 months in French and American oak barrels*

### FINAL ANALYSIS:

*Alcohol: 14.5%*

*TA: .71*

*pH: 3.60*

### CASES PRODUCED:

*2,524*

