

# ANCIENT PEAKS

2020 | **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

The 2020 vintage comes from three blocks at Margarita Vineyard that exhibit their own distinct qualities, bringing added dimension to the finished wine. These blocks are situated along the slopes of an uplifted ancient sea bed, which provides the type of highly calcareous soils that are coveted by winemakers worldwide. Block 15 is a newer planting that delivers dark, velvety black fruit flavors. Meanwhile, Block 5 yields a more nuanced character with both softness and power. Finally, Block 4 presents a brighter spectrum of red fruit flavors. 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 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 cooler climate nuances and structure inherent to Margarita Vineyard. The 2020 growing season was marked by a mild spring and summer, punctuated by two late-summer heat waves that accelerated the pace of ripening into harvest. After harvesting and destemming, each lot was 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 (65%) and American (35%) oak barrels, 20 percent of which featured new oak. Small lots of Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel were incorporated into the final blend for added complexity and mouthfeel.

## TASTING NOTES

The 2020 Merlot opens with enticing red fruit aromas joined by hints of dried herbs and toasted oak. A round, supple texture delivers mouthfilling flavors of raspberry, plum, black cherry, cocoa dust and baking spice. Lingering complexities of cedar and mushroom elevate the senses on a silky, polished finish.

## CUISINE PAIRING

The rounded textures and complex flavors of the 2020 Merlot pair well with rack of lamb, herbed roast beef, mushroom risotto, and Merlot-braised pork chops.

## VINEYARD:

Margarita Vineyard

## SOIL TYPE:

Ancient Sea Bed

## VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

Merlot 85%  
Cabernet Sauvignon 9%  
Zinfandel 6%

## HARVEST DATES:

September 26 through October 8

## AGING REGIMEN:

17 months in French and American oak barrels (20% new)

## FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 14.3%  
TA: .62  
pH: 3.81

## CASES

PRODUCED:  
7,458



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