

ANCIENT PEAKS

v. 2022 | **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 fruit flavors and luscious textures, resulting in what has become one of the Paso Robles region's most notable Merlots.

VINEYARD

The 2022 vintage comes from four 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 velvety black fruit flavors. Meanwhile, Blocks 4 and 5 yield a more nuanced character with both softness and power. Finally, Block 7 brings enhanced dark fruit intensity and richness. 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 2022 growing season was moderate through mid-summer in the wake of dry winter conditions. While a sustained heat wave landed on Labor Day weekend, our Merlot blocks maintained a nice pace of ripening into the first of October. 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 18 months in a combination of French (50%) and American (50%) oak barrels, 20 percent of which featured new oak. We combine French and American oak barrels with our Merlot to cultivate complementary flavor profiles and to enhance overall complexity.

TASTING NOTES

The 2022 Merlot is elegantly scented with plum, mulberry, tobacco, caramel and black tea. The mouthfeel is expansive, ripe and velvety with flavors of black raspberry, cherry and blackberry, accented by notes of cocoa dust, coffee and toasty oak. Finely grained tannins extend into a smooth, rich finish.

CUISINE PAIRING

Recommended pairings for the velvety 2022 Merlot include pan-seared duck breast, grilled veal chops and pasta with lamb ragu.

VINEYARD:

Margarita Vineyard

SOIL TYPE:

Ancient Sea Bed 

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

Merlot 91%
Malbec 3%
Petite Verdot 3%
Petite Sirah 3%

HARVEST DATES:

September 30 (Block 15)
October 1 (Blocks 4, 5 & 7)

AGING REGIMEN:

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

FINAL ANALYSIS:

Alcohol: 14.5%
TA: .64
pH: 3.80



MERLOT



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