



FRATELLI PERATA WINERY 1999 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, ESTATE

The Templeton Gap area of the Paso Robles appellation offers a very fine environment for producing classic Cabernet Sauvignon. Soils are ideal. Climate offers daytime temperatures with enough warmth to develop deep fruit flavors. The nighttime temperatures range 40 to 50 degrees cooler than the daytime high temperatures, so the acid levels are preserved.

Fratelli Perata uses our estate grown grapes only. We have three hills of Cabernet, each contributing a different flavor component, each ripening at different times during the harvest season, due to differences in soil and exposure to the sun. Our harvest is therefore done over a period of weeks to obtain optimum sugar/acid ratios and best flavor. As a small winery working with small lots (1 ½ tons) of grapes, we are ensured the best fruit the vineyard offers. We planted the vineyard in 1980, so we also benefit from mature vines.

We are a dry-farmed vineyard, or in current jargon, use deficit irrigation. All our viticultural practices aim toward small berry size, with the goal of deeply colored, deeply flavored wines. The rains from 1998 set the stage for a magnificent 1999 crop. The vines were deeply watered in 1998 by a greater than average rainfall. The growing season of 1999 was long and warm, with no wide heat spikes. The vines responded by carrying the grape clusters for a late, optimum harvest. The rule of thumb is: the longer the hang time on the vine, the more developed the flavors of the grape. In Cabernet Sauvignon, this particularly means moving the taste from asparagus, green bean to the desirable cherry elements.

Harvest began October 16th, 1999 and continued until November 6, 1999. The crop was exceedingly small, at 1 ton/acre. All the Cabernet was fermented in small fermenters holding 1 ½ tons of crushed grapes. The cap of grape skins that forms due to the action of fermentation is punched down by hand four times per day. Our Cabernet gives us much less juice per ton than, for example, the Zinfandel or Sangiovese, or from irrigated vines. This makes the physical process of punching down very difficult, a real aerobic exercise. But the extraction of color and flavor that results makes the effort worthwhile.

The average Brix of the Cabernet at harvest was 24.0 degrees, with an average pH of 3.6. The sweetness of the juice allowed for fermentation in open vats for approximately

14 days, before being pressed directly to oak barrels. Our press allows us to vary the pressure from 0 bars (free run juice) up to 8 bars. We use only 2 bars of pressure on this Cabernet, so the pomace left over from pressing is still damp. This avoids the bitterness associated with pressed wines, although some wine is lost in the process

The 1999 vintage was particularly extracted and full-bodied, so the decision was made to allow it to barrel age longer than most previous vintages of Cabernet. A combination of half 3-year old French and 1-year old American oak barrels were used. The French for the subtle fine vanilla finish, and the American for complexity due to its being a different species of oak from the French. The wines are unfinned and unfiltered, but racked to remove sediment throughout the course of barrel aging. This Cabernet was bottled on August 3, 2002, after almost 3 years of aging. Total production just 682 cases.

Cabernet Sauvignon is the favorite wine of Joe (Giuseppe) Perata, one of the two brothers who own the winery and make the wines of Fratelli Perata. Along with Gino, his brother and winemaker, their goal with Cabernet is to produce a multi-layered wine that is complex and can age into a silky wonder. The first Cabernet they produced was a 1988 vintage. Today this wine still holds up as an exceptional Cabernet. The elements sought to make wines worthy of aging are: exceptional fruit, good balance of ripeness and acidity, and oak barrels to add complimentary layers to the fruit.

With the 1999 vintage being so deeply flavored, bottle aging was essential. At this date, the wine emerges from the bottle requiring some breathing time before the full flavors show. But with a little swirling, the aromas dance out of the glass and the flavor coats the palate. Expect this wine to mature and show off as it emerges from the younger, shy years. Look for cherry, leather, and a flash of mint. Feel confident to pair this wine now with juicy beef flavors, or to lay it down in the cellar for 5 to 7 years.

This vintage is an example of how Fratelli Perata views each wine and vintage individually. They use no formula or mold to produce simply wine. They expect exceptional wines from their vineyard, and approach winemaking with the goal to produce those exceptional wines. Sometimes this means bottling a young and fruity 18- month old Zinfandel, or a 4 year old Sangiovese. We hope that you will find each wine to be an individual and worth the wait.