

CATERWAUL

2022 PHELAN RANCH VINEYARD CABERNET SAUVIGNON

NOTES

There are several reasons for me to be excited about this Caterwaul release letter, but one really overshadows everything else, the introduction of Phelan Ranch. I've never seen a more impressive new development in the Napa Valley. I first learned of this young vineyard from friend and fellow winemaker, Russell Bevan. We talked over the phone about where this was and what it might be like as the vineyard matured. I had an expectation of seeing something great but even then, I was not prepared for the glory of Phelan Ranch. Owner Jeff Phelan and estate manager Armando Hernandez have developed something truly spectacular. Beauty is one thing, but substance is something else so going into the harvest of 2022, we were curious to see what young vines from such an extreme site could produce. What we ended up with in bottle is arguably the finest 2022 we made. Where a lot of 2022s are soft and a bit thinner in color, this wine is more fully realized with a saturated black complexion and mountain structure that signifies place. More to follow on this exciting release below. With the Napa, we had the luxury of catching several great sites in this somewhat challenging vintage, making the 2022 full of even more high-end sources than years past. This did help with density, but the wine still retains the fresh fruited, juicy nature of the vintage. Even better, we were able to bump production close to 10,000 cases to insure we can share this wine with a larger audience.

VINTAGE

I'll admit the first few tastings of vintage 2022 were a bit disappointing but even in the toughest of vintages, there are always bright spots. The Phelan Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon lot, a combination of the Papa and Elizabeth blocks, was always the shining star in every portfolio sampling. As we tasted through everything, the best wines were the ones most similar in color and structure to the vintages that preceded them. Here we didn't have that history, so we were looking for a product of place. Sitting way above Lake Hennessey east of St. Helena in rocky, red-dirted soil, we knew something akin to Pritchard Hill is what we should find. Here we have a wine that tastes more like a 2021 than a 2022. The wine starts with a saturated to the rim black hue that only turns to ruby at the outermost edge. The fruit profile is kaleidoscopic starting with black/purple and moving to a cool blue, wintergreen note. On the nose, there are savory notes of creosote, sage, fresh tobacco and crushed rock, the latter note informing what you'd expect from the soil profile of this mountaintop vineyard. Structure is big but round, with no pokey tannins sticking out to clip the finish. This wine is one of the few true joys from the 2022 vintage. The only thing wrong with this bottling is how much we made, a scant 130 cases.

PARTNERSHIP

A partnership between Matt Hardin and Thomas Brown was formed during the 2014 vintage after countless years of working together. Out of that friendship the idea of utilizing the strengths of one another gave birth to Caterwaul wines. Matt Hardin, a 6th generation Pope Valley resident and farmer, is owner of Hardin Vineyard Management, one of the most renowned vineyard management companies in Northern California as well as his own Matthew Wallace Wines. Thomas Rivers Brown, winemaker for some of Napa and Sonoma's most iconic labels (Schrader Cellars, Outpost and his own Rivers-Marie & Aston), has more than 50 100-point wines to his resume.



APPELLATION:

Napa Valley

VARIETAL:

Cabernet Sauvignon

BARREL AGING:

100% French Oak

85% New

20 months in Barrel

ALCOHOL:

14.9%

TOTAL PRODUCTION:

130 cases