



MADRÓN A

2012 Nebbiolo—Hillside Collection

Nebbiolo

Winemakers throughout California have tasted the great Barolos and Barbarescos of Northern Italy wondering if the variety could ever grow here. Known for its peculiar growing issues as well as making wines of harsh tannins, high acidity and light color, most wineries have steered clear of Nebbiolo.

However, our family's high-elevation vineyards provided us an opportunity in 1997 to plant Nebbiolo in two locations that provided a cool climate and rich soil conditions—something not yet tried in California. The result has been to produce a wine with good color and a palate with rich texture and an identifiable strawberry/plum fruit.

The Vineyards

In 1997, we had the opportunity to try something new. We had noted that Nebbiolo from California seemed to lack the wonderful complexity and aspects of great Barolos and Barbarescos, and perhaps the climate at 3,000 feet here in Pleasant Valley would produce a spectacular wine. With two small plantings (1 acre each) in the Sumu Kaw and Enyé Vineyards grafted on to the devigorating rootstock 101-14, the deep Aiken clay loam provides plenty of leaf area for this variety. Diligent leaf removal on the north side of the vines gives us grapes with ripe cherry and hints of spice. The one challenge is (and always has been) the aggressive tannins in the fruit. This makes Nebbiolo the most educational and experimental variety in our vineyards.

The 2012 Vintage

With just a drop of Barbera blended into this wine (1.4%), I thought it would take a century for the tannins to soften in this Nebbiolo. But alas, the wine shows an elegance and finesse I truly didn't expect with just a year of bottle age. The aromas highlight the uniqueness of Nebbiolo with sweet cranberry and dried cherry fruit layered with a glorious heart of fresh lavender. Intriguing and delightful, this floral essence builds into the first sip of the richly textured entry of dark cherry and blueberry. Hints of herbal spice are sprinkled throughout, but it's the youthful yet supple tannins on the finish that make this Nebbiolo a wine to search out. And don't forget that garlic is your friend when pairing this expression of the variety. (Cellaring Potential: 5-7 years)

Suggested Food Pairings

Garlic!!! And after that, more garlic. But mix in some nice meats to marry with the young tannins. And then add just a hint more garlic! (I'd love to change this description, but it's the same every year.)

Facts

Appellation: El Dorado

Estate Grown

Blend: 98.6% Nebbiolo, 1.4% Barbera

Aging: 13 months in oak barrels (neutral French and American)

Bottled: January 23, 2014

Alcohol: 14.2%

pH: 3.83 TA: 0.51 g/100ml

Production: 140 cases

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