



MADRÓN A

2015 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 2015 Vintage

At the height of the drought in California, the 2015 vintage produced some incredible wines. This Nebbiolo is no exception, showcasing both the elegance of the variety as well as the classic structure. Interestingly, we blended in about 16% Barbera to not only soften the palate slightly but also give our “higher pH” expression just a bit more acid for balance. The result is a Nebbiolo with complex fruit and spice framed in an approachable palate (and that's no easy feat with this variety!). The aromas start with a fresh, light cherry character, hints of cinnamon spice and an intriguing ripe fig essence. Put your nose in a little deeper, and the herbal notes married with the anise and forest pine give a glimpse at how complex this wine is. The entry on the palate is rich and bold with tobacco spice, dark cherry and a plum fruit that carries throughout. Although the tannins are still youthful (and demand a food pairing), they are positively soft for the variety. Enjoy this beautiful expression of mountain Nebbiolo!

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: 84% Nebbiolo, 16% Barbera

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

Bottled: December 14, 2016

Alcohol: 13.9% pH: 3.79 TA: 0.53 g/100ml

Production: 108 cases

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