



November 2015

Dear Wine Club Member:

We are excited to present you with our latest releases, the first wines from the exceptional 2013 vintage:

2013 Montemaggiore Paolo's Vineyard Syrah
2013 Montemaggiore Syrafina

Most vintages in northern California are fairly good because we have nearly perfect weather, but every once in a while we experience a truly exceptional vintage. 2013 is one such vintage. We're not just mimicking the yearly post-harvest press where the winemakers say "one of the best vintages ever" (how can they say that every year with a straight face?). In the fourteen years we've been making wine at Montemaggiore, we've only had two other exceptional vintages: 2004 and 2007. If you've been in our Wine Club for a while, you may realize that these two other vintages were so good that we made a Reserve Syrah—and yes, we also made a Reserve for 2013 (but let's not get ahead of ourselves because that wine won't be released until next year).

The growing season in 2013, like those of 2004 and 2007, produced exceptional wines that are flavorful and smooth now but have the natural tannin and acidity for aging. So, you may be asking, what specifically makes an exceptional vintage at Montemaggiore?

- Lots of rain in the early spring to saturate the soils and fill our ponds
- Warm sunny days later in the spring to bring an uniform bud-break and even pollination
- A mild summer with highs in the 80s and 90s keeping the ripening process steady during the day, with cool (but not too cold) nighttime temperatures to maintain acidity levels
- Warm and dry in the early fall so that we are not dodging raindrops during harvest

2013 followed these four tenets fairly closely (see below for more detail) and the long, moderate growing season yielded grapes with balanced acidity, ripe tannins, and reasonable sugar levels—all leading to a classic vintage. Included in this Club Selection is our flagship wine, the 2013 Paolo's Vineyard Syrah, which is 100% syrah, along with the 2013 Syrafina, which is 95% syrah co-fermented with 5% viognier. On a side note, the Wine Enthusiast recently awarded the 2013 Syrafina with 91 points, and the Syrah with 90 points. We are especially eager to have you taste these 2013 wines, and we hope you agree that they are extra special.

The Vineyards. Both the syrah and viognier grapes for these wines come from our estate vineyards on a mountainside 750ft above Dry Creek Valley in northern Sonoma County. Our vineyards are on a steep grade whose rocky soils produce intensely flavored grapes at naturally low yields. These mountainside grapevines produce smaller individual berries, which create wines with firm structure, incredible varietal intensity, and excellent aging potential.

All our estate vineyards are farmed according to biodynamic principles and using organic materials. With its focus on biodiversity and soil fertility, we believe biodynamics brings additional strength, vitality and a unique sense of place to Montemaggiore wines.

The Growing Season. Three "E"s describe 2013: early, even, and excellent! The winter rains ended somewhat early and given the extra sunshine, the vines broke their winter dormancy a few weeks early. A warm, dry spring brought strong growth and even bud break. For some reason we had to do much more suckering than usual in the vineyard to remove unwanted growth at the base of the vines and in the canopy. The vines bloomed evenly and pollination was fairly uniform (unlike in 2015!). With the exception of one heat spike on the cusp of June and July, the summer temperatures were moderate thus ripening and veraison proceeded very evenly.

(over)

In 2013, harvest was relatively dry although we experienced two brief mid-September rains, which had virtually no impact on the grapes. Our harvest started a bit early, at the end of September, and proceeded quickly over the next three weeks. The grapes were in excellent condition: small, uniform, and clean (little bird damage and no mildew). Yields were very slightly above average and sugar levels were moderate.

The Crush. We harvested five different areas of our vineyards over six days, resulting in four different lots of syrah and one of syrah + viognier (a co-fermentation, where the two varietals are fermented together). As usual, we hand-harvested the clusters starting at 4am with LED lights from our tractor, and brought them into the winery while still cold. About 20% whole clusters were put into the bottom of an open-top stainless steel tank, stems and all. By noon, the remaining 80% had been destemmed and carefully sorted, the resulting whole berries are layered on top.

The grapes underwent a two- to five-day cold maceration to bring out flavor and color precursors, after which they were inoculated with yeast from the northern Rhône, coincidentally called *Syrah*. For the duration of the 14-17 days of fermentation, manual punchdowns were performed three times a day for a half hour each on every tank in order to introduce oxygen in the fermentation and keep the flavorful skins in contact with the juice. Peak fermentation temperatures ranged from 81°-86°F, and all fermentations proceeded evenly to dryness.

Aging the Wine. Each lot of syrah (and syrah + viognier) was individually pressed off the skins using a stainless steel basket press, whose gentleness limits the wine's astringency. The wines were then aged on their fine lees in 100% French oak barrels for eighteen months. For those not steeped in wine-lingo, **lees** are the dead yeast cells and other particles remaining in a wine after fermentation. As the yeast cells break down, they release polysaccharides and mannoproteins (amongst other compounds), thus enhancing the structure, mouthfeel, and flavor complexity of the wine.

For both the Syrah and Syrafina, 33% of the wine was aged in new oak barrels, imparting structure, some tannins, and oak flavors into the wine. The balance of the wine was aged in neutral barrels. In September of 2014, different Syrah lots were blended according to taste. 150 cases of Paolo's Vineyard Syrah and 175 cases of Syrafina were bottled in April of 2015, and then allowed to rest before being released in November of 2015 to our wine club.

Tasting Notes. With the 2013 Paolo's Vineyard Syrah, aromas of ripe blackberries and dark plum mingle with mineral and white pepper components. In the 2013 Syrafina, those aromas are similar, but complemented by floral high tones of violets. Flavors on the palate of both wines reflect their aroma, being framed by soft tannins and gentle acidity.

The 2013 Syrah and Syrafina are ready to drink now, but their tannin and acid structure also lend them significant ageability. Both could be cellared for up to 5-10 years if you prefer more mellow, integrated flavors in your wines.

Food Pairings. Both these wines pair well with wild mushroom soup, braised short ribs, pork tenderloin, bacon rösti, marinated tri-tip, lamb shanks, pasta bolognese, roast duck, grilled portobellos, sheep's milk cheeses, and lamb burgers. For recipes and more food pairing strategies, navigate on our website to Wines > Recipes.

Enjoy your 2013 Paolo's Vineyard Syrah and 2013 Syrafina along with any other wines you've chosen for your Fall Wine Club Selection. In April comes our next Wine Club Release, consisting of the 2013 Nobile. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your continued support. *Salute*, as we say in Italian!



Montemaggiore

SYRAFINA

DRY CREEK VALLEY · SONOMA COUNTY

SYRAH 95% · VIOGNIER 5%

ESTATE SYRAH 2013

Technical Data

Varietal Blend.....	95% Syrah 5% Viognier
Average Sugar at Harvest.....	25.1° Brix
Alcohol	14.7%
Cooperage	100% French
Percentage New Oak.....	33%
Harvest Dates	Sep 19–Oct 6, 2013
Bottling Date.....	Apr 2015
Cases Produced.....	175
Optimum Consumption.....	2016-2022

Tasting & Serving Comments

Aromas of brambly blackberries, licorice, and white pepper are highlighted by the essence of violets. Flavors on the palate are similar, being framed by round tannins and gentle acidity.

Syrafina pairs well with salmon grilled on a cedar plank, roast leg of lamb with rosemary, seafood cioppino, roast duck, grilled portobellos, pork tenderloin, lamb burgers, and sheep's milk cheeses.

Montemaggiore Syrafina will improve with time in your cellar. In its youth, the wine will flaunt its fruit characteristics, while over time it will gain further complexity and the various flavor elements will integrate. If opened within the first few years of release, please decant the wine for several hours.

Vineyard Profile

Both the Syrah and Viognier come from Montemaggiore's estate vineyards located on a mountainside high above Dry Creek Valley. The rocky soils produce intensely flavored grapes at naturally low yields. Using biodynamic practices and organic materials, Paolo's Vineyard is farmed without chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides.

Vintage Summary

2013 was an outstanding vintage for Montemaggiore wines. The vines broke their winter dormancy early with a dry spring, which was followed by moderate summer temperatures, and a relatively dry harvest. The long growing season resulted in grapes with balanced acidity, ripe tannins, and reasonable sugar levels—all leading to a classic vintage. 2013 was so high quality that Montemaggiore produced a Reserve wine, which had only happened twice in the prior ten years.

Winemaker Notes

The inspiration for Syrafina comes from the Côte Rôtie region in France, where Syrah has historically been planted and blended with a small amount of Viognier. For Montemaggiore's Syrafina, the two varietals were picked over two and a half weeks in September and October. The grapes were destemmed then sorted at the berry level (while 10% remained as whole clusters). After a brief cold soak, the Syrah and Viognier were inoculated with the northern Rhône Syrah yeast, then co-fermented in open-top stainless steel tanks at 85°F. The whole berry fermentation with punchdowns for cap management brought out the wine's complexity on the palate. After a gentle pressing in a stainless steel basket press in order to limit astringency, the wine aged for 18 months in 100% French oak barrels.



Montemaggiore

SYRAH

DRY CREEK VALLEY • SONOMA COUNTY

PAOLO'S VINEYARD • ESTATE GROWN

2013

Technical Data

Varietal Blend.....	100% Syrah
Average Sugar at Harvest.....	25.5° Brix
Alcohol	14.7%
Cooperage	100% French
Percentage New Oak.....	33%
Harvest Dates	Sep 29-Oct 2, 2013
Bottling Date.....	Apr 2015
Cases Produced.....	150
Optimum Consumption.....	2016-2025

Tasting & Serving Comments

Aromas of blackberries, bacon, and herbs mingle with damp earth and cracked pepper components. Flavors on the palate are similar, being framed by structured tannins and a long finish.

Paolo's Vineyard Syrah pairs well with pork tenderloin, salmon grilled on a cedar plank, pasta bolognese, grilled portobellos, bacon rösti, lamb burgers, and sheep's milk cheeses.

Montemaggiore Syrah will improve with time in your cellar. In its youth, the wine will flaunt its fruit characteristics, while over time it will gain further complexity and the individual flavors will integrate. If opened within the first few years of release, please decant the wine for several hours.



Vineyard Notes

Located on a mountainside high above Dry Creek Valley, the rocky soils of Montemaggiore's estate vineyards produce intensely flavored grapes at naturally low yields. Using biodynamic practices and organic materials, Paolo's Vineyard is farmed without chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides.

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Winemaker Notes

Two individual blocks of Syrah were hand-harvested four days apart in late September and early October. The grapes traveled less than 100 yards to the estate winery where they were destemmed but not crushed, then carefully hand-sorted at the berry level. About 10% of whole clusters (including stems) were added for complexity. All the grapes underwent a three-day cold soak in open-top stainless steel tanks, then were inoculated with the northern Rhône *Syrah* yeast. The whole berry fermentation with punchdowns for cap management brought out the wine's complexity on the palate. After a gentle pressing in a stainless steel basket press in order to limit astringency, the wine aged for 18 months in 100% French oak barrels.

