



October 2016

Dear Wine Club Member:

We are excited to present you with our latest wine release:

2013 Montemaggiore Reserve

Those who have followed our wines over the years may realize that we've only released two other Reserves in our 15 year history: our first in 2004, and another in 2007. In the case of Montemaggiore wines, "Reserve" means something truly special: a great vintage yielding exceptional fruit, special barrels selected for their intensity and depth of flavor, blended together into an exceptional wine. As good as our other 2013 wines are, the 2013 Reserve clearly stands head and shoulders above, representing the final release from a truly exceptional vintage.

The 2013 Reserve is comprised of 94% syrah and 6% cabernet sauvignon. The majority of the syrah comes from the Hilltop section of our vineyard—the highest elevation with the leanest soils and the lowest yields, producing the most concentrated flavors. A touch of cabernet sauvignon adds structure, increases complexity, and lengthens the finish. Aged in barrel for 18 months and aged in bottle for another 18 months, we hope you enjoy this truly special wine.

The Vineyards. The grapes for the 2013 Reserve (and indeed all our red wines) come from our estate vineyards on a mountainside 750ft high above Dry Creek Valley in Sonoma County. The Hilltop section lying at our highest elevation supplied most of the syrah grapes, which struggle given the meager nutrients and low water retention of its rocky soils. This section produces our smallest grapes with the most intense flavors—at pitifully low yields. Further down the mountain, our Cabernet section lies on slopes so steep that the vineyard is terraced like the great vineyards in the Mosel, Rhône, and Douro valleys.

Living amongst our vineyard, we strive to be good stewards of the land thus our estate vineyards are biodynamically and organically farmed. After nine years of farming in this natural and chemical-free way, Vincent truly appreciates additional strength, vitality and a unique sense of place which Biodynamics brings to Montemaggiore wines.

The Growing Season. The 2013 vintage was early, even, and excellent! Being a drought year, the winter rains ended somewhat early and given the extra sunshine, the vines broke their winter dormancy several weeks early. A warm, dry spring brought strong growth and early bud break. 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)

What does "Reserve" mean?

Historically, winemakers would set aside some of their best wine for extra barrel aging, rather than sell it immediately. These reserved wines would emerge tasting richer and more complex than the regular releases.

Unfortunately, today the term "reserve" is meaningless in the US, as evidenced by Kendall-Jackson's Vintner's Reserve. All these K-J wines are "reserves" so the term has been reduced to marketing fluff. Unlike other terms on a wine label (e.g., "estate"), the term "reserve" is not regulated.

In some countries (e.g., Spain, Portugal, and Italy) wines that are labeled *Riserva* or *Reserva* receive special treatment. They must be aged for a minimum amount of time typically 2-3 years (part of which must be in oak barrels).

At Montemaggiore, with only three Reserves in fifteen years, our Reserve wines are especially selected and blended for their great intensity and depth of flavor. They represent our best wine from the best vintages.

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

The Crush. The majority of the syrah came from the Hilltop, which is always harvested first—in 2013, this was on September 19 which was a few weeks early. We harvested the grapes by hand starting at 4am using high efficiency LED lights on the tractor and strapped to the picker's heads. By 7:30am we finished picking and brought the grapes into the winery while still cold. The bunches were carefully destemmed and sorted by hand, and then the grapes were put in stainless steel tanks. The syrah underwent a short cold soak and 10-day fermentation. After a gentle pressing in a stainless steel basket press in order to limit astringency, the wine was barreled down. Cabernet, generally ripening later than syrah, was picked in two batches in early and mid-October. The cabernet underwent a short cold soak and 15-day fermentation before being pressed and barreled down.

Aging the Wine. The wine was aged in 100% French oak barrels for 18 months, 38% of which were new barrels. New oak serves to soften naturally assertive tannins in the wine, and contributes flavors of vanilla and coconut to complement the natural grape flavors. The balance of the barrels, 62%, were “neutral” or used barrels, which promote a round texture due the micro-oxygenation of the wine through the barrel staves.

Twelve months into barrel aging, Lise started blending individual syrah barrels, along with small amounts of cabernet. The blended wine aged another six months in barrel, and in April of 2015 a total of 200 cases were bottled. This is also the first wine we have bottled in larger format, 1.5 Liter bottles. The bottled wine was allowed to rest for a year and a half before release, creating new flavors while increasing the wine’s complexity and subtlety.

Tasting Notes. The aroma of the 2013 Reserve opens with deep, rich, brambly blackberry, underpinned by hints of pepper and cocoa. On the palate, its structure is full and mouth-filling, with formidable but supple tannins, and a velvety finish. This wine carries the hallmarks of Montemaggiore: rich and mouth-filling yet elegant, with well-integrated oak and a long smooth finish. Ready to drink now for those who prefer youthful, fruit-oriented wines, but it could be cellared for up to 10 years if you prefer mellower, integrated flavors.

We hope you enjoy the 2013 Reserve, and if you customized your shipment, all the Montemaggiore wines you received! The next Club Release of the 2014 Paolo's Vineyard Syrah and Syrafina will come in March or April of next year. Saluté and have a great holiday season,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Vince & Lise".