



October 2019

Dear Wine Club Member:

Thinking back over the years, all the people we've met and the adventures we've had—it's been quite a journey! Thank you for the memories. As newlyweds in 2001, we left our high tech jobs and purchased 55 acres on a Sonoma mountainside with the dream of producing great syrahs. Starting with just two wines, our portfolio expanded to seven over a total of 15 vintages with numerous awards along the way. Selling the vineyard and winery in 2017, we realized something surprising.

We dove into Montemaggiore out of a love for the land and for wine, but we came out being most profoundly affected by the people—you (our loyal customers), our fabulous neighbors, our interns and our colleagues. Actually our animals too: the dogs, cats, chickens, and sheep. From the people and animals, we learned a lot, laughed a lot, lived a lot. We are reminded once again, that "things" and inanimate objects are not important...people are.

We hope this wine becomes meaningful for the memories you form while sharing it with those people most special to you. Perhaps you will drink this wine at your family's holiday gathering, or a friend's notable birthday, or even an intimate evening with a loved one in front of the fire. Perhaps you will also reminisce about your friends, Vincent and Lise, who once dreamed about creating a wine like this—remembering that you helped make their dream a reality.

Being the last Montemaggiore vintage, the 2016 wines serve as a reminder to all of us that new "chapters" may appear scary but can be so incredibly rewarding. After all, Montemaggiore was a new chapter for us back in 2001 and what a fabulous journey it was! Now we look forward to the next chapter, whatever that may bring.

With more than a little wistfulness, we present you with our final two releases of Montemaggiore estate wines:

2016 Nobile **2016 Reserve**

After a difficult 2015, we were especially happy that 2016 was a "typical" vintage—fitting, in retrospect, as our final harvest. 2015 brought the fourth year of drought, and spring temperatures fluctuating so much that our vines didn't pollinate fully or evenly—then a heat spell came as harvest approached and our yields were 35% down. In comparison 2016 was very easy: all of northern California had plenty of rain during that winter; then spring and summer temperatures were moderate; and harvest was cool and spread out—just the way we prefer! The wine reflects that steadiness with excellent balance, tannin structure, and complexity.

The Vineyards. Both the syrah and cabernet grapes for these wines come from our estate vineyards on a mountainside 750ft above Dry Creek Valley in northern Sonoma County. On a steep grade, the rocky soils of the Montemaggiore vineyards produce intensely flavored grapes at naturally low yields. These mountainside grapevines produce small 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. The 2016 vintage was reasonably typical and uneventful, producing wines with great balance and freshness! The growing season started auspiciously with the first normal rainfall after four years of drought. Due to prior drought stress, the grapevines bore smaller berries and a slightly lighter crop than usual but nothing too extreme. The moderately warm spring weather led to even pollination and nice fruit set.

The summer ripening season enjoyed slightly cooler than average daytime highs—perfect for deeply colored, complex wines. Due to the wintertime rains, there was a nice healthy canopy of leaves sheltering the grapes and we did a bit of leaf pulling to achieve just the right sun exposure on the grapes.

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Mid-September brought some unseasonably cool temperatures which slowed down ripening and spread out the harvest, a bonus for every winemaker (although this does make the grapegrower, Vincent, nervous). Our first harvest day of the season was September 24th which is fairly typical. The harvest started with our top-most block of syrah which went into our Reserve, then generally proceeded down the mountain through the Cabernet, and finishing up with our last harvest from our lowermost syrah block on October 7th. All the wines have great depth of flavor and there were no major disasters during harvest—a welcome relief compared to the prior vintage (drought, uneven fruit set, very low yields).

The Crush. For these two wines, we harvested two different areas of our vineyards over two and a half weeks, resulting in two different lots: one of cabernet sauvignon and one of our hilltop syrah. As usual, we hand-harvested the clusters starting at 5:30am with LED lights from our tractor, and brought them into the winery while still cold. For the syrah, about 20% whole clusters were put into the bottom of an open-top stainless steel tank, stems and all. Whereas for the cabernet, 100% of the clusters were destemmed. By noon, the destemmed grapes were carefully sorted, the resulting whole berries are layered on top of any whole clusters.

The grapes underwent a cold maceration to bring out flavor and color precursors, after which they were inoculated with yeast. For the duration of the 14-19 days of fermentation, manual punchdowns were performed three times a day (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 82°-86°F, and all fermentations proceeded evenly to dryness.

Aging the Wine. Each lot 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, less than 50% of which were new barrels (which impart structure, tannins, and oak flavors into the wine). The balance of the wine was aged in neutral barrels (which impart a smooth texture but no flavor).

In September of 2017, the hilltop syrah and cabernet barrels were each tasted and then chosen for the Nobile blend (52% cabernet sauvignon, 48% syrah) and the Reserve (100% syrah). 150 cases each of Reserve and Nobile were bottled in March of 2018, and then allowed to rest before being released in November of 2019 to our wine club.

Tasting Notes. With the 2016 Reserve, aromas of deep, brambly blackberries mingle with notes of black pepper and coconut. With the 2016 Nobile, the aromas lean toward black cherry and baking spices, complemented by notes of cedar and dried herbs. Flavors on the palate of both wines reflect their aroma, being framed by smooth tannins and balanced acidity.

The 2016 Reserve and Nobile 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. Our favorite dishes to pair with both these big, bold wines include marinated tri-tip, braised short ribs, osso buco, pasta bolognese—and the list goes on! For recipes and more food pairing strategies, go to our website and navigate to Wines > Recipes.

Enjoy your 2016 Nobile and 2016 Reserve along with any other wines you've chosen for your Fall Wine Club Selection. Remember, this is your final wine club selection, but you will still be able to order Montemaggiore wines from our website over the next year or so.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your support over the years!

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Vincent & Lise". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.