



THE VINEYARD

This is the last vintage from our Estate Hilltop Merlot vines. We removed this vineyard in 2025 with plans to replant with new Merlot soon. It's all about structure, showing dry-tannins, tart-berry laden flavors and a core of spices ending with puckering textures. The vineyard was one of oldest on the land and first established in 1995. Yielding only 1.5 tons per acre, this wine is intense and tannic! The vines were VSP pruned and trained; we conduct both shoot thinning and leaf pulling. The vineyard soils are a mix of clay and rock at the top of the ridge and mostly sandy-loam as you head to the bottom of the block. The historic April 6th freeze event limited our crop even further and made 2024 the lightest year on record.

THE WINEMAKING

This is the hardest grape to destem and crush.... it just doesn't want to break its berries! The grape skins are super thick and do not release much juice even after being processed and agitated by pumping over. The first few days of fermentation are challenging as we are limited by how many pumpovers we can complete. We let the crushed "must" cold soak for 3 days before any attempts of pumping over, this allows for adequate time as the grape skins breakdown and release juice. 2024 was a smooth and long fermentation; taking 26 days to finish. The fermenting wine was then drained leaving the skins to be pressed. We combined the "free run" and the "pressed fraction" into the same settling tank. The wine settled for 1 week before racking off "the lees" and transferring into once and twice used French and American Oak barrels. We bottled just 240 cases!

THE FACTS

Varietal Composition: 100% Merlot
Appellation: Paso Robles
Vineyard: Frankel Family Estate
Finished Alcohol: 15.2%
Residual Sugar(G/F): 0.02 g/100ml
Total Acid: 0.70 g/100ml
pH: 3.44
Bottling Date: August 13, 2026
Release Date: December 1, 2026
Total Production: 240 Cases

THE TASTE

The wine is impressive and memorable from first sip to finish! The vines certainly show their age, offering smooth textures and lingering notes of chewy dry tannins. Classic aromas of cranberry and sour cherry dominate and coated in kitchen spices like thyme, rosemary, peppercorns and all-spice. The palate is very complete, ranging from tart red fruit to spicy peppers and herbs. The mouthfeel is impressive and encompasses distinctive qualities of blueberry pie crust. The aromas show off red licorice and red fruits, while the bouquets accent subtle oak nuances. This wine is age worthy, give it till 2032 before it's at its best taste.

-Paul Frankel, Winemaker