CHATEAU MONTELENA
ESTABLISHED 1882

2018 Estate Zinfandel

Notes from the Winemaker, Matt Crafton

INTRODUCTION

The cyclical nature of viticulture invites us to experience and celebrate *renewal* each growing year. Tender, new growth on the vines arrives with a sense of optimism, ushering in spring, and enticing the beholder to both appreciate and live in the moment. The iridescent green, yellow, and slightly pink buds burst from dormancy, in stark contrast to the weathered bark surrounding them. It's quite a sight that is both familiar and at the same time, novel. That puzzle is fitting as the 2018 vintage marks a return to our Estate Zinfandel, the first since 2012. Some of the vines are new, but the profile is recognizable and classic. After five years of replanting our Estate Vineyard, this wine makes its triumphant return, something we can all celebrate.

VINTAGE WEATHER

The Primitivo component of this blend tends to show best in moderately warm years and 2018 certainly qualifies. Ample sunshine and plenty of heat throughout the summer months favored uniform ripening and a purity of flavor. That consistency carried into harvest, allowing for small, targeted picks across vineyard blocks, capturing the complexity and elegance of this vintage.

NOSE

Brimming with fresh fruit, the aromas are dominated by ripe raspberry and cranberry, leaning southern Italian in style at first. However, after a few minutes, the Zinfandel component becomes more prominent and robust as blackberry jam, hoisin, and savory herbs appear, lending some allure as well as familiarity. It's the nexus of these disparate, yet harmonious red and dark fruit characteristics that's emblematic of Montelena wines and our Calistoga vineyard.

PALATE

The elegance of 2018 comes through immediately on the palate. Laser-focused acidity and strawberry slowly merge with sweet baking spices, dried cherry and earth. The tannins are soft enough to balance the acidity without overwhelming the steady stream of candied fruit. Medium-bodied, the weight of the wine adds depth without the need for extended aging.

FINISH

As the fruit subsides, the brambly nature of Zinfandel comes to the forefront; first as mint and then as black pepper and tea. The tannins here are more chalky, almost chewy, and complement the subtle notes of smoke and pipe tobacco exceedingly well.

Technical Information

HARVEST DATES
September 20–30

ALCOHOL
14.3%

BLEND
100% Zinfandel/Primitivo

BARREL AGING
16 months in French, Irish and American oak, 17% new

BOTTLING DATE
April 2020

WINEMAKER
Matt Crafton

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