

BIRICHINO



2017 PETER MARTIN RAY CABERNET SAUVIGNON

After many years of drought, the winter of 2016-2017 was the wettest ever recorded in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A ferocious heatwave in the last week of August running into early September further challenged all but the best sites where old vines, ideal exposition, and fastidious farming make all the difference. Besson and Enz spring to mind. As does the most recent addition to the Birichino quiver, one of the most celebrated neighborhoods in California winedom, the Peter Martin Ray Vineyard in the *Chaine d'Or* of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Peter's late father, the winemaking iconoclast Martin Ray, began planting Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in an upper block in 1943, adding Cabernet Sauvignon to this ridgetop in the mid-1950s. In 1972, much of the original land was ceded to his investors and became Mt. Eden, but the Ray family kept two choice parcels of the historic property. This hilltop of shallow Franciscan shale, farmed organically and without irrigation high above Silicon Valley, just to the southeast of Montebello, allows for a tannic, muscular wine, yet one wrapped in a lovely perfume of violets and cassis, not surprising given that the source material for these vines traces its lineage back to cuttings brought in the 1880s from Château Margaux.

A serendipitous early September offer of grapes from this viticultural holy land could not be declined, even by two Cabernet agnostics. Though we are more temperamentally inclined towards improvisation, vinification proceeded strictly according to Hoyle: early morning harvest; 100% destemming; primary fermentation without inoculation; 22 day cuvaision; 21 month elevage in 20% new French barrels; bottling with neither fining nor filtering after a single rack to bottling tank. In one departure from mountain Cabernet orthodoxy, we decided against mid-elevage racks, as the wine never gave a hint of reduction. It should greet the 2030s and 40s with great *élan*.

-Alex and John

Harvest Date: Sept. 13th & 14th, 2017
Composition: Cabernet Sauvignon 100%

Appellation: Santa Cruz Mountains
pH: 3.52 **TA:** 6.3 g/l **Alc.:** 13.5%
Press: 94 pts, Vinous, Oct. 2020,
93 pts, Cellar Selection, Wine
Enthusiast, Mar. 2021

Total Production: 5 barrels

