

2017 Malbec

Peterson Vineyard, Dry Creek Valley

Background

Malbec first grabbed William Knuttel's attention when he was winemaker at Chalk Hill Estate, where Malbec clones from both France and Argentina were evaluated. The fruitfulness of Malbec varies greatly depending on clone. Knuttel designed experiments to examine wine quality as a function of pruning, ripeness, and extraction techniques, among other variables. The most important conclusion was simple: Malbec quality is highly dependent upon yield! At similar cropping, clones show little difference in flavor characteristics, but high yields limited flavor concentration. The key to quality Malbec is to limit its crop. Knuttel has since been producing Malbec under his eponymous brand, and also with his brand Tentadora in Cafayate, Argentina, as the temptation to go back to the source was irresistible.

Vineyard and Winemaking

Peterson Vineyard, on Bradford Mountain in northwest Dry Creek Valley, yields intensely flavored Malbec with great natural acidity from its well-drained, red-clay hillsides. A small block of Petit Verdot sits nearby, and 20% was co-fermented with the Malbec. Fully ripened clusters from the near perfect 2017 vintage were hand harvested and gently crushed to one-ton fermenters. The must was inoculated after two days of cold soaking the berries. Extraction with three punch downs daily continued until the wine was completely dry, at which time it was pressed to 100% French oak, predominantly Francois Freres, for malolactic fermentation. Fourteen months aging in barrel, with quarterly racking, completed the classic Bordeaux-style winemaking utilized in the making of this Malbec.

Tasting Notes

The 2017 Peterson Vineyard Dry Creek Valley Malbec is densely scented with aromas of blueberry, boysenberry and earth, gently massaged with oak spice. Flavors of black cherry and raspberry chime in on the mid-palate, and resolved tannins amply support the lengthy finish. This wine is eminently suited to the table, and pairs especially well with roasted meats and grilled vegetables.

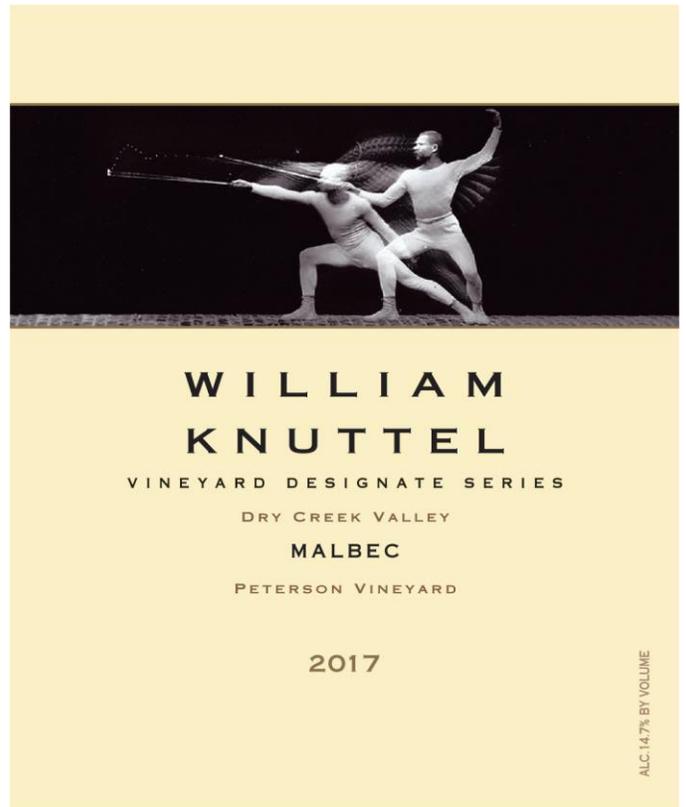
YIELD: 3.3 tons/acre (average)

AGING: 20 months in French oak, 25% new, 75% 2 year-old

COOPERAGE: Tonnelleries O, Kadar (Taransaud)

TA/pH: 5.7 g/L & 3.79

CASES: 138 (12 x 750ml)



William Knuttel was formerly Winemaker & Vice President with Chalk Hill Estate from 1996 to 2003, specializing in ultra-premium Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, & Sauvignon Blanc, and Dry Creek Vineyard's Executive Winemaker from 2003 to 2011. As proprietor of Tria, 1995 to 2003, he produced fine Pinot Noir and Zinfandel. As Saintsbury's winemaker from 1983 to 1996, Knuttel established that brand as a leader in ultra-premium Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.

ABOUT THE LABEL ART:

Designer Jeffrey Caldewey captured William Knuttel's kinetic wine world with Etienne-Jules Marey's 1890 "chronophotograph," in which multiple exposures are superimposed to show the complete motion of "le coup d'eepe." The image metaphorically highlights the balance, finesse, power and poise valued by the wine-maker.