

# Mount Eden Vineyards

Santa Cruz Mountains

Mount Eden's estate vineyards began to be developed in 1945 by the legendary vintner Martin Ray on a rugged mountaintop in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Today, the site consists of 40 acres of low-yielding Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc vines. The Chardonnay and Pinot Noir were propagated from selections brought to California by French winemaker Paul Masson, while the Cabernet Sauvignon came from Emmett Rixford's historic *La Questa Vineyard* in Woodside, California. Mount Eden is considered to have the longest lineage of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir in North America.

Planted in infertile Franciscan shale, the vineyards are 15 miles from the Pacific Ocean and enjoy a cool, but sunny climate above the fog line. Harvest normally begins in the first weeks of September and finishes around the end of October, occasionally going into early November. The combination of a long growing season and naturally low yields allows slow, steady maturation of the grapes and the concomitant intensification of their flavors. This process is enhanced by vertically training the vines to maximize the exposure of the grape clusters to sunlight and by thinning the crop, when necessary, to ensure yields do not exceed two tons per acre.

## Cabernet Sauvignon Estate, Santa Cruz Mountains

The heritage of Mount Eden Cabernet Sauvignon dates back to the 1890s, when the famed viticulturist Emmett Rixford of Woodside, California, obtained selected cuttings from *Chateau Margaux* in Bordeaux, France. Rixford planted his famous *La Questa Vineyard* with these selections, in the same proportions as found at Margaux.

In the late 1940s Martin Ray planted his first Cabernet vineyard with cuttings from the *La Questa Vineyard*. The present-day Estate Cabernet Sauvignon vines were planted in the early 1980s using cuttings taken from these vines. Yields are low, typically one to two tons per acre. Soils are very thin (1-12 inches), with a dominant base of Franciscan shale. The climate is cool, especially for Cabernet, and influenced by the vineyard's altitude and its proximity to San Francisco bay and the Pacific Ocean. The vines are trellised in a modern fashion, which allows for a more uniform ripening. The vineyard also contains small blocks of Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

The Cabernet is fermented in small 1,000-gallon stainless steel tanks, with the *must* punched down manually and macerated for six to ten days after fermentation completes. The new wine is transferred into new Bordelais chateau barrels where it finishes its malolactic fermentation. During the twenty-two months in the cellar, the wine is racked three to four times per year via air pressure. It is bottled unfined, unfiltered and aged two years prior to release.

Mount Eden Estate Cabernet Sauvignon is a Bordeaux-style blend of approximately 75% Cabernet, 22% Merlot and 3% Cabernet Franc, although the *cepage* varies by vintage. This high mountain, cool coastal vineyard is an unusual site for California Cabernet Sauvignon, reflecting its refreshing acidity and moderate alcohol. Fine integrated tannins buttress characteristic flavors of red currant, blackberry and earth. Recommended cellaring is ten to fifteen years.