

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.

Pinot Noir Estate, Santa Cruz Mountains

Martin Ray planted Pinot Noir at Mount Eden in 1945. The budwood came from Paul Masson's original vineyard near Mount Eden. Because Masson was a good friend of the Louis Latour family of Burgundy, it is likely the selection came from one of Latour's finest vineyards and was brought by Masson to California during the 1880s. The faith Ray demonstrated in this difficult red wine variety, at a time when America had little appreciation of fine wine, was remarkable. Today, Pinot Noir vines occupy seven acres of the estate vineyard and typically yield a meager one to one-and-a-half tons per acre.

Pinot Noir is the first variety harvested at Mount Eden, kicking off the vintage season. Using natural yeasts, fermentation is conducted in small open-top fermentors and extends ten to fourteen days, with the *must* punched down by hand. The new wine is immediately put into 75% new and 25% one-year-old French Burgundy barrels. It matures for eighteen months before being bottle unfined and unfiltered. Nothing is added; nothing is taken away.

Due to the soils in the vineyard, the Estate Pinot Noirs' elegant, transparent style is more Burgundian than Californian, emphasizing wild strawberry, earth, blueberry and dill varietal characters. Cellaring the wine from five to twelve years pays handsome rewards.