



Jeff Runquist WINES



The Sierra Foothills appellation is well known for producing terrific Zinfandel. Almost half of all the red grapes grown in Amador and El Dorado Counties is Zinfandel. Zinfandel is the historic grape of the region having been planted soon after the discovery of gold in the mid 1800's. Some of the oldest vineyards in the state are Zinfandel; one, still in production in Amador County, dates back to 1869. While Zinfandel has enjoyed the limelight in the foothills there is a relative newcomer that is starting to cast a shadow and draw some attention.

The new kid in town is Barbera. Barbera was introduced to the Sierra Foothills in 1974 by Cary Gott, while establishing the Montevina Winery that later became Terra Del Oro. A local grower, Dick Cooper, jumped on the Barbera bandwagon and has become the area's preeminent source for Barbera supplying over forty different producers. We made our first Barbera in 1998, and it is now our largest selling varietal wine. Barbera has great flavor; it is juicy and succulent, the tannins are mild and when it comes to pairing with food it is incredibly versatile. It is easy to recognize why Barbera's popularity has increased so dramatically in the past few years. At the forefront of this increase is Barbera from the Sierra Foothills.

In 2018 California winemakers crushed 43,405 tons of Barbera; enough to produce close to three million cases of wine. Given this volume one might expect this variety to have a more prominent position in the marketplace, but it doesn't. The vast majority of the Barbera grown in California is in Madera, Fresno and Tulare Counties in California's fertile central valley. There Barbera is prized for its high acidity and its ability to bring a youthful zesty quality to blends that might otherwise be flat and lifeless. Despite its contribution Barbera rarely gets first billing.

Yet move just a few miles east and gain a couple of hundred feet in elevation and Barbera becomes a headliner. The Sierra Foothills crushed just 1.8% of the Barbera grown in California in 2018 but we will produce almost 80% of the varietal Barbera offerings that reach the marketplace. It is amazing how in just a few miles this grape can go from a humble blending component to a full flavored deeply pigmented red table wine capable of winning 'Best of Show' Honors at the California State Fair; twice. The hillside vineyards, decomposed granite soils and the cool fall nights provide an ideal environment and one in which Barbera thrives. It is well established that the Sierra Foothills are especially well suited for Zinfandel and perhaps even more so for Barbera.

The 2018 Amador Barbera has a ruby purple color of a moderate depth. The aroma centers on raspberry, cherry and currant fruits, along with a perfumed note of violets and lavender. Aging in small barrels provides a bouquet that frames the aromas with notes of vanilla, nutmeg, and hazelnut. This combination generates a gravitational pull that is hard to resist. Barbera is known for its brightness due to a little extra acid in the grapes similar to a Pippin or Granny Smith apple. This often makes for a zesty, tangy, sometimes zippy flavor. However, our 2018 Barbera has a savory balanced succulence on a soft luscious texture. The red fruit flavors are delivered by a wine with a smooth round feel that transitions seamlessly to an elegant finish with notes of caramel, and gently toasted oak. This is an easy drinking red wine that pairs well with Mediterranean cuisine. Barbera was my father's pizza wine. I can't recall sharing a pie with Dad without a bottle of Barbera close by.

Varietal Composition: 100% Barbera
14.8% Alc., 0.69 g/100ml TA, 3.40 pH

Oak Regime: 47% American Oak, 36% French Oak, 17% Neutral Oak

Released: March 1, 2020

1,779 Cases Produced

Suggested Retail Price: \$26