



PASSIONE DIVINA

2020 RETRO

750 ml

APPELLATION Paso Robles, CA

GRAPES: 43% Cabernet Sauvignon, 36% Petit Verdot, 21% Syrah

Our 2020 Grand Reserve Retro is the second bottling made 100% by Erich Russell from Paso Robles. The 2013 was the first bottling and was created to commemorate 35 years of Erich's winemaking success. The 2013 Retro was labeled in a watercolor copy by Joanne's artist mother and was made from a blend of Petite Sirah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Syrah. The 2020 vintage Retro is made from a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot, and Syrah, and bottled in the Russell's new Passione Divina label.

The new 2020 Retro is very special to the Russells. As Erich states, "this wine is truly a wine of passion in winemaking and grape growing". The grapes all came from the Willow Creek AVA vineyard in Paso Robles. This property was purchased and planted by Erich and Joanne after they were married in 1999. When they bought the property, it was just a cattle grazing hillside with one old farmhouse. Over the next 22 years, they planted their vineyards, olive trees, and remodeled the house.

The grapes in the 2020 Retro were hand selected by Erich. This wine will be the LAST wine produced by the Russells from the Willow Creek District as the vineyard has been sold. It will also be the last wine that Erich was directly, and hands-on, involved in the winemaking. Erich personally did many of the pump-overs of the wine and pumped the wine to barrels for aging. He also did the topping of the barrels until November 2021. Since then it has been taken care of by his assistant in California.

The Syrah was picked on September 10 and cold-soaked until September 22 when it was yeasted by a wild yeast strain from a Paso Robles Vineyard. The Syrah was pressed on October 12 after 32 days on the skins. The Cabernet Sauvignon was picked on September 17, cold-soaked until September 22, and then yeasted with the same strain of yeast. The Cabernet Sauvignon was pressed on October 19 after 32 days on the skins. The Petit Verdot was picked on October 7, cold-soaked until October 15, and then yeasted with the same strain of yeast. The Petit Verdot was pressed on November 2 after 26 days on the skins. After pressing, the wine was pumped to 100% new French Oak barrels where it aged until December 2022.

The wine was bottled on December 9, 2022 by a friend of the Russells at a winery in Lompoc. There were 350 cases bottled. Most of these will be sent to Denmark but they are keeping 84 cases for their society members in the United States.

This wine is truly a retrospective of Erich's 40 years in the cellar and his winemaking style over the years. Erich has always produced big, bold deeply extracted wines. Even when the trend shifted to lighted food-friendly wines, he never lost his style. This wine was produced from grapes that were grown on a vineyard that was also their home. They planted and cared for the grapes, built the winery from scratch from which it was produced, and operated the winery themselves.

The Russells are continuing to make wine with the help of others in California who are under Erich's direction and will continue to do so as long as the quality can be maintained. However, as Erich admits, he has now hit the ripe age of 75 and thinks his barrel filing and pump-over days are behind him. The first wine Erich made was a 1981 Zinfandel from his small vineyard in Healdsburg, and the last wine personally made by Erich is this 2020 Retro. The Retro is even more special to Erich as it was made with Joanne and the grapes they planted together.

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