

Cakebread Cellars



2012 Dancing Bear Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain, Napa Valley

Vineyards

Our Dancing Bear Ranch on the slopes of Howell Mountain in northern Napa Valley ranges in elevation from 1,100 to 1,900 feet and enjoys a near 360 degree exposure, offering a wide range of growing conditions. Planted in shallow, rocky, volcanic soils in 24 separate blocks based on varietal type (cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc), sun exposure, soil profile and clonal selection, the vines are routinely stressed, yielding small crops of intensely flavorful grapes. To ensure the fruit reaches full physiological maturity, we carefully manage the crop on each vine to achieve optimal ripening and flavor development. Observing the process – and sometimes partaking of the goods – are hungry foxes, bears, bobcats and wild turkeys.

Vintage 2012

2012 was a truly spectacular growing season in Napa Valley, with a warm, dry spring fostering early budbreak and trouble-free flowering and grape set. Consistently mild summer weather free of rain or unwelcome heat spikes allowed us to harvest our Dancing Bear grapes at peak maturity with a perfect balance of deeply concentrated fruit flavors, bright acidity and ripe, supple tannins.

Winemaking

Due to the stressed vines and small berries typical of Dancing Bear Ranch – a result of very well-drained soils – our winemaking goal is to fully capture the fruit's intense mountain character while avoiding overly aggressive tannins. Winemaker Julianne Laks carefully monitors tannin levels in the juice and wine during fermentation and maceration. After the component lots of Dancing Bear achieve an optimal balance of fruit intensity and tannin, she drains the free run wines from their skins and ages them in French oak barrels prior to blending in the spring following the vintage. Our 2012 Dancing Bear – a blend of 95% cabernet sauvignon and 5% merlot representing six of the vineyard's distinctive clonal selections – spent a total of 21 months aging in barrels, 54% new, prior to bottling on July 29, 2014.

Tasting Notes

Characteristically dense, perfumed aromas of bright black cherry, blueberry and blackberry fruit, mixed with floral and forest-floor scents, introduce amazingly bright, vibrant and concentrated red and black cherry, plum, spice and dark chocolate flavors framed by round, ripe tannins. Beautifully balanced and structured for long-term aging, this intense, complex mountain cabernet is just beginning to unfold its many splendors and will age beautifully in bottle for at least a decade.

Grape varieties: 95% cabernet sauvignon, 5% merlot
Vineyard: Dancing Bear Ranch, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley
Harvest dates: October 4-13, 2012
Fermentation: 100% in stainless steel tanks
Barrel aging: 21 months in French oak, 54% new

Alcohol: 14.6%
Total acidity: 0.62 g/100 ml
pH: 3.77
Bottled: July 29, 2014
Winemaker: Julianne Laks