

Cakebread Cellars



2011 Dancing Bear Ranch 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 over 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 bear, bobcats, mountain lions and wild turkeys.

Vintage 2011

2011 was a challenging vintage. The year began with a wet winter and spring, followed by atypically cool summer weather and several October rainstorms. Not surprisingly, our Dancing Bear grapes ripened slowly, resulting in a prolonged harvest. To address the situation, we thinned fruit from our vines to ensure full ripening of the remaining clusters and sorted meticulously through the grapes at the winery so that only the best berries were sent to the crusher. This helped achieve our goal of making a typically intense and complex Dancing Bear.

Winemaking

The challenge in crafting Dancing Bear is to fully capture the intense mountain character of the fruit without extracting overly aggressive tannins. Winemaker Julianne Laks' approach is to carefully monitor 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, we drain the free run wines from their skins and age them in French oak barrels. The 2011 vintage spent a total of 19 months in barrels, 46% new, prior to bottling in December, 2013.

Tasting Notes

Our 2011 Dancing Bear Ranch – a blend of 85% cabernet sauvignon, 13% cabernet franc and 2% merlot – presents a characteristically perfumed nose of blackberry compote, dark plum, blueberry and loganberry complemented by sweet oak and forest-floor spice scents. Dense and powerful on the palate, it offers deeply concentrated black fruit flavors that are augmented on the long, savory finish by briary spice, mineral and dark chocolate tones. Boasting great structure and balance, firm, but supple tannins and tremendous reserves of fruit, our 2011 Dancing Bear will age beautifully in bottle for at least a decade.

Grape varieties: 85% cabernet sauvignon, 13% cabernet franc, 2% merlot

Vineyard: Dancing Bear Ranch, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley

Harvest dates: October 15-17, 2011

Fermentation: 100% in stainless steel tanks

Barrel aging: 19 months in French oak, 46% new

Alcohol: 14.2%

Total acidity: 0.60 g/100 ml

pH: 3.71

Bottled: December 2013

Winemaker: Julianne Laks