

FAMILY OWNED SINCE 1927



PEDRONCELLI

The Press Democrat

Wine of the Week: Pedroncelli's '17 Merlot Has Balanced Complexity

By PEG MELNIK, July 22, 2020

With a second round of closings in California, drinking in place is practically our only option. The upside is that wine continues to be the life of the party wherever it's uncorked.

"With social life canceled, I think wine needs to be more approachable," said Montse Reece, winemaker of Geyserville's Pedroncelli Winery. "It needs to fill the void left due to the pandemic with regard to our social habits."

Reece, who believes the socialite in us should thrive even in a pandemic, is behind our wine of the week winner—the Pedroncelli, 2017 Bench Vineyards, Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma County Merlot at \$18. This merlot, which snagged 4.5 stars, over-delivers in a big way. A feminine wine, it's both complex and balanced. It has aromas and flavors of raspberry, plum and vanilla bean. And it makes a lasting impression with its striking black raspberry finish.

As for the Pedroncelli merlot, Reece said her wine has an interesting backstory.

"This merlot comes from our estate ranch in Dry Creek," the winemaker said. "Over the years

we started to select the best rows of vines for the merlot label and from there I fermented the grapes separately and aged the wine in only 30% new American oak barrels to showcase the variety better and the area, Dry Creek Valley."

Making authentic merlot wine that showcases the variety and place is key, Reece said. Extended hang time and excessive oak will mask merlot's true nature.

"Merlot is one of most planted varieties in the world because of its adaptability to grow well in different areas," Reece said. "But it also can become too ge-

neric if treated without tailoring the winemaking to the area where it's grown. Merlot requires a winemaker who knows the place where it's growing and what type of flavors he or she can extract from it."

A native of Catalonia, Spain, Reece grew up in a culture where wine is part of daily life.

"Winemaking is an art, a science and a cultural connection," she said. "I learned to appreciate wine in my Spanish culture. I'm also very fond of microbiology and the chemistry of the winemaking process. Wine has always been part of my life. That's why I chose to be a winemaker."

Reece, 47, studied agricultural engineering with a specialty in oenology at Rovira i Virgili University in Tarragona, Spain. She earned her degree in 1998.

"The style of merlot I'm shooting for is a wine with smooth tannins, balanced acids and one that preserves the spiciness and minerality of the Dry Creek Valley," Reece explained. "I want it to have just enough oak to add some complexity without overpowering it. Merlot has to be a food-friendly wine, above all."

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MONTSE REECE
Winemaker,
Pedroncelli Winery

"Merlot is one of most planted varieties in the world because of its adaptability to grow well in different areas."

2017 Bench Vineyards,
Dry Creek Valley, Sonoma
County Merlot, 14.2% alc.,
★★★½

This merlot over-delivers in a big way. A feminine wine, it's both complex and balanced. Aromas and flavors of raspberry, plum and vanilla bean. And it makes a lasting impression with its black raspberry finish. Striking.



MERLOT | BENCH VINEYARDS
v.2017 SONOMA COUNTY, DRY CREEK VALLEY



PEDRONCELLI WINERY

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