

Cakebread Cellars



2015 Dancing Bear Ranch Cabernet Sauvignon Howell Mountain, Napa Valley

Vineyards

Our Dancing Bear Ranch is a spectacular site on the steep, rugged slopes of Howell Mountain in northeastern Napa Valley. Divided into 24 separate blocks based on varietal type (cabernet sauvignon, merlot and cabernet franc), sun exposure, soil profile and clonal selection, the vineyard is planted in dry, rocky, volcanic soils between 1,100 to 1,900 feet and enjoys a near 360-degree exposure, offering a diverse range of growing conditions. Due to the vineyard's well-drained soils and position high above the fog line – where they receive the full attention of the summer sun – its vines are routinely stressed and yield small crops of intensely flavorful grapes.

Vintage 2015

After abundant harvests from 2012 through 2014, the 2015 growing season experienced more weather extremes that led to a small, yet outstanding, vintage. 2015 was our earliest harvest ever in the 40+ year of Cakebread Cellars history. A warm, dry winter fostered early bud-break, though a cold spell during fruit set limited cluster sizes. A warm summer and late-season heat spikes ensured beautiful ripening.

Winemaking

Our Dancing Bear Cabernet Sauvignon is a perfect example of small-lot, handcrafted winemaking. Given the stressed vines and small berries characteristic of Dancing Bear Ranch – a result of extremely well-drained soils and the rigors of mountain viticulture – we are intent on capturing our fruit's intense mountain character while avoiding overly aggressive tannins. Winemaker Julianne Laks carefully monitors tannin levels in the 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 transfers them to French oak barrels for aging. Our 2015 Dancing Bear – a blend of 92% cabernet sauvignon and 8% cabernet franc incorporating many of the vineyard's distinctive clonal selections – spent a total of 22 months aging in French oak barrels, 62% new, prior to bottling on July 17th, 2017.

Tasting Notes

Bright, high-toned aromas of ripe boysenberry, blackberry and dark cherry fruit are coupled with fascinating floral and forest-floor spice scents in the captivating nose of this wonderfully complex mountain cabernet. Dense and deeply concentrated on the palate, the wine offers intense black fruit flavors that segue into an extremely long, lush, dark-fruit finish laced with invigorating spice and mineral tones. Beautifully structured by big, but supple tannins and fresh acidity, the 2015 Dancing Bear, despite its intensity, displays a charming elegance. Still in its formative years, this mountain jewel will glitter even more brightly with another decade's aging.

Grape varieties: 92% cabernet sauvignon, 8% cabernet franc

Vineyard: Dancing Bear Ranch, Howell Mountain, Napa Valley

Harvest dates: September 12th – 19th, 2015

Fermentation: 100% in stainless steel tanks

Barrel aging: 22 months in French oak 62% new

Alcohol: 14.9%

Total acidity: 0.66g/100 ml

pH: 3.55

Bottled: July 17th, 2017

Winemaker: Julianne Laks