

SHANNON RIDGE



Both natives of California's wine country, Clay and Margarita Shannon met while working at a Napa Valley winery. From there, they went on to build a vineyard management and development company. Their goal was to make really enjoyable wines that tasted like perfectly ripe grapes on the day they were harvested. In the late 1980's, they began working with wine grapes from Lake County and recognized the area's potential to grow great mountain fruit.

Then, in 1995, they purchased a magnificent mountain property in the High Valley appellation in Lake County, about 35 miles north of the Napa county line. At altitudes of 2,100 to 2,400 feet above sea level these steep mountain ridges are cooled by steady winds off Clear Lake and from the higher peaks just north of us. The lean, rocky volcanic soils promised to make the vines produce small berries with concentrated flavors.

Their first vineyard on the ridge was Terre Vermeille. Planted in two phases, they started with Cabernet Sauvignon, Sauvignon Blanc and Zinfandel. Since then, they added Petite Verdot, Barbera, Merlot and Cabernet Franc.

Stretching across these mountain ridges, the vineyards are comprised of well-drained volcanic rock. Each vineyard block was carefully planned to fit the contours of the land and maximize ideal sun exposure. Varietals, rootstocks, clones, vine spacing and row direction were matched to the soil composition and exposures. Because of the jagged characteristics of these mountain slopes, most of the vineyard blocks are small, averaging less than 3 acres each.

Over the ridge from Terre Vermeille, is a steep south facing slope dropping precipitously down toward Clear Lake (on a 38-40 degree pitch). These rocky vertical slopes are reminiscent of the Rhone Valley's famed Crozes-Hermitage vineyards. Fittingly, they have planted Rhone varietals, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Grenache and will continue to experiment with Roussanne, Marsanne and Viognier. These slopes also suit Zinfandel, Petite Sirah and Tempranillo.

MERLOT

REGION: Lake and Mendocino Counties, CA

WINEMAKER: Mike Wood

VARIETAL: 85% Merlot, 9% Cabernet Sauvignon, 6% Barbera

COLOR: Deep garnet

BOUQUET: Blackberry, plum, vanilla, herbs

TASTE: Ripe berries, cherry, violets. Well balanced with a lush mouthfeel

AGEING: 16 months in French and American oak

FOOD PAIRING: Rack of lamb, pork, veal, all red meats and aged cheeses

SERVING TEMP: 68° F (20° C)

