



2014 PERGAMOS

DICK VANDERKOUS

SOLITUDE VINEYARD

This wine is a co-fermentation of Merlot and Sangiovese from a remarkable hillside vineyard in Martinez, high up and overlooking the Carquinez Straights. The vineyard is small but very complex, with at least 7 distinct sections: some of them are very steeply sloping, one of them is the flat at the crown of the hill, the rest are all separate and moderately sloping. All of them have very light, pebbly soil due to marine uplifts from what is now the bay at the foot of the hill. Most of the vines struggle mightily; the steep hillside produces in every year the smallest and most intense berries that we harvest from any vineyard, anywhere.

This was one of our two most successful vintages from this crazy vineyard— and the most extreme of any. 2014 was the third year of the drought, and the whole vineyard is dry-farmed. The steep hillside of Merlot was utterly without ground water during the growing season, and produced about 500 lbs per acre. The “fruit” that we harvested was in fact mostly rachis (the woody stems) by weight, and we made an interesting decision in no way to modify the expression of the vintage. So, as usual, we did not destem and made a wine from the hillside that was more like a tannic black tea than anything ever made from Merlot. We still cofermented the rest of the merlot and the Sangiovese, and, after a little more than a year, blended everything together. We bottled the wine after two years’ maturation. The drought has the most remarkable effect on ripeness: this wine is very intense and concentrated, but is only at 13.59% alcohol.

The winemaking is typical for our red wines: We bring the fruit in, introduce it gradually into 600 liter puncheons turned vertical, with their heads removed. We stomp the fruit moderately as it goes in, with the effect of breaking about half of the berries but leaving the rest intact and on the stems. Then we leave it alone. In a week or so, fermentation starts and a cap forms. Still we leave it alone. We call this the Courier Protocol— an extended floating cap fermentation with a minimum of punchdowns and no pump-overs. After about 3 weeks of fermentation, we drain the wine away, press the remaining pomace very gently, and age the wines for two years in 110 and 220 liter neutral oak barrels.

The wine usually ages without SO₂ and is bottled with 0 free and about 40 mg/L total.

A note on the name: “Pergamos” is the name of the hill on which the ancient city of Troy was built. the Van der Kous household stands alone on top of this noble thill that looks over the water; I could not help but think of Priam and Hector’s hillside city in the [Iliad](#).

TOTAL PRODUCTION:
43 cases