Fratelli Perata
1995 Cabernet Riserva

The warm days and cool nights of Paso Robles, California develop the most pleasing and wonderful Cabernet Sauvignon wines. Temperatures typically vary 40 degrees from the daytime high to the nighttime low. Big fruit flavors are achieved without sacrificing acidity.

Notable in Paso Robles are its soft tannins in Cabernets. This makes the wine more immediately accessible when young, yet still allows aging potential. Early in the region's history, there were concerns that the tannins would not allow the wines to age and they were therefore ordinary. However, UC Davis to the rescue and research, as well as empirical evidence of finally older vintages, has proven the wines develop quite wonderfully with age. In fact, our 1988 vintage is doing very nicely.

Knowing we have this potential, Fratelli Perata prunes its Cabernet very severely for concentrated flavors. There are three hills of Cabernet, each distinctive, producing 1 1/2 to 2 tons per acre. The Riserva is from our best hill of Cabernet, the rockiest,-lowest-producing,-smallest-berry,-the-harvest-crew-hates-to-pick-it-hill. In 1995 it was harvest on October 24th at a Brix of 24.25 and a pH of 3.55. This huge Cabernet yields very little juice per ton of grapes due to the small berry size. We average 2.25 barrels per ton, with less than 2 tons/acre. The Cabernet was crushed and fermented with no stems in 1 1/2 ton lots, the cap being punched down by hand 4 to 5 times per day. This cap is extremely thick and more care is taken to extract every element out of it. Thus the wine was pressed after 13 days on the skins. Gently pressed, it was put in new oak barrels from the Nevers forest of France.

The wine was bottled February, 1998 after 28 months of barrels aging. Bottle aging at this time has allowed to tannins to start to silken, showing a complex of cherry, cinnamon, mushroom and vanilla. It will continue to meld with age and reward the patient drinker. Although it's not too shabby right now with deep, rich foods.