

Tasting Monterey

A WINE ENTHUSIAST'S MONTHLY JOURNEY THROUGH MONTEREY'S WINE COUNTRY

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Viognier FULL-BODIED & AROMATIC



Viognier is an intriguing grape varietal we're seeing more of these days. Similar to Chardonnay, Viognier can produce white wines with complex characteristics, proving that not only red wines can have backbone. Viognier wines are also similar to Chardonnay wines in that they are less acidic than many other white wines produced from varietals such as Sauvignon Blanc or Pinot Gris/Grigio.

Viognier's homeland is considered to be in France, in the Rhône Valley, and it has since stretched across the world, including having significant plantings in places such as California (and specifically in our Central Coast region). However, the origins of the Viognier grape are bit a murky.

Many believe the varietal was actually first grown in what is now the country of Croatia and was introduced to the Rhône by the Romans. One French legend claims that the original vine plantings were meant to be delivered to the Beaujolais region further north, yet the ship navigating the Rhône River was captured on the way by local outlaws near the town of Condrieu. Perhaps nodding credit to the legend, to this day Viognier is the single allowed grape varietal in Rhône appellation of Condrieu, and these wines are considered within France's top tier of wines.

Over the centuries, Viognier became known as one of the Rhône's primary varietals. It's grown throughout other Rhône appellations where it is often blended with Roussanne, Marsanne, and/or Grenache blanc. The varietal's popularity has extended outside of the Rhône and is now grown and produced on a large scale in the French growing region of Languedoc.

The varietal was very nearly lost to the world somewhat recently, with only thirty acres remaining planted in France in the 1960s. And at this time the varietal was not being grown in New World places like California, Washington State, or Australia as it is today. Thankfully, Viognier survived and it is now thriving even in places such as Virginia.



As for the wine made from it, Viognier has the potential to produce full-bodied wines with natural aromatics such as hints of honeysuckle, jasmine, peach, apricot, nectarine, orange blossoms, and pears. Depending on the fruit and style of winemaking, Viognier wines can have strong floral aromas and be reminiscent of Gewürztraminer wines. Or, they can be drier, more acidic, lighter in texture, and have more citrus flavors.

A winemaker's choice of aging in stainless steel or oak can have impacts on wines produced, just as with Chardonnay. If a Viognier wine is made in a stainless-steel tank, peach and apricot flavors are brought out. If it is made in oak barrels, layers of vanilla and spice will be added.

Although Viognier is nice to sip on its own, it's also a very food friendly varietal. Chicken and fish dishes are classic choices to pair with Viognier, but other meats with buttery or cream sauces would be safe bets as well. Viognier is also a great choice to pair with shellfish. But always keep in mind the style of Viognier compared to the food. A

Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

LINE SHACK - 2014 Syrah



In the old West, before the days of ATVs and helicopters, when cowboys still worked cattle on horseback, the term "Line Shack" referred to a small cabin built on the open range where cowboys could take shelter from nature's wrath while working away from their home ranch.

The grapes come from Marin's Vineyard which has a shaley loam topsoil laced with chalk and limestone. We used 3 different clones from the vineyard; Estrella, Syrah Noir and 877. After a 24 hour cold soak, they were fermented to dryness and aged in 2-3 year old French and American Oak for over 9 months. Rich and full flavored, this year's syrah exhibits dark fruit flavors and firm tannins. Aromas of blueberries, cherries and plums combine with black licorice and mocha with full firm tannins.

90% Syrah, 7% Petite Sirah, 3% Viognier

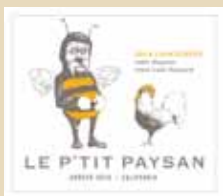
750 Cases Produced

14.9% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2020

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

LE P'TIT PAYSAN - 2015 L'apiculteur Viognier



Le P'tit Paysan did not set out to make these wines. They discovered great vineyards at the edge of sensible farming and decided to bring them to light. The farther they looked, the more they found – remote, challenging vineyards, with hard depleted soils, and intense sunlight tempered only by the coastal breeze. Vineyards capable of producing only the most idiosyncratic wines. Their goal as winemakers is to lightly polish the roughest edges and leave the idiosyncrasy intact. It is here in the back country, filled with individual character, where Le P'tit Paysan comes to life.

Aromas of river stone, guava, quince and lychee, soaring honeysuckle and peach blossom, hints of ripe D'Anjou pear and Honeycrisp apples. Lush and smooth on the palate, with guava and passionfruit flavors underscored by honeydew melon. Fresh and bright acidity offsets the tropical notes. Finishes with mineral, citrus and kefir lime notes, lingering acid and sweet tannins.

100% Viognier

250 Cases Produced

14.4% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

AIENA - 2010 SLH Pinot Noir (Club Red)



Aiena is committed to making high quality burgundy varietal wines from outstanding microclimates in Monterey County. Winemaker Byron Kosuge, also winemaker for Miura and McIntyre, and formerly winemaker of Saintsbury focuses on non-interventionist approaches, relying on low yields, physiologically complete ripeness, repeated hand sorting of fruit, native yeasts, minimal handling and unfiltered bottling. Kosuge works with the growers to optimize wine quality, resulting in lower yields, less irrigation, and more intensive farming practice.

The Aiena 2010 Santa Lucia Highlands is a blend of McIntyre Estate fruit and wine from other nearby vineyards in the Highlands. 2010 was a late vintage but the wines are quite ripe and plush in character, a bit less structured than the 2009 vintage, with rhubarb, tart cherry and plum notes. It was fermented using indigenous yeast and aged in French oak, with a relatively low proportion of new barrels.

As with all Santa Lucia Highlands or other cool-climate Pinot Noirs, it will open up nicely with a simple decanting.

100% Pinot Noir

408 Cases Produced

13.9% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

LINE SHACK - 2014 Viognier (Club Blanc)



Line Shack's fruit is primarily grown in the Southern Monterey County with the focus of our winemaking efforts being the San Antonio Valley AVA. This AVA, which is a 1,200 foot high Mountain Valley in the heart of the Santa Lucia Mountain Range and several miles inland from the Pacific Ocean on the Central Coast of California, is becoming renowned for producing excellent quality warm climate, "Bordeaux and Rhone" grape varieties that produce intense flavored, full bodied red and white wines of exceptional character.

Grower Marin's Vineyard provided the fruit again this year yielding barely 2.5 tons/acre. The grapes were co-fermented in Stainless Steel tanks and aged for 9 months in neutral French Oak barrels. The wine's intensity reflects not only the shy production but the wonderful ripeness and flavor from these soils. Lush and off-dry with exotic flavors of tropical fruits, apricots, wildflowers, spices and peach.

80% Viognier, 20% Roussanne

500 Cases Produced

14.1% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued

lighter style Viognier may be a better selection with lighter food dishes and so forth.

Viognier is also often used as a blending varietal for both white and red wines. Viognier adds aromatics to white Rhône-style blends and is used as a small percentage in Syrah wines to soften tannins. This practice began originally in French Côte-Rôtie wines, but now these wines are made around the world.

Viognier is notoriously difficult to grow, susceptible to winds, prone to disease, and low-yielding. In the winemaking department, it is known to present steep difficulties for winemakers as they try and balance acidity and alcohol levels, both of which can sabotage a wine if not properly controlled. Long story short, Viognier is definitely not a starting varietal for new growers or winemakers.

Although growing and producing Viognier into wine is complicated, most Viognier wines are not meant for aging. There are some late-harvest wines produced from this varietal which can age well, but most of the time when you see Viognier on its own or in blends, the wines are meant to be opened within a few years.

Our own Central Coast has become a natural home to Viognier. The varietal is grown throughout California, but the Central Coast leads the Viognier charge. Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Monterey County are growing and producing outstanding Viognier wines. In order to thrive, the varietal needs a climate which is not too hot, or at least it must have some climatic characteristic which cools down the vines and berries. It should not be surprising then to consider how Monterey County's afternoon winds, especially in summer, are not all that dissimilar from the Rhône's famed Mistral winds.

Bryce Ternet - is a contributing editor and is the author of: "The Stevenson Plan, A Novel of the Monterey Peninsula."



VISITING Varietals



SYRAH

Pronunciation: See-ra

Syrah is a dark-skinned red wine grape. Its origins have been popularly debated, but its modern viticultural home is unquestionably the northern Rhône Valley of eastern France. In Australia, Syrah is overwhelmingly (but not exclusively) known as Shiraz, and is regarded as the country's national grape.

One of the world's most diverse and successful grape varieties, Syrah wines can display myriad dark-fruit flavors. Varietal Syrah can be quite floral in its youth, developing more peppery and herbaceous notes as it ages. Some examples show tanned leather and smoky scents, while the fruit in these wines tends towards the very dark flavors of blackcurrant and licorice.

Syrah is also an extremely useful blending grape due to its deep color and typically high tannins. In the southern Rhône it is common for Syrah to be blended with any combination of Grenache, Mourvedre, Carignan and Cinsault, among others.

Some of the world's most famous Syrah wines are the peppery, earthy reds of the northern Rhône, specifically of the Côte Rôtie, Hermitage and Saint-Joseph appellations. While Hermitage has been held in high regard for many centuries, the "roasted slopes" of Côte Rôtie have emerged as a leading source of Syrah only towards the end of the 20th Century. Across the Atlantic Ocean, 6000 miles (9600km) west of the Rhone, Syrah has a cult following in the western United States, in California, Washington and Oregon. While it has not seen the runaway success enjoyed by Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel, nor the feverish worship of Pinot Noir, a dedicated band of American winemakers has been devotedly working with Syrah since the 1970s. Known as the Rhone Rangers, these men and women have proven that the variety can produce complex, rich wines in all three of the above states.

RECIPE

Grilled Pork Tenderloin with Corn on the Cob

Ingredients

For the pork and corn:

- 1 tablespoon paprika
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 teaspoon packed light brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 small pork tenderloins
- 4 ears corn, husked

For the sauce:

- 3/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt



Directions

Make the pork: Combine the paprika, 2 teaspoons salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, the brown sugar, cumin, mustard powder, onion powder and garlic powder in a bowl. Rub the olive oil all over the pork, then coat with the spice rub. Wrap each tenderloin tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate 3 to 6 hours.

Make the sauce: Combine the vinegar, 1/2 cup water, the brown sugar, ketchup, red pepper flakes and 1 teaspoon salt in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a simmer, stirring until the sugar dissolves; remove from the heat.

Remove the pork from the refrigerator about 30 minutes before grilling. Preheat a grill to medium high. Cook the pork, turning occasionally, until a thermometer inserted into the thickest part registers 140 degrees F to 145 degrees F, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, brush the corn with olive oil; grill, turning, until marked, about 5 minutes. Slice the pork and drizzle with the sauce. Serve with the corn.

CHEESE

Varietals



BEAUFORT

Pronunciation: Bew-fort

Beaufort was already known in the time of the Romans and is named after a small rural town in the French Alps. Beaufort cheeses come in three versions, Beaufort, Beaufort d'été (summer Beaufort) and Beaufort d'Alpage (in the Alps mountains). The latest is made with milk from Tarine (or Tarentaise) cows. They live in the mountains and graze exclusively on natural pastures. It is said that tasters can feel the grass and flowers of the mountain when eating a piece of Beaufort!

Beaufort making: It takes about 500 litres (130 gallons) of milk to make a Beaufort of 45 kg (99 lb). Beaufort needs to age between 4 to 6 months or even more, in a mountain cellar that maintain a cool temperature throughout the year.

Tasting Beaufort: Beaufort is a giant cheese. A whole wheel weighs over 36 kg (80 lb) but more generally 45 kg (99lb). Beaufort is richer and creamier than other mountain cheeses such as Gruyere, Comté or Emmental. Beaufort has a nice scent of milk, butter and honey. The supple paste has flowery and herbs aromas.

Tasting advice: The best way to serve Beaufort is with smoked salmon. A good substitute to crackers would be Beaufort cheese cut in small squares. Like Gruyere, Beaufort melts well and is a very good choice for a cheese fondue or a hot sandwich

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