

Tasting Monterey

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

STORE HOURS



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Falanghina

An Ancient Varietal Revisited



Ever heard of the wine grape varietal Falanghina? Honestly, neither had I before I began researching for this article. I've heard of Falernian wine, which is related to the varietal, but we'll get to that later. And I'm very familiar with Monterey County's dynamic Wrath winery, which has graced us with a new form of this ancient varietal, but we'll also get to that later. For now, let's start with the ancient varietal part.

Falanghina is an Italian white wine varietal native to the coast of Campania, north of Naples. In southern Italy, it's frequently paired with seafood. Although it's been common in Italy since antiquity, it was only approved as a recognized varietal by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and

Trade Bureau for use in the United States in 2014. So unless you are particularly well-versed in Italian varietals, don't feel wine-ignorant on this one.

As for modern wines produced with the varietal, they are well-rounded and juicy with peach and tropical fruit characteristics. They often then have a crisp lemon zest finish. Sound intriguing? It is. This is not your average white wine. Familiar aromas from Falanghina wines include ripe peach, mango, and yellow plum, underlain by a subtle mineral element. The full mouth-feel will have juicy pit and tropical fruit flavors punctuated with that burst of lemon finish. Traditionally, these wines are aged in stainless steel which substitutes for the earthenware winemaking vessels the Romans would have used; so don't expect any oak in these wines.

A fruity, yet not sweet, white wine with a zesty finish...sounds not all that dissimilar from wines made with the Albariño varietal to me. And, like with that Spanish varietal, food pairings are varied and wide based on the flexibility and liveliness of the wine. Spicy food, such as Thai or Indian, would be great to pair with Falanghina wines as the wine will tame that raging spice. The southern Italians, and one can assume the Romans, seemed to have figured out long ago that Falanghina wines are perfect to accompany shellfish and seafood in general. As we're still in grilling season, this is an excellent patio wine to pair with grilled fish. Our last food recommendation would be to pair with fresh salads or vegetable creations. The touch of fruitiness should be delightful with the vegetables.

Now to that Roman connection. Falernian wine was produced from the slopes of Mt. Flernus, near the border of the Latium and Campania regions. It was the most renowned wine in ancient Rome and was highly sought after. One could even call it an ancient "cult wine." The wine was produced primarily from two varietals: Aglianico and Falanghina. Falernian was a white wine high in alcohol content and was amber to brownish in color because of oxidation which occurred during its aging process. This was one of the first wines to be exported outside of Italy to other realms of the Roman Empire. As with the empire's decline of influence after its fall, so did the popularity of Falernian wine.

Thankfully, pioneering wineries today, such as Monterey County's own Wrath, occasionally surprise everyone by producing wines which keep even the most educated vinophiles on their toes. And Wrath has an interesting story as well.

In 2007, the Thomas family bought San Saba Vineyards. From the start, the new owners set out to change



Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

DISTRICT 7 - 2014 Pinot Noir



Of all grape varieties, Pinot Noir is the most sensitive to its terroir. District 7 works hard each vintage to get it right in the vineyard so that when the grapes are harvested and arrive at the winery, they can step aside and allow the fruit to speak for itself. The cool temperatures of District 7 present ideal growing conditions for Pinot Noir. Each afternoon, the reliable winds from the Monterey Bay come howling down the valley, keeping the estate vineyards at a moderate temperature. The delicate Pinot Noir grapes were picked at optimum ripeness. Upon arrival at the winery, the grapes were destemmed, crushed and fermented in open top fermenters. Over the next 2 – 3 weeks, the firm cap of skins and seeds that bubbled up and formed on the surface during red fermentation was punched down. The wine was carefully aged in a combination of new and neutral oak, to craft a lush, elegant wine with bright fruit aromas and vivid flavors.

Flavors of black cherry and strawberry are complemented by a touch of vanilla and toast that linger in a long, silky finish. An elegant, balanced offering that is the ultimate food wine. Try it with grilled salmon, roast duck, pork tenderloin or soft ripened cheeses.

100% Pinot Noir

7,5200 Cases Produced

13.9% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2020

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

WRATH - 2014 Ex Anima Falanghina



Wrath represents a nexus of nature and an unbridled passion for winemaking. They produce site-driven Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Syrah, and Sauvignon Blanc from their estate vineyard and respected properties in the Santa Lucia Highlands. Their production is small, distribution is limited and the wines reveal attitude, passion, and an inherent respect for what a vineyard can give them. Their Estate San Saba Vineyard is set in a sheltered nook just below the Santa Lucia Highlands AVA. The estate consists of 72 acres of which 67.75 are planted to Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Syrah and Falanghina. This is a cool site with little rainfall and one of the longest growing seasons in the world. The soils, Arroyo Gravelly Loam and Hanford Gravelly Sandy Loam, provide a low-vigor, well-draining, disease- and pest-free medium for the vines. They also impart a subtle mineral quality to their wines.

Wrath's 2014 Ex Anima Falanghina comes from the two rows of this ancient Campanian grape planted on their estate vineyard. It is fermented and aged for 6 months in a combination of neutral oak levels. The resulting wine is bright and direct with a pronounced perfume of flowers and citrus. In the glass, there is a lively acidity and compelling combination of fruit and minerality to balance against grilled seafood, fresh cheeses and shellfish.

100% Falanghina

80 Cases Produced

14.1% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2018

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

COASTVIEW - 2010 Granite Terrace Syrah (Club Red)



Located at over 2,200 feet in the Gabilan Mountains with a commanding view of the Salinas Valley and Monterey Bay. Coastview sources their grapes from this exceptional vineyard planted on decomposed granite and veins of limestone. In many respects including soils and elevation, this vineyard is nearly identical to those of Calera's famous Mt. Harlan vineyards just a few miles to the North. Owner John Allen farms the vineyard organically and follows Coastview's direction with respect to keeping yields down and managing the canopy for the highest quality.

This classic Rhone varietal is a deep garnet red. The nose offers herbal notes and strong aromas of cedar, graphite and hard spice box elements. The palate is a voluptuous blending of the ripe fruits of each of these varietals. It promises to be the perfect pairing for a special dinner featuring prime rib.

100% Syrah

165 Cases Produced

13.9% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

DISTRICT 7 - 2013 Chardonnay (Club Blanc)



District 7's cool climate estate vineyards, located just outside of the town of Greenfield, are blessed with a climate that is perfect for growing top quality Chardonnay. With morning fogs that often linger until mid-day, the intricate fruit flavors have time to develop while preserving crucial acidity. These just-right conditions place Monterey on par with the best growing regions of the world.

Each vintage, District 7 strives to craft a Chardonnay that strikes a perfect balance between rich and refreshing. Through the judicious use of oak, they seek to complement, not detract from, the gorgeous tropical fruit flavors that are the hallmark of District 7. The 2013 vintage has aromas of tropical fruit and butterscotch that lead into a lively blend of pear, pineapple and citrus flavors. It is a versatile wine with food, pairing particularly well with grilled seafood, roast chicken, or your favorite salad.

100% Chardonnay

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued

the culture of the wine and viticulture of the winery. A goal of Wrath is to create wines that express the pure flavors of varietals and vineyards. They started with replanting large sections of their estate vineyard, San Saba Vineyard, with Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Syrah. Wrath sources the fruit for their wines from their own estate vineyard and from a select few other elite county vineyards, such as Doctor's, McIntyre, Tondre, and Boekennoogen.



Wrath has an inviting tasting room in Carmel-by-the-Sea and is a team of owner Michael Thomas, winemaker Sabrina Rodems, consultant Byron Kosuge, and grower Steve McIntyre. Sabrina has an interesting story of her own.

Born in northern California, the wine world is a second career track for her. After years dabbling in other professions, she started as an intern with Gloria Ferrer Winery before joining San Saba Vineyards in 2004. Now the full-time winemaker for Wrath, she's also started her own label called "Scratch." Sabrina's view on winemaking is: "Let the wine tell you what to do, don't try to tell the wine what to do." We're certainly glad to have a winemaker with the skill and focus on quality as Sabrina in Monterey County.

The Wrath Ex Anima Falanghina included in our club selection this month is a shining example of how our top notch growers and winemakers in Monterey County can produce new wines from different, and perhaps obscure, varietals. We're proud to have pioneering wineries in our county producing intriguing wines such as the Wrath Falanghina.

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

RECIPE

Lentil Fritter Pitas with Red Cabbage

Ingredients

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 2 15-ounce cans | lentils, rinsed |
| 1/2 cup | fresh cilantro leaves, plus more for serving |
| 1/2 cup | fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves |
| 1 clove | garlic, finely chopped |
| 1/2 teaspoon | ground cumin |
| 1/2 cup | bread crumbs |
| | kosher salt and black pepper |
| 1/4 head | red cabbage, shredded (about 1 1/2 cups) |
| 2 tablespoons | fresh lemon juice |
| 3 tablespoons | olive oil |
| 1/2 cup | low-fat Greek yogurt |
| 1/4 teaspoon | crushed red pepper, plus more for serving |
| 4 | pocketless pitas, warmed |

Directions

In a food processor, puree 1 can of the lentils with the cilantro, parsley, garlic, and cumin until nearly smooth. Transfer to a bowl and mix in the bread crumbs, the remaining can of lentils, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Form into sixteen 1/2-inch-thick patties.

In a large bowl, using a wooden spoon, lightly mash the cabbage with the lemon juice, 1 tablespoon of the oil, and 1/4 teaspoon each salt and black pepper; set aside. In a small bowl, stir together the yogurt, crushed red pepper, and 1/4 cup water.

Heat 1 tablespoon of the remaining oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Working in 2 batches, cook the patties until browned, 3 to 4 minutes per side, adding the remaining tablespoon of oil to the skillet for the second batch.

Dividing evenly, top each pita with the patties, cabbage mixture, yogurt sauce, and the additional cilantro and crushed red pepper.

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.



VISITING Varietals



CINSAUT

Pronunciation: San-soh

Cinsaut (or Cinsault) is most often used as a blending grape with other types. France has more Cinsaut planted (50,000 hectares) than Cabernet Sauvignon and there is as much Cinsaut acreage planted in its former backdoor wine colony of Algeria.

Cinsaut is one of those "grower" varieties that easily produces a very large crop of 6 to 10 tons per acre. At this crop level, it offers little sensory interest and imperceptible flavor distinction. So much cinsaut is overcropped and used as "filler" that it is difficult for many wine critics to issue it any respect. When properly managed to a crop load of just 2 to 4 tons per acre, it can produce quite flavorful wines with penetrating aroma and soft tannins, easily quaffable in their youth.

The tight bunches rot easily, so it does best in drier climates. The cinsaut vine is fairly drought tolerant and has a fairly short growing season. With cluster stems that easily detach from the vine, cinsaut adapts well to machine harvesting. Large, black, thin-skinned, fleshy berries make cinsaut also attractive as eating grapes.

First imported to California in the 1860s, it was known as Black Malvoise and, blended with Zinfandel, labeled "Claret". Somehow surviving past Prohibition, it was made as wine into the 1960s, sometimes labeled Malvasia Nero. Acreage peaked in 1971 to a total of 810 statewide, but current surveys count less than 150.

Wine made from cinsaut grapes can be very aromatic with a vaporous perfume that assails the nostrils and supple texture that soothes the palate. Fairly low in tannin, it is often made into rosé by itself or blended, to brighten the fruit and tone down the harsher edges of carignan, in particular. Although officially sanctioned in Châteauneuf du Pape, it is used by only a few producers in their blends..

CHEESE

Varietals



IDIAZABAL

Pronunciation: ee-dee-ah-ZAH-bahl

Idiazabal is an unpasteurized sheep milk cheese from the Basque and Navarre regions in Northern Spain. The cheese has a firm texture, with very few tiny holes or no holes at all. The cheese is aged at least 60 days. Eaten fresh, it has a nutty, buttery flavor. Aged Idiazabal is harder and is suitable for grating.

Idiazabal comes in both smoked and non-smoked varieties. The smoked cheeses are usually drier and have a stronger, sometimes saltier taste. The rind on smoked cheese is often dark brown. Unsmoked Idiazabal has a yellow rind. The rind is hard and inedible.

The name Idiazabal is protected in Europe. The cheese can only be made in the towns of Aralar, Entzia, Gorbea, Orduna, Urbasa, and Urbia. The milk must be whole milk, with at least 6% milkfat, from the lacha (or latxa) breed of sheep. The carranzana breed may also be used.

The wheels are turned often during the curing of the cheese, and the rinds are brushed with oil. Smoked varieties are smoked near the end of curing, and may be smoked with the wood of beech tree, birch tree, cherry tree, or hawthorne.

Idiazabal is made only on small farms, by many different farmers. It has been a staple of sheepherders whose sheep graze the Pyrenees for many generations.
















Idiazabal should be stored in your refrigerator in foil or wax paper, so it can breathe.

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