

Tasting Monterey

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

STORE HOURS



A Taste of Monterey
Cannery Row
Sun-Thu 11am-7pm*
Fri-Sat 11am-8pm*

Food service begins at
11:30am daily

*No new member tastings
after 6pm

NOVEMBER REFERRALS



Refer a friend to the
Monterey Wine Club, and
after they join, you get a
\$20.00 Gift Card!



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Albariño & PIERCE RANCH VINEYARDS

Albariño is a white varietal most often associated with Spanish wines. The majority of the world's Albariño grapes are grown in Spain and made into Spanish wines as either varietal wines or white blends. But the varietal is not limited to Spain. It's grown prolifically in Portugal, and is growing in popularity in new world growing regions such as Australia and California. Of course, as our talented growers and winemakers in Monterey County are consistently on the cutting edge of wine trends, we have Albariño grapes and wine to showcase, such as the Pierce Ranch Vineyards Albariño.

An interesting historical fact concerning Albariño is that although it has become adopted as being a native Iberian Peninsula varietal, its actual origin was somewhere far more north in Europe. The grape's name itself reveals this history – Alba-Rino actually means "white wine from the Rhine," as in the Rhine River, as in the river dividing Germany and northeast France. It's believed that the grape was brought from the Alsace region of France to Iberia by monks, sometime in the middle ages.

Regardless of origin or where the grape is grown now, Albariño wines will always share common characteristics. Unlike many other varietals, Albariño seems to be one that doesn't greatly change depending on terroir characteristics where it is grown as long as favorable growing conditions exist. The grape is noted for its distinctive botanical aroma, similar to Riesling, Viognier, and Gewürztraminer. (In the past Albariño was believed to be a clone of Riesling, but it is in fact an older varietal by a couple of centuries.)

Wine produced from Albariño is usually light, high in acidity, and will have lower alcohol levels. Mostly made in stainless steel tanks without oak, Albariño has crisp flavors that suggest grapefruit and other citrus fruits, with a light mineral edge. Albariño wines will tend to have a lightness and crispness combined with aromatics of ripe fruits.

Albariño wines pair well with a wide range of foods. The juiciness of Albariño wines tend to cool down spicy foods, while the wine's lighter weight and body pair excellently with shellfish and grilled fish. The freshness of the wine is also an excellent pair with grilled vegetables and poultry. We've said in the past that Gewürztraminer is a surprisingly excellent Thanksgiving wine option to consider. It should come as no surprise then that our recommendation to consider opening a bottle of Albariño for the annual feast is just as strong.

As for growing Albariño, the grape tends to thrive best in hot growing regions. It's not viewed as a particularly difficult varietal to grow and is actually often allowed to purposefully over-cluster to temper sugar content in grapes, and thus later result in lower alcohol level wines.

One of our Monterey County champions of Albariño is Pierce Ranch Vineyards.



Pierce is a relatively new player in the Monterey County wine scene. Specializing in Spanish and Portuguese varietals, and representing one of our newer and less known AVAs – the San Antonio Valley appellation – in a short time this winery has made its presence very well known.

The winery has vineyards in southernmost Monterey County on the border with San Luis Obispo County and the wine-growing

Continued Inside

MONTHLY WINE SELECTIONS

CRAFTWORK - 2014 Pinot Noir



Following a picture-perfect 2013 growing season, the 2014 vintage was another beaut. Spring came early and lasted long. In the summer, cool nights led into overcast mornings that were followed by breezy, warm afternoons. These temperate conditions and ideal temperatures made the 2014 growing season an excellent one for even ripening and good flavor development.

The delicate Pinot Noir grapes were picked by hand at optimum ripeness. Upon arrival at the winery, they were destemmed, but not crushed, into small fermentation bins and allowed to cold soak at 50°F for 2 – 3 days to help stabilize color and enhance flavor. The juice was then fermented in open-top fermenters and punched down 3 times a day at the height of fermentation, and held on the skins for 2 – 3 weeks before pressing. The wine was carefully aged with a combination of new and neutral oak to craft a lush, elegant wine with bright fruit and vivid flavors.

An elegant and stylish wine, with aromas of strawberries and vivid red fruit flavors balanced with subtle spice and a delicate mineral note. The Craftwork Pinot Noir is a graceful and balanced offering that is the ultimate food wine. It pairs beautifully with grilled salmon, roast duck, pork tenderloin or soft-ripened cheeses.

100% Pinot Noir

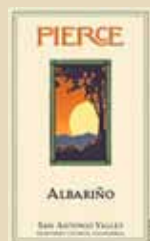
4,000 Cases Produced

13.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2018

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

PIERCE RANCH VINEYARDS- 2015 Albariño



Pierce Ranch Vineyards is a small, family-owned operation centered in southern Monterey County's San Antonio Valley appellation. They produce limited-run, estate-grown wines with an emphasis on Spanish and Portuguese varieties.

The 2015 Albariño is the product of Pierce Ranch's vineyards in the San Antonio Valley, a recently declared appellation at the southernmost tip of Monterey County. Grown in a mix of calcareous rock, broken shale, decomposed granite, and clay, the 2015 vintage provides a clear expression not only of varietal character but also of their vineyards' own unique terroir. Produced on a limited scale, it was fermented at low temperatures in stainless steel and aged in a combination of stainless steel and neutral oak. With the rich aromatics, crisp acidity, and minerality that are the signature of the variety, it features notes of apple, pear, peach, and citrus.

100% Albariño

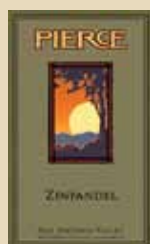
264 Cases Produced

12.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2017

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

PIERCE RANCH VINEYARDS - 2013 Zinfandel (Club Red)



At an elevation of 1000 feet, Pierce Ranch Vineyards is situated in the alluvial basin overlooking Lake San Antonio where they reap the benefits of the warm daytime temperatures. In this warmer climate, fruit is able to ripen consistently and reach full maturity with an ease rarely seen elsewhere in Monterey County.

Located at the warmer southernmost tip of Monterey County, the San Antonio Valley with its rocky soils, high elevation, and wide variation in diurnal temperature provides excellent growing conditions for their one-acre block of heritage clone Zinfandel. Rooted on the slopes of their Y Ranch vineyard in a mix of calcareous rock, broken shale, and decomposed granite, their 2013 vintage is a substantial yet nuanced presentation of the variety. Produced on a limited scale, it was fermented in small lots and aged in French and American oak for 18 months. Berry compote, red cherry, and black plum combine with an herbal element and traces of spice.

100% Zinfandel

144 Cases Produced

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2020

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

CRAFTWORK - 2014 Chardonnay (Club Blanc)



Not to be outdone by the 2013 growing season, the 2014 vintage was another stunner. Spring came early and lasted long. In the summer, cool nights led into overcast mornings that were followed by breezy, warm afternoons. These temperate conditions and ideal temperatures made the 2014 growing season an excellent one for even ripening and good flavor development.

Craftwork'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, which is why they take great pride in producing our Craftwork Chardonnay. A combination of right location and traditional winemaking allows them to craft a graceful and expressive wine that delivers classic Chardonnay flavors, complexity, and a creamy texture.

Aromas of pineapple and pear are followed by a lively blend of tropical fruit and citrus flavors. Striking the perfect balance of a rich, creamy palate with firm acidity, it is a versatile wine that pairs particularly well with grilled seafood, roast chicken, pasta in cream sauce, and shrimp scampi.

100% Chardonnay

2,500 Cases Produced

14.5% Alcohol

Cellar Through 2018

Comments: _____ ◇ Great ◇ Good ◇ So-So

Cover Article Continued



region of Paso Robles. Wines from this area of our County tend to be intensely flavored and complex, and at times share more in common with wines produced from the aforementioned region to the south.

Pierce's winery and vineyards are located at an elevation of approximately 1,000 feet overlooking Lake San Antonio. Their vineyards are planted on light rolling hills divided into three vineyards, each with distinct characteristics: the Home Ranch, the "Y" Ranch, and the Eastern Bloc vineyards. Pierce's goal is to only plant varietals in terroir conditions of their vineyards which will result in the best varietal representations in their wines.

Along with Albariño, other Spanish and Portuguese varietals Pierce grows and makes into wine include Tempranillo, Touriga, and Tinto Cao. In addition to these varietals, which are still rare not only for Monterey County, but for California as well, Pierce grows and produces wines with Cabernet Sauvignon, Petite Sirah, Zinfandel, Syrah, and Grenache. Pierce makes varietal wines and traditional blend wines, including a port-style dessert wine.

Pierce strives to produce approachable, fruit-forward wines that provide a robust yet elegant expression of both varietals and the region, contributing to the landscape of viticulture and winemaking in Monterey County. Although their winery is a bit out of the way for most, Pierce has a tasting room open to the public in Monterey. We're very glad to have Pierce Ranch Vineyards on our exceptional team of Monterey County wineries and look forward to tasting all of this winery's future sure-to-be interesting wines.

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



Visiting Varietals



ZINFANDEL

Pronunciation: Zin-Fan-DELL

Zinfandel truly is California's unique contribution to the world of wine. Unlike ubiquitous Cabernet and Chardonnay there is no European yardstick to compare itself against. It has had to find its own way, its history modeling that of the settlers who first brought it to America's west coast. But the story of where the grape originally came from and how it got its name has for many years been a matter of considerable debate and exhaustive study.

Historians discovered that the grape was first brought to Long Island, New York by George Gibbs who had brought cuttings back from the Imperial collection of plant species in Vienna. In 1832 it was advertised for sale in Boston as "Zinfandal" and by 1845 it had become popular as a table grape, grown under glass, throughout northeast America.

The grape went west at the time of the Gold Rush. It adapted well to the hotter climate and most importantly could be grown without the need for sticks or wire, both of which were in short supply and it produced an abundant crop for thirsty miners. It's hard to make a bad wine from Zinfandel, which is probably how it survived the prohibition years as it was the grape of choice for home winemakers!

The primary flavors of Zinfandel are jam, blueberry, black pepper, cherry, plum, boysenberry, cranberry, and licorice. When you taste Zinfandel it often explodes with candied fruitiness followed by spice and often a tobacco-like smoky finish.

RECIPE

Hot Crab and Corn Dip

Ingredients

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 2 tablespoons | unsalted butter, at room temperature |
| 1 small | shallot, chopped |
| 2 cups | frozen fire-roasted corn, thawed |
| 1 | red jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped |
| 2 tablespoons | sherry or dry white wine |
| | salt and freshly ground pepper |
| 8 ounces | lump crabmeat, picked through |
| 1 1/2 cups | grated monterey jack cheese (about 6 ounces) |
| 3/4 cup | sour cream |
| 1 cup | crushed butter crackers (such as Ritz; about 20 crackers) |
| 1/4 cup | grated sharp white cheddar cheese |
| 2 tablespoons | finely chopped fresh chives |
| 1 teaspoon | Old Bay Seasoning |



Directions

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the shallot and cook until softened, about 1 minute. Add the corn and jalapeno; cook, stirring, until softened, about 3 minutes. Add the sherry and cook, stirring, until evaporated, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Transfer the corn mixture to a large bowl and add the crabmeat. Stir in the monterey jack, sour cream and 1/2 cup crushed crackers. Transfer to a 1-quart baking dish.

Combine the remaining 1/2 cup crushed crackers with the cheddar, chives and Old Bay in a medium bowl. Work the remaining 1 tablespoon butter into the crumb mixture with your fingers until combined. Sprinkle the crumb topping over the crab mixture. Bake until golden brown and heated through, about 20 minutes.

Serve with butter crackers or sliced baguette.

CHEESE

Varietals



MONTEREY JACK

Monterey Jack earns the rightful position as a true "American" cheese since it originated in the Mexican Franciscan friars of Monterey, California. Around the 1700s, these monasteries around the Monterey region were making a semi-firm, creamy, mild flavoured cheese from cow's milk which they aged for a little period. An American entrepreneur named David Jack realized its commercial value and started selling it all over California. The cheese came to be known as "Monterey Jack's" or "Jack's Monterey," eventually acquiring the name Monterey Jack.

The cheese is commonly used in Mexican and Spanish cuisine as its mild in flavor and melts really well. It's akin in taste and texture to Colby and Cheddar. Variants of Monterey Jack known as Dry Jack (aged version) and Pepper Jack (pepper spiced) are also quite popular. Monterey Jack is available across all grocery stores and supermarkets in the United States. Consider Pinot Noir and Riesling with Jack cheese.


















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	Craftwork 2014 Pinot Noir	\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
	Pierce 2015 Albariño	\$18.00	\$13.50	\$14.40
	Pierce 2013 Zinfandel	\$22.00	\$16.50	\$17.60
	Craftwork 2014 Chardonnay	\$20.00	\$15.00	\$16.00
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