2019 Napa Valley Ribolla Gialla, Matthiasson Vineyard

Ribolla Gialla originates in the Friuli region of Italy and across the border in Slovenia. An ancient grape variety, its earliest known mention was by the Pope in 1296. Ribolla Gialla makes an unparalleled food wine, filling the gap in food pairing between white wines and red wines—it can be amazing with pork and stewed pome fruit, fatty raw seafood, cured meats, and intense cheeses. We have been making "orange wine" from this fruit since 2008, fermenting the wine whole cluster, with the skins and stems, until dryness.

The wine is 100 percent Ribolla gialla from our home vineyard.

The wine was fermented whole cluster with native yeast in an open-top tank using punchdowns. After two weeks the must was pressed, and the wine was aged for 18 months in neutral barrels. The wine aged sur lees and it was never racked. No SO2 was used until a tiny amount at bottling.

The alcohol is 13.0%, the pH is 3.9 and the TA is 5.35. 253 cases produced.

The Ribolla gialla tastes like hazelnuts, baking spices, meyer lemon curd, Bartlett pear, but most of all it has a stony minerality that is incredibly distinctive. There is supple tannic structure and fresh balanced acidity, with great weight and length given the moderate alcohol.

The Vineyard

The Ribolla gialla represents seven rows in our home ("Matthiasson") vineyard in the Western Oak Knoll area of Napa Valley. It was grafted onto 15 year old Merlot vines. George Vare was given a few sticks of the budwood from Josko Gravner in 2001 and grafted it into his own vineyard, which Steve was managing. Steve (and then Jill) fell in love with the variety in the process, and immediately grafted the variety into their own vineyard when they purchased it in 2006. Farmed using only organic methods, with fruit trees at the ends of the rows, the vines are serenaded throughout the season by kids, coyotes, owls, bees, and the occasional roar of one of our old tractors.