

# Matthiasson Wines: Organic Wine Growing At Its Best

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Steve Matthiasson's passion for wine began in 1995 when he was an agricultural consultant for grape, almond, and peach growers. His specialty, organic farming, brought him into the wine business through a different route. With organic agriculture engrained in his psyche, Steve wanted more. He wanted his own vineyard and established his **Matthiasson Wines** as a niche in organic wine growing because Steve feels winemaking is an extension of farming.

Working in the central valley for seven years, Steve and Jill Matthiasson made wine on the side from their client's grapes. From their experience in sustainable agriculture, the local food movement, and Jill's work with non-profits, they established their winery in 2003. They were able to purchase their first vineyard in 2006. They are now in their 27th harvest.

If asked today, Steve and Jill describe themselves as home winemakers, organic farmers in agriculture with a goal to reduce pesticides. They are farmers first.

Steve is a science-based person whose goals are to reduce the carbon footprint and create healthy soil and a hospitable workplace.





Steve Matthiasson. Photo Courtesy of Matthiasson Wines



## Organic Wine Growing

Steve was very influential in 1999 with writing the grant for sustainable viticulture. In fact, the Lodi Rules came from some of his consultations in the area.

In the vineyards, the grapes' hang time is shorter, and irrigation is minimal. The grapes are typically picked early. Vineyard management means they touch the vine at least 25 times from bud to harvest.

As plant nerds, they grow many unusual varieties, including Ribolla Gialla, Refosco, Schioppettino, Tokai Friulano, Vermentino, and Aglianico to name a few.

Steve still consults for many well-known wineries in the area



Organic Wine Growing Vine Management. Photo Courtesy of Matthiasson Wines



## Steve Matthiasson on Sustainability

For Steve, sustainability is an ongoing process, with changes occurring along the way. The goal is to work toward a specific outcome, which is achieved in different ways. One has to remember that in the 1990s, sustainability had different goals. Sustainability in the workplace and reduction of the carbon footprint came later. Today, sustainable farming practices may need to adapt due to the drought.



In The Vineyard. Photo Courtesy of Matthiasson Wines



## Organic Wine Growing And Winemaking

Matthiasson Vineyard is certified organic. Many of the vineyards that Steve oversees and sources fruit from are **Certified Organic** and others are in transition to organic certification.

### Matthiasson Label

The Matthiasson label creatively displays pruning shears in an abstract way. The pruning shear represents viticulture and the craft of grape growing, which is what Matthiasson wines are all about.



Matthiasson Wines



## Matthiasson Wines

2020 Matthiasson Napa Valley Chardonnay, Linda Visit Vineyard: This Chardonnay represents Matthiasson's flagship white wine. The grapes come from older vines, originally planted by Beringer in 1989 in the West Oak Knoll area. This area is known for its cool winds and clay soils. Harvesting occurs at different times during the ripening period. This method of harvesting brings out the acidity and minerality and also maintains the richness of the wine. The grapes are pressed whole-cluster and ferment and age in neutral French oak barrels. A portion of the barrels goes through malo-lactic fermentation.

I found a crisp, bright and refreshing Chardonnay that bursts forward with wonderful apple aromas and flavors.

2019 Matthiasson Napa Valley Ribolla Gialla: Ribolla Gialla is an ancient variety that originates in the Friuli region of Italy and also in Slovenia. This wine is created like an orange wine by fermenting whole cluster with the skins and stems. The wine aged 18 months in neutral Oak.

On the nose, I found aromas of hazelnuts that give way to very earthy flavors with hints of hazelnuts and pear and nice minerality.

2018 Matthiasson Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon: In addition to the Cabernet Sauvignon, there is a tiny portion of Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot added to the mix. The Cabernet comes from six vineyards throughout Napa Valley, including three AVAs. Coombsville adds structure and black fruit, Rutherford adds savory character and bright fruit, and the Oak Knoll gives the wine its soft fruit qualities.

Steve hopes to emulate Mondavi and the old-style wines with this Cabernet Sauvignon. The wine has weight but not heaviness. The wine aged 20 months in a blend of mainly used French Oak and a smattering of new barrels.

I discovered an elegant Cabernet Sauvignon with softer tannins and the epitome of Napa Valley character.



## Visiting Matthiasson

The tasting room is located in the south part of the Oak Knoll district in the vineyard. Tastings are by appointment only.

Placing organic wine growing as the pivotal marker of achieving purity and consistency of wine is the focal point of Matthiasson Wines.

Note: Common to the wine industry, this writer received hosted wine samples. While it has not influenced this review, the writer believes in full disclosure.