



2006 Napa Valley White Wine

MATTHIAS
SON

This wine is a new-world conception of a mythical old-world wine...a California wine with a spiritual connection to Friuli, Italy.

The wine is a blend of Sauvignon blanc, Ribolla gialla, Tocai Friulano, and Semillon. The Sauvignon blanc grapes were picked very early, preserving their fresh citrusy acidity. The Ribolla gialla was picked mid-season to best express the varietal. It brings a unique minerality and structure to the blend. The Tocai friulano vines are from a very old field selection, and their slow ripening demanded that the fruit be picked very late. The deep spicy fruit adds a layer of fascinating top notes. The Semillon provides weight and depth.

The fruit was whole-cluster-pressed with low pressure and minimal rolling in the press. The wine was barrel-fermented, and left on its lees, with occasional stirring, until bottling—never racked. The acidity and fruit expression is balanced by the rich lees character and the sweet oak. There is interplay in the wine between lightness and richness, and focus and complexity. The Ribolla gialla adds a spicy component and a supple tannic grip that ties the wine together and brings another dimension of length and interest.

The wine was barrel fermented in 50% new French Boutes barrels. Two of the five barrels went through natural malolactic fermentation. After nine months of elevage, sur lees, the wine was filtered, to prevent further malolactic fermentation, and then bottled. The blend is 73% Sauvignon blanc, 15% Ribolla gialla, 8% Tocai friulano, and 4% Semillon. The alcohol is 13.6 percent. 120 cases were made.

The Vineyards

The three vineyards are all in the cool southern Oak Knoll District of Napa Valley.

The Sauvignon blanc comes from Ryans Vineyard, which sits on a streak of gravel in the center of the valley floor. It is right in the path of the daily wind current that pulls up through the valley from the San Francisco Bay towards Calistoga. California native grasses are planted under the vines to compete for moisture and nutrients and encourage the roots to forage down deep in the gravelly soil. The strong Sauvignon Blanc ("white savage") vines work hard to make intense flavors, and the cool breezy afternoons and evenings preserve the intense acidity.

The Ribolla gialla and the Tocai friulano is from Elsa's Vineyard, in the mouth of Napa's Dry Creek canyon. Ribolla gialla is a 13th century variety from the Collio region of Italy and Slovenia. It is the indigenous grape of Friuli, and it is a passion that we share with our friends George and Elsa Vare, who introduced us to the variety. This is the only Ribolla that we know of in California, and grown here the wine has the Friulian character of toasted nuts and pure minerality, but in a pouch of California spun gold. The Tocai friulano is actually a field blend which includes other old varieties which we haven't yet been able to identify, but which contribute a wonderful complexity.