



2009 Napa Valley White Wine

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This wine is our new-world conception of a mythical ideal old-world wine...a California wine with a spiritual connection to Friuli, Italy, but also drawing inspiration from the great whites of the Loire, Graves, Alsace, the Rhone, old-school Napa...actually the list of great whites we are inspired by goes on and on, and it is all wrapped up in this wine. This wine is an attempt at getting at the core of what white wine is all about, the archetypal "white wine," thus the name.

The blend is 59 percent Sauvignon blanc, 28 percent Ribolla gialla, 8 percent Tocai friulano, and 5 percent Semillon.

The Sauvignon blanc brings a clean fresh citrusy acidity and some tropical character. The Ribolla gialla brings seashell minerality, nuttiness, and structure to the blend. The Semillon contributes viscosity and a ripe fig and beeswax character that adds gravity and weight. The Tocai friulano adds spicy aromatic notes. The acidity and fruit expression is balanced by a rich lees character and a little sweet oak. There is interplay in the wine between lightness and richness, and focus and complexity.

The fruit was very lightly whole-cluster-pressed. All four varieties were co-fermented in 30% new Boutes barrels, and left on its lees, with occasional stirring, until bottling, never racked—to prevent losing aromas to oxygen. Several of the 15 barrels went through spontaneous malolactic fermentation, which is encouraged. After nine months of barrel aging, the wine was filtered to prevent further malolactic fermentation, and then bottled. The pH is 3.19, the TA is 7.0, and the alcohol is 13.6%. 366 cases were made.

The Vineyards

The three vineyards are all in the cool southern part of the Napa Valley.

The Sauvignon blanc comes from Ryans Vineyard, which sits on a streak of alluvial gravel in the center of the valley floor, south part of Napa. It is right in the path of the daily wind current that pulls up through the valley from the San Francisco Bay towards Calistoga. 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 Ribolla gialla and Tocai friulano are from the tiny Elsa's Vineyard, in the mouth of Napa's Dry Creek canyon, right next to the creek. The rocky fluvial soil and cool air drainage of the canyon work perfectly with the variety. Ribolla gialla is an extremely old variety cultivated since medieval times in the Collio region of Italy and Slovenia.

The Semillon is from 60 or 70 plus year old vines in the Yount Mill Vineyard in Yountville. They are head trained and dry farmed, and are so stressed and virused that when the berries are at full ripeness, hanging golden and amber in the sun, the sugar is typically only at 20 brix (18.5 brix in 2009), helping to naturally keep the alcohol moderate while lending incredible viscosity to the wine.