2023 VIOGNIER "O"

TASTING NOTES

You are unlikely to meet a more aromatic and deliciously unusual wine than this skin-fermented Viognier, nor one that is more challenging to describe (this writer not excepted)! The nose is rambunctious and super appealing with floral, citrus peel and spices bounding from the glass, and perhaps a suggestion of beeswax in the background. In the mouth you may find honey and spices (allspice and eucalyptus and some exotic ones not in my spice rack) plus a citrus rind underpinning. Amazing stuff. Floral/Lush; highly aromatic & unusual; dry/full body, light gold color, medium acid, medium tannin.

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Our Viognier "O" is what's known as an "orange wine": a wine made from white-wine grapes but made like a red wine, fermented in contact with the skins (white wines are made with just the juice). The name "orange" comes from the color of some wines made in this style – but it's confusing for many (no, there aren't any oranges in it) so these days we're calling it our "skin-contact" or "skin-fermented" Viognier (although that has led some to ask whose skin it was in contact with ;-). When I first learned about orange wine, I thought it was a neat idea, so I started chewing up white wine grapes to find a variety that I thought would work for us. Most had quite bitter skins, but the skins of Viognier were soft and lovely. Fermenting this wine on the skins creates a powerfully aromatic and flavorful wine, with tannins from the skins giving it a lovely unctuous mouthfeel (just like red wine grapes, the skins of green grapes are full of tannins). It's a little too powerful, in fact, so we add back a little bit of pressed juice just to dial it down to a reasonable level of awesomeness.

Composition
100% Viognier

Appellation
Rattlesnake Hills, Yakima Valley

Vineyard
Sugarloaf Vineyard

Harvest Date
September 6, 2023

Harvest specs
22.7 brix, pH 3.73, TA 6.6 g/l

Crush Pad
Destem and light crush

Yeast
Native

Fermentation
Small open-top fermentors, punched down by hand

Malolactic Fermentation
Yes

Time on skins
13 days

Aging
7 months in barrels

Oak
None

Fining/Filtration
Cross-flow filtration

Alcohol
13.7%

Production
226 cases

Bottled
April 25, 2024

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PAIRINGS

Try it with charcuterie and you'll be saying O-migosh this is amazing. Also great with aged and blue cheeses – go for flavorful and rich. Beef bourgignon – yes! Other ideas: chanterelle risotto. Fall photo shoots. Sushi. Badminton. Mango sticky rice. When you are at the winery, try it with Crimson Cove Spiced mixed nuts!

VINTAGE DETAILS

The 2023 vintage got off to a late, cool start, but then raced ahead with warm temperatures, making up ground throughout the growing season and even tracking slightly ahead of average by mid-July. A brief heat spike in August caused issues in some varieties but didn't slow down the speeding train of ripening. Harvest started off with a fury, bringing home one variety after another day after day. Yields were widely variable, and things were changing so quickly that yield forecasts sometimes turned out to be significantly higher or lower than expected when the grapes were harvested. This means that we got more of some varieties than expected, and less of others. The good news is that the quality was very good in nearly everything, so we are expecting some great wines from the vintage.

GRAPE VARIETY INFO

Viognier is a highly aromatic variety of uncertain ancient origin, but historically grown in the Rhone valley in France. It produces full-bodied, aromatic wines, but can be challenging to grow, with variable yields and susceptibility to powdery mildew (a common vineyard ailment).

FUN FACTS

Orange wine is an ancient style that hails from the Republic of Georgia; there they ferment whole clusters of white-wine grapes in earthen vessels called "qvevri" buried up to their necks in the ground. This technique suggests the origin of wine in the forgetting of harvested grapes... As you can imagine, wines made this way are typically...funky. Ours uses more modern (i.e. clean) techniques to make great-tasting, unique wines.

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