



Vineyards:

Viognier: Linda and Bob Salomon have devoted their retirement years to farming this tiny gem of a vineyard in Sonoma Valley north of Kenwood. Our block of Viognier is entirely dry-farmed and has more pebbles mixed into the predominant Huichica loam than the surrounding area. The southeast exposure at an elevation of 450 feet and cool air rolling off the mountains to the west create just the right conditions for gentle ripening and retention of acidity.

Grenache Blanc: The confluence of three overlapping AVAs at Ceja Farms – Sonoma Coast, Carneros and Sonoma Valley – produces a unique environment that benefits our Grenache Blanc in myriad ways. The ocean breezes through the Petaluma Gap combine with the fog rolling off the northern reaches of the bay to provide a consistently cool climate and long hang time, perfect to retain acidity necessary for a crisp white wine. Unusual for the region, the soil in this block is deep, dark and rich, with volcanic material combining with clay to produce vibrant, expressive flavors.

Vintage: The first winter with big rains in half a decade allowed soils to store up plenty of water for what would prove to be a scorching hot growing season with over a dozen 100 degree days. Flowering and fruit set were textbook, leading to good yields, but balancing flavor development with sugar and acid levels in the Viognier proved to be a bit of a challenge during the final August heatwave - we chose to harvest the fruit in two separate lots, the first on September 1st with vibrant acidity and the second on September 13th with riper, richer flavors. Harvest came earlier than normal for the Grenache Blanc, but it was still by far the longest hanging of all of our white grapes, picked on September 30th with bright flavors and a great balance of acidity.

Winemaking: The Viognier was harvested in two passes, the first at about 20° brix with bright acids, and the second two weeks later at 22.5° brix with much richer flavors. The first lot was destemmed and fermented with its skins in clay amphorae for the first seven days before being pressed and racked into neutral French oak for aging. The second lot was immediately pressed and then fermented in clay amphorae, where it also aged sur lie for just over 5 months. The Grenache Blanc was pressed and racked into a concrete egg tank, where fermentation began spontaneously with wild yeast. After a few days of fermentation we racked it with its lees into two-thirds used French oak barrels and one-third stainless steel, and moved the barrels to the cold cellar, where fermentation continued at a snail's pace throughout the winter. All three lots went through a full malolactic fermentation and were blended and filtered just before bottling, with the Gusto Bianco containing 50% Grenache Blanc, 50% Viognier - 25% from the skin-contact lot and 25% from the later picked clay-aged lot.