

Clos Saron 'A Pleasant Peasant' 2016

Producer: Gideon Beinstock and Saron Rice

Provenance: North Yuba AVA, Oregon House, California (Sierra Foothills)

Farming: Conventional, irrigated

Grape(s): Carignane

Vineyard(s): The ungrafted, pre-prohibition Carignane planted in the early 1900's is grown in Markus Bockish's vineyard in Lodi. Sand and fine, decomposed granite.

Fermentation/ Aging: Foot crushed in whole clusters and fermented in polyethylene harvest bins. Macerated between 6-11 days depending on development with once daily punchdowns. Pressed into neutral french oak barrels. Bottled off of gross lees.

Fining/ Filtration: none.

Sulfur: 35 ppm at bottling.



The Producer:

Given the meteoric thrust of the natural wine 'scene' there are all manner of ideologies being thrown about that tend to paint American naturalists in a reactionary hue. Clos Saron is emblematic of an older, more contemplative approach that finds itself in the natural camp because, well, that's the best way to express a sense of place! Israeli ex-pat Gideon Beinstock is a consummate terroir-ist whose discomfort with the definition of 'winemaker' stems not from radical minimalism for its own sake but from the simple fact that he spends nearly all his time farming and very little in the cellar.

Even setting aside the historicity of the project, Clos Saron is remarkable. The winery has never stopped evolving, continuing to explore ideas of ripeness, cofermentation and sulfite application in thoughtful ways despite decades of successful production. The wines are monolithic embodiments of North Yuba's scorching, iron-laden granitic terroir. They have potency in the manner of the southern French masters - presence and assertiveness couched in the language heat and earth.

The Vineyard

The Carignane was planted without grafting into sandy, decomposed granitic soils with a high water table in the early 1900's before prohibition in Bechtold field, cultivated today by Markus Bockish. The situation could potentially lead to overproduction but the advanced age of the vines helps to offset vigor. Though Lodi is usually, and justly,

associated with overcropped bulk wine, this vineyard is located in Galt in the northwest where rolling, alluvial hills and decomposed granite give the area a feel closer to the Sierra Foothills in personality. Harvest decisions are made by interview with the grower focused on identifying the right acidity threshold.

The Cellar

Whole clusters are completely crushed by foot (no intracellular 'carbonic' effect) in polyethylene harvest bins. Once a day manual punch downs are conducted using a peicemail tool made of a piece of pvc piping and a stainless steel rod but they are meant only to keep the cap hydrated and NOT to enhance extraction. Each ferment is pressed according to its specific development, with macerations usually ranging from 6-11 days before pressing. The wine ages in mostly French oak barrels of at least 10 years of age.

Although Gideon has experimented with zero and extremely low sulfur wines, he has found that mouse is too much a distraction and his approach to sulfur has changed over the years. He started with 35 ppm added at crush with a period in the middle trying to use almost none and has fallen into an equilibrium between the two. Lab results from his bottled wines reveal almost no 'free sulfur' remaining. During the period of time he made this wine, the approach was to only add SO₂ 24 hours before bottling at the same moment the wine was racked away from the gross lees into tank for settling. No fining or filtration.

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