

Clos Saron 'Stone Soup' 2015

Producer: Gideon Beinstock and Saron Rice

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

Farming: Organic

Grape(s): Syrah cofermented with about 10% Viognier

Vineyard(s): From a coplanted, single vineyard at 2000ft elevation. Vines were established in the iron rich, granitic soils that typify North Yuba.

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.

Vintage: Despite the full influence of the drought on yield, the wine itself manages not to show the duress but for a slightly more intense profile.

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

Planted in 2003 into iron rich and extremely rocky granitic soils on a steep south-facing slope, the appropriately named 'Stone Soup' is the name of both the vineyard and the ensuing wine. At 2000 ft altitude a mere mile up the road from Clos Saron, the vineyard

is co-planted to about 90% Syrah and 10% of Viognier. Since 2013 the Syrah has been co-fermented with the Viognier in a nod to the old-fashioned Cornas style.

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 length 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 from the many passes through the vineyard is pressed according to its specific development with macerations usually ranging from 6-10 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 short settling before bottling. No fining or filtration.

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