

Clos Saron 'Carte Blanche' 2017

Producer - Gideon Beinstock

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

Farming: Organic, irrigated (for Albarino and Verdelho), Organic, dry farmed (for Sauvignon Blanc)

Grape(s): an even mix of Albarino and Verdelho with 5% Sauvignon Blanc

Vineyard(s): The ungrafted Verdelho and Albarino are grown in Markus Bockish's vineyard in Lodi. Sand and fine, decomposed granite. The Sauvignon Blanc comes from the iron rich, terraced vineyards at Renaissance in Oregon House.

Fermentation/ Aging: All three varieties are foot crushed in whole clusters and cofermented 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: none.



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 2017 rendition of 'Carte Blanche' sees a return to Markus Bockish's organic, irrigated vineyard in Lodi. 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. Grown right next to the pre prohibition plot used for 'Pleasant Peasant,' the rows of Albarino and Verdelho benefit from the same sandy soil which allowed for the vines to be planted without grafting. Harvest decisions are made by interview with the grower focused on identifying the right acidity threshold.

As time progresses, Gideon's focus has shifted more towards championing Oregon House's particularities but he wasn't able to get the correct sourcing for this wine hence the Lodi fruit. However, with 2017 about 5% of Sauvignon Blanc grown in the terraced, dry-farmed, brutally dry and iron rich vineyards at Renaissance cared for by Gideon's former apprentices Cara and Aaron Mockrish (Frenchtown Farms).

The Cellar

Gideon's approach to white grapes is usually the same for reds so, yes, this could be called 'orange' wine though he tends to press whites a tad earlier than reds.

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. All three varieties are cofermented. 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. Bottled off of gross lees without sulfite addition.

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