

La Clarine 'Gamay' 2020

Producer: Hank Beckmeyer and Caroline Hoël

Provenance: Sierra Foothills, California

Farming: Organic

Grape(s): 100% Gamay

Vineyard: Witters Vineyard in El Dorado at 3400 ft planted in 2000 into volcanic, clay-loam soils, and a slight northern slope.

Vintage: Hank writes: "it's becoming one of my fav vintages. It reminds me of 2010 - nice acidities and great flavors with balanced concentration. No fire issues in 2020 for us (that was this year). The 2020s seem well built, very friendly up front, and I think they will age well."

Fermentation/ Aging: Whole cluster foot crushed in macro bins for open top fermentation. Aged on gross lees in flex tank.

Fining/ Filtration: none.

Sulfite: after a few years with occasional mouse issues, they now add up to 20ppm sulfite at crush. 20 ppm added at bottling.



The Producer:

If wine writer Terry Theise's notion that distinctiveness as precondition for greatness is correct, La Clarine Farm is certainly primed for immortality. The La Clarine wines are teeming with life in a way that separates them from even the most lively of French natural producers. Self-proclaimed refugees from the music business, Hank Beckmeyer and Caroline Hoël began the project thinking they'd try a few things and if people liked it, they'd continue. Recovering biodynamic farmers, they have evolved from Steiner's method of rigorous input to Fukuoka's method of careful observation. Although they purchase the majority of their fruit, Hank writes about the quantum entanglement of vineyard, winery and winemaker; a cellar-inclusive addendum to the conception of terroir. The La Clarine wines are bottled inquiries, cloudy with curiosity and a bursting state of vivacious play that makes them a joy to drink and endlessly fascinating.

The Vineyard:

The vineyard was planted for Edmunds St. John in 2000 by Ron Mansfield, one of the preeminent figures in El Dorado viticulture. Owned by Bob Witters, the vineyard had been a pear orchard up until 1999 when global market pressures made the crop untenable for Bob. 4 acres of Gamay were planted in 2000 making it the first meaningful planting of Gamay in a generation. The vineyard sits at 3400 ft, one of the highest in California, with volcanic, clay loam soils and a slight Northern slope making it an excellent spot for slow ripening but also exposing it to risk of Spring frosts.

The Winery:

Hank tried to channel old-fashioned, pre-carbonic Beaujolais here with a nod to Jean-Paul Brun. Whole clusters were foot crushed into macro bins for spontaneous fermentation. Foot tread twice daily until the end of fermentation whereupon the free run juice was transferred to Flex tanks for aging. Racked once in the winter and then once again shortly before bottling.

After a few experiences with wines developing mousey off-flavor, Hank has shifted his sulfite application of up to 20 ppm during crush to discourage the overeager lactic acid bacteria populations that are substantially more sensitive to sulfite than yeast. Bottled with another small addition sulfite depending on need.

For more details email info@OlmsteadWine.com

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