

PALMINA

2007 Malvasia Bianca Larner Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley



Not only is Malvasia Bianca captivating as a wine, but the varietal itself carries a fascinating history. The origins of the grape go back to 13th century Greece. “Malvasia” or “Malvoise” was the European translation for the medieval fortress of Monemvassia located on the southern edge of the Peloponnese. The Turkish occupation of Greece during the rule of the Ottoman Empire eventually forced the Malvasia loving Venetians back to Italy, where they established this exotic varietal on their own soil. Fast-forward five centuries to find that wine loving travelers who revere this aromatic and captivating grape have established it at the Larner Vineyard in Santa Barbara County, California. It is the only non-Rhone grape planted at Larner, and coincidentally boot-shaped block of Malvasia Bianca is nicknamed “Little Italy”.

2007 was a classic, near-perfect growing season for this somewhat fragile grape. A Mediterranean climate of warm sunny days and cool nights, well draining soils and a long growing season is needed to bring out the best of Malvasia. That, along with personal attention given to each vine is the profile of the Larner Vineyard, in the Ballard Canyon area of the Santa Ynez Valley. Even with the superb condi-

tions of the 2007 vintage, yields were extremely low and because the grape is so delicious, the Larners were in constant competition with the local deer, honeybees and birds! Hand harvested at dawn’s first light, the grapes are immediately whole-cluster pressed to translate the pure essence of the grape. The wine was fermented in neutral oak barrels and allowed to undergo partial Malolactic fermentation to provide a creamy textural component to this complex wine.

A pale green-gold color almost shimmers in the glass, but it is the first whiff of the bouquet of Malvasia Bianca that is so astounding. Honeysuckle, orange blossom, white jasmine and a hint of beeswax soar from a swirl and envelop the senses. The aromatic profile of the wine is so fragrant that the palate may be expecting something sweet. But the charming (and bone dry) Malvasia Bianca then surprises with bright and lively citrusy notes of key lime along with hints tangelo and passion fruit. The smoothness of the barrel fermentation comes through as notes of lemon curd, and is then joined by a slate-like minerality. This wine has it all – seductive aromatics, striking fruit notes, lively acid, silky texture and beautiful balance. Cheers to 2007!

Extremely limited vintage.

Although one of our favorites to enjoy nicely chilled on a warm summer evening, Malvasia Bianca pairs superbly with both spicy and savory dishes. We love it with seafood, and our featured recipe is Grilled Calamari Salad.

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