

PALMINA

2006 *Mattia* Santa Barbara County



When Palmina owners/winemakers Steve and Chrystal Clifton decided to get married, it was no surprise to anyone that the wedding would take place in Italy. And particularly in Friuli, in the northeastern part of the country. Helping with all of the international coordination and planning were their adopted family in Italy, the Scarbolos – Valter and Mariagrazia, son Mattia and daughter Lara. With family and friends gathered, they were presented at their reception with a “wedding wine”, made by good friends Valter Scarbolo and Joe Bastianich. This very special wine was a blend of Refosco, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Chrystal and Steve decided a few years hence to recreate this wine in honor of the celebration and their union, and have named the wine Mattia. Mattia himself has helped

during harvest and summers as an intern at Palmina, and the family tradition continues to grow and prosper.

It may seem unusual to have a hearty red wine with “Bordeaux” varietals hailing from Friuli, but in fact this is a rather established blend. The main component, Refosco, is native to the northern Italian regions and produces a wine with lively acidity and black fruit notes – all nicely complemented by the tannins, floral characteristics and fruit characteristics of Merlot and Cabernet Franc. This blend is often seen in the Veneto, and produces a hearty wine with deep color, hearty body and bold acidity and tannin.

Mattia recreates the original wedding wine, adding to that the rather magnificent conditions for growing these three grape varietals in Santa Barbara County. A long growing season that stretches from April to October allows optimum ripening of all three varietals. Both the Cabernet Franc and Merlot hail from the Alisos Vineyard in the Los Alamos Valley, while the Refosco is grown in the Bien Nacido Vineyard in the Santa Maria Valley. Each was harvested and vinified separately utilizing small open top fermenters and punched down by hand 2-3 times each day to fully extract flavors, tannins and color from each varietal. Upon dryness, the wines were moved to neutral French oak barrels for a year of aging before being blended and returned to barrel. There, they aged to “marry” the three components before being bottled. The wine was then celled for an additional six months of bottle aging. As before with the wedding wine, the blend is 55% Refosco, 30% Cabernet Franc and 15% Merlot. Just 60 cases of the 2007 vintage produced.

Depth of color predominates, yet with rather mischievous glints of garnet peeking from the maroon/violet color of the wine. On the nose, vibrant and earthy notes of currant, plums, dried cherry and violets abound. Plush on the palate, Mattia refreshes and caresses with a yin-yang of liveliness and elegant, dusty tannins all beautifully integrated and layered with fruit notes of black cherry, dark plum, pomegranate and blackberry, intermingled with a hint of cedar, a wisp of truffle and a suggestion of black tea-like tannins. A food wine bar none. Our wine club recipe for the 2007 Mattia is Friulian Leg of Lamb with Roasted Fingerling Potatoes.

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1520 E. Chestnut Court ~ Lompoc CA 93436
tel: 805.735.2030 ~ fax: 805.735.2693 ~ email: info@palminawines.com
www.PalminaWines.com