

PALMINA

2007 *Honea Bianco* Larner Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley



Friuli is located in the northeastern corridor of Italy, where the melding of German, Slavic and Italian cultures has influenced the creation of some of the world's greatest white wines. Indeed, local bragging rights for wines go to those winemakers who craft the most intriguing, complex, and sophisticated white wines. Becoming known throughout the world as "super whites", these white blends are crafted so that their exotically aromatic, crisp and yet full-bodied character continues to evolve and become even more intricate with aging.

At Palmina, owner/winemaker Steve Clifton has taken the idea and challenge of a Super White even one step further, by crafting a white blend that expresses how each of these grapes, blended together, reflect their sense of place. One site, three grapes, and scrupulous attention to vinification and blending has resulted in the inaugural release of Honea Bianco.

The Honea Vineyard was planted by Milt Honea and his family specifically to Italian varietals for Palmina. The Cliftons and the Honeas made careful consideration of which varietals would shine in the various sections of the twenty acre vineyard. Planted in the Alamo Pintado corridor of the Santa Ynez Valley, the vineyard features ancient river rock and a vein of limestone running from the hillsides into the blocks of white grapes. The 2007 Bianco is composed of three white varietals; Arneis, Tocai Friulano and Pinot Grigio. Each was harvested by hand at ultimate ripeness and fermented separately. While the Tocai Friulano and Pinot Grigio were vinified in stainless steel with no malo-lactic fermentation allowed, the Arneis was placed into neutral oak barrels and allowed this second fermentation. As a chef considers all the sensory aspects when creating a signature dish, so did Steve consider aromatics, taste, texture and color when designing Honea Bianco. A determination that a fusion of 1/3 each of these three wines would ultimately express the Honea Vineyard was made, and the blend put to stainless steel for an additional two months to marry and meld each grape's attributes before being bottled in the Summer of 2008.

The result is a wine that Palmina would proudly take to Friuli. Bianco struts its heritage with a brilliant and steely pale yellow-gold color that glistens in the glass. On the nose, the mineral laden soils of Honea provide a backbone of flint that is overlaid with subtle white rose, kaffir lime, passionfruit and hints of white pepper spice. The first sip refreshes with playful acidity and citrus notes of blood orange and lemon before the roundness of the blend glides across the palate. Chalky undertones from the limestone join with exotic notes of kumquat, dragonfruit and the inside slice of a pineapple. Lingering green-tea and lemongrass-thyme notes refresh and satisfy, and beg for another taste. Beautifully balanced and full-bodied, Honea Bianco will only continue to evolve and gain complexity with cellaring. Yes, an ageable white wine – trust us! Yet, it is also delightful in its youth, and is an excellent complement to a meal. Our featured recipe is Fresh Corn Chowder.

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