

PALMINA

2009 Arneis Honea Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley



The push and pull of warm daytime temperatures and cool nights in Santa Barbara County closely mirror the conditions in Arneis' home region of Piemonte, Italy. This white grape can be finicky and fussy in the vineyard, requiring not only this unique type of climate, but also sandy, chalky soils and wine-growers with patience and fastidious attention to detail. Arneis has a long history, dating back to the 1500's. There is no doubt that it has always been highly strung, as the word "Arneis" loosely translates to "rascal" or "whimsical one" for its viticultural temperament.

Perhaps because of Arneis' choosy nature, little is grown or vinified in California. But as with other challenging varietals, the results are more than worth the work. Choosing to translate the ethereal qualities of this Italian "white barolo" grape, Steve Clifton and the Honea family planted one of only two certified vineyards in California to the Honea Vineyard's ancient alluvial soils. Here Arneis thrives, enjoying the cool nights, early morning sea fogs and warm sun-kissed afternoons. Here, Arneis is one happy grape.

In 2009, the two different rootstocks of Arneis at Honea Vineyard were hand harvested and vinified separately to gain more understanding of the nuances of the vintage. The barrel protocol of utilizing 1/3 stainless steel and 2/3 neutral oak for six months of cellar aging continued, and resulted in a complex wine that is both lean and full bodied, with both a refreshing crispness and a pleasing oily texture. Still medium bodied as with previous vintages, this 2008 release is leaner than previous years to allow the varietal's exotic fruit notes to shine.

Light golden in color with bright highlights first hint of the interconnected contrasts of this complex wine. On the nose, tangy aromas of pear and lime zest mingle with rich honeyed perfume. A first sip confirms the crispness, followed by a palate coating texture that brings young anjou pear and key lime, then lychee, starfruit and finishes with hints of mexican sage and a limestone minerality. A persistence reminiscent of pomelos and almond lingers until the next sip.

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