



Mattia SANTA BARBARA COUNTY, 2004

Chrystal and Steve have an “adopted” family in the Friuli region of Italy, the Scarbolos, who are very much a part of their lives. When Steve and Chrystal were married in Friuli last year, they were presented with a wedding wine made for them by Joe Bastianich and Valter Scarbolo - a harmonious blend of Refosco, Cabernet Franc and Merlot. Continuing the family connection, each year the Scarbolo’s son Mattia comes to stay with the Cliftons during the summer, learning about California and Palmina’s winemaking. When Chrystal and Steve decided to introduce a Palmina version of their wedding wine, they also wanted to honor the Scarbolos by naming the wine *Mattia*.

Refosco is the most widely planted red grape in the Friuli region of Italy, and is known for producing hardy wines with weight, nice acidity and plentiful tannins. Refosco is also thought to be the same varietal as the French Mondeuse Noir. Cabernet and Merlot were introduced to the Friuli region at the end of the 19th century, and so blending Refosco with the Bordeaux varietals of Cabernet Franc and Merlot is quite a tradition. The blend shows the best of all three varietals – the heartiness of the Refosco, the structure and backbone of Cabernet Franc and the softness and mid-palate of Merlot.

The grapes for *Mattia* were harvested and vinified separately. The Refosco hailed from the Bien Nacido vineyard in Santa Maria, and the Cabernet Franc and Merlot from the Alisos vineyard outside of the small town of Los Alamos, nestled between the Santa Ynez and Santa Maria Valley appellations. Refosco tends to fully ripen at low sugar levels, producing a wine with spicy characteristics and a lovely tannic structure with lower alcohol. The Merlot and Cabernet Franc were harvested a bit later, and all three varietals were vinified in the same manner. All were fermented in small 4x4 bins, and punched down by hand several times each day to extract color, flavor and tannins from the skins. After fermentation was complete, all were racked into neutral barrels. The final blend was determined in June of 2005 to be 55% Refosco, 30% Cabernet Franc and 15% Merlot. The wine was blended and then allowed to “marry” until bottling at the end of August. Only 320 cases were produced.

An intense ruby color with glints of garnet first delights the eye. There are spicy, white peppery notes, and then hints of herbs d’provence or bouquet garni on the nose. The aromatics are lifting and are then echoed on the palate. This wine is a true spice garden, complemented by a beautiful tannic structure and a velvety texture. Lavendar and deep rose petal notes linger with dark, concentrated fruit, raspberry, hints of anise and dusty currants. There is a nuance of dark chocolate truffle on the long, pleasant finish.

Definitely a food wine, *Mattia* will appeal not only to aficionados of Italian wines, but also to those who love Bordeaux blends or a hearty Zinfandel. Try this with pork chops or meat filled ravioli.