

PALMINA

2006 Arneis Honea Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley



How can one resist opening a bottle of wine whose varietal name translates to “whimsical”? Arneis is an ancient grape that hails from the Roero hills of Italy’s Piemonte, just north of Alba. Also translated as “rascally” or “a little crazy”, Arneis has a reputation of being a difficult and ornery grape to grow – one that will first test the patience of the grower and then the winemaker. But behind willfulness often lies artistic genius, and so it is with Arneis’ impetuous nature.

The love of history and a good story is as much a passion at Palmina as great food and wine. Arneis is thought to date back to the 1500-1600’s, and legend has it that it was first made as a sweet wine for the Savoias – the royal family from Turin. What was left on the vine and not consumed by the birds that lusted for its sweet character was made into a sweet wine and then hoarded jealously until the period of Carnival, where it was used to toast and enjoy that grand celebration. Although the Clifton’s interpretation of Arneis is fermented completely dry, this certainly sounds like a wine that should reside at Palmina!

In Italy, this rascalion grape now grows in the area around Cuneo in an area of sandy ground, marine deposits and rolling hillsides with bright sunshine. Palmina’s Arneis is grown at the Honea Vineyard in the “Alamo Pintado Corridor” of the Santa Ynez Valley. The vineyard features rolling hills, sandy alluvial soils and warm sunny days followed by cool and crisp evenings. Meticulous farming and careful crop management adds to this equation for “the taming of the grape”. Once delivered to the winery, the golden clusters are pressed to a combination of stainless steel and oak. The only white wine

at Palmina that ever sees a barrel, the newly fermented wine is placed into 1/3 stainless steel, 1/3 neutral French oak barrels and 1/3 new Gamba 500-liter puncheons. After bottling in the Spring of the following year, capricious Arneis is bottle aged for an additional three months.

The resulting wine is chock full of character, with an alluring floral bouquet and intriguing layers of flavor and texture. The delicate aromatics of jasmine and honeysuckle are joined by a hint of sandalwood as the spun straw colored wine is swirled. The most robust white in the Palmina lineup, Arneis then displays the care taken in the cellar to profile this most interesting grape. The perfumed nose is the result of the stainless steel aged wine. A first sip returns an elegant structure and coats the palate with a creaminess from the wine aged in the Gamba puncheons, which is then joined by lilting, prancing flavors preserved by the neutral barrels – kiwis, lemon curd, tangerines and nuances of fennel and a shadow of bitters or wild herbs. Persistent remembrances of pomelo and almond linger and loiter until the next swirl and sip.

The 2006 Arneis is a delightful aperitif, but also a wine with enough body and personality to hold its own with a wide range of food. We’ve paired the wine with a *Bagna Cauda*, a favorite Piemonte recipe. Arneis is also a white wine that will continue to evolve with a few years of cellar aging. We recommend enjoying the wine at room temperature.

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