

PALMINA

2007 Dolcetto Honea Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley



Dolcetto – the “little sweet one”. A grape that produces a friendly, playful, youthful, easy-going wine. A wine to drink now, with a picnic or a pizza. All true. And yet...

With the 2006 vintage of Dolcetto from the Honea Vineyard, owner/winemaker Steve Clifton decided to experiment with pruning. Rather than the traditional cordon/spur pruning, he had the vineyard crew prepare a small section of the Dolcetto block for the vintage with a cane prune. With this more difficult and labor intensive method, a one or two year old cane is chosen to be the new cordon. This takes skill and additional time, and it is the pruning technique of choice in northeaster Italy. The resulting wine was phenomenally different – more serious, more complex, darker. Was it an anomaly?

Not one to shy away from a challenge, in 2007 Steve expanded the cane pruning in the Dolcetto block to include a few more rows. Once again, the crop size was smaller, the clusters longer and heavier and each one uniformly ripe. The cane-pruned section was picked at lower sugar levels than in the first year, and then with a gleam in Steve’s eye, the whole clusters were placed into 1.5 ton open top fermenters, cold soaked for a few days and then fermented with stems. Placed into French oak barrels at the completion of fermentation, the cane-pruned Dolcetto aged for 11 months before bottling in December of 2008.

The result is quite astounding. Whether that is one of those variables – the cane pruning, the whole cluster fermentation, the French oak barrel aging – or a combination of factors is an enigma yet to be resolved. But, the end result is a multifaceted delight. A vivacious red wine with layers of intrigue. A yin yang of youthfulness and experience. A juxtaposition of flavors and textures. In a word – captivating.

A bit closed and shy at first swirl, the 2007 Dolcetto, Honea Vineyard yields a dark fruit profile of blueberries, blackberries and mocha, with earthy tar overtones. The deep maroon color hints of the depth of flavors, all intertwined with robust tannin. The skin of a French vanilla bean, cocoa powder, black raspberry, more blackberry, orange pekoe tea and that dark chocolate/orange peel truffle all meld together, layer after layer. This wine is complex and fascinating. The texture is both silky and mocha-like, and the finish lingering. It is a food wine, no question. As this wine is a bit “Pinotesque” in character, we have paired it with *Polenta topped with a Poached Egg sprinkled with Sage and crispy Pancetta*.