

PALMINA



2008 Alisos Santa Barbara County

Back in 1995, owner/winemaker Steve Clifton created the wine that was to launch Palmina. It was intended to be a food wine of extreme focus – a stylistic wine of concentration and structure to showcase the best of both the Sangiovese and Merlot grape varieties in the blend. First named *Vino Tavola de Costa Centrale* because it is such a food wine, this labor-intensive passion project utilizes many winemaking techniques from the Veneto region of Italy and the superb grapes from the Alisos Vineyard in Santa Barbara County. It is fitting then, that since 2001 this wine has been named *Alisos* to herald its sense of place.

Modern viticulture and winemaking intermingle with time-tested tradition and methods in every step of the “grape to glass” process. Alisos Vineyard manager Loren Collahan shepherds the vines and clusters through the growing season and then hand harvests in pre-dawn hours once they receive the “pick” decision from winemaker Clifton. Upon delivery to the winery at first light, a percentage of the Sangiovese is set aside to dry into raisins, in an *appassimento* method passed down through generations in Italy’s Veneto. The balance of Sangiovese and the Merlot (which is harvested separately and usually later in the season) are fermented in small, open top containers over a 2-3 week period of time before being moved to barrel to complete their evolution. After about 100 days of drying, the Sangiovese raisins are re-hydrated and then fermented to dryness. These three components – Sangiovese, Merlot and appassimento Sangiovese provide a palette of flavors and textures for the ultimate blend, which in 2008 includes 80% Sangiovese (of which 8% is appassimento) and 20% Merlot. The wine then spent twenty months in barrel to allow the layers to marry, tannins to lengthen and fruit and acid to integrate. The result is pure style, and pure Palmina.

Alisos first promises depth with color - a deeply colored ruby with glints of intriguing crimson shining through in the beautiful clarity of the wine. A swirl produces wafting aromatics of red plum, dried raspberry and hints of lavender and violet. A sip confirms the bouquet, but is additionally rewarded by a smooth and silky texture as *Alisos* glides across the palate, leaving remembrances of blueberry and black cherry from the Sangiovese, earthy and meaty dark notes from the Merlot and herbs d’provençal nuances from the appassimento Sangiovese. The lively acidity, barrel aged tannins and layered structure allow the soft fruits to show through in this superbly balanced food wine.

Years after its first introduction as “Vino Tavola” *Alisos* is still crafted to be an extension of the plate and enjoyed as part of a meal.