

# PALMINA

## 2008 Malvasia Bianca Larner Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley



As a grape, Malvasia has been around for a long time, but as a wine it is one of the most refreshing and modern white wines imaginable. Its history is cultured and convoluted, beginning in 13th century Greece where it was so prized as a wine that Venetian merchants introduced it throughout their trading routes, including of course, Italy. Historians believe the wine was named after the center of Venetian trading – the island fortress Monemvasia in the Peloponnese. As empires fell and trading routes changed, the Malvasia vine was planted throughout coastal regions during medieval times and centuries later at the Larner Vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley. The Larners themselves must have been seduced by this captivating grape, as it is the only non Rhone grape planted at their vineyard, and it thrives in a little boot-shaped section of the vineyard, caressed by the oceanic influence from the Pacific Ocean just a few miles away.

Sometimes extreme conditions lead to serendipity, exemplified by the 2008 growing season. Michael Larner was challenged with record-breaking frosts, then high winds and heat spikes during the springtime growth cycle, but persevered with many a pre-dawn farming hour and produced a stunningly beautiful crop.

Optimally ripe and hand harvested at a mere 21° brix, the golden clusters were lightly foot stomped over 3 days to extract complexity, texture and flavor from the skins. After the clusters were pressed, a spontaneous native yeast fermentation occurred over a number of weeks, followed by full malo-lactic fermentation. The 2008 Malvasia Bianca then spent six months in neutral oak to allow aromatics, flavors, acids and textures to integrate and meld before being bottled in the early summer of 2009.

Owner/winemaker Steve Clifton believes this may be the best Malvasia Bianca he has ever made. The color is reminiscent of the pale gold of dawn's first light – ethereal almost. But a swirl unleashes exhilarating aromatics, a crisp and persistent bouquet of jasmine, a hint of vanilla bean, citrus and melon notes and the freshness of the seaside. While the perfumed nature of the wine may lead to an expectation of a sweet wine, the 2008 Malvasia is bone dry, with the palate being caressed with accents and nuances of cherimoya, the dark orange meat of a black plum and Clementine's, interlaced with a stony minerality. The hint of spice and texture from the skin contact carry the flavor and aroma through the crisp and enduring finish. At a low 12.5% alcohol by volume, the 2008 Malvasia Bianca is very Friulian in nature, almost austere in its style, and a wine that will not only enhance a conversation, but perhaps start one.

Malvasia Bianca's seaside origins make it a natural enhancement for seafood. Spicy and savory grilled dishes are also superb pairings. Our featured recipe is *Roasted Beet Salad* (which just happens to include a bit of anchovy paste!) The recipe can be found on our website.

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1520 E. Chestnut Court ~ Lompoc CA 93436  
tel: 805.735.2030 ~ fax: 805.735.2693 ~ email: [info@palminawines.com](mailto:info@palminawines.com)  
[www.PalminaWines.com](http://www.PalminaWines.com)