

STOLPMAN

LA CROCE

BALLARD CANYON
2021

50% Sangiovese / 50% Syrah
490 cases produced

VINEYARD

Components

Block A Hilltop Sangiovese (Rodino & Brunello Clone 23) & Block A Hillside Syrah (Alban Clone) both High Density 2,400 vine/acre

Harvest Date

October 7 (East facing Syrah hillside / Brunello clones) & October 21-24 (West facing Syrah / Rodino Clone)

WINERY

Vinification

Co-fermented together, destemmed; no sulfur added throughout fermentation

Vatting/Fermentation

Open top Concrete tanks for 20 days

Cooperage & Elevage

Neutral French 500L oak Puncheons for 16 months

SENSORY

2021 La Croce shows lavish brushes of fruit, coating reds with black inlays. Blueberry and vanilla bean grant further downright deliciousness while fruit compote resonates through the palate. A combination of toasted nut, fine tannin, and bright acidity lend a dry, serious finish behind all of that "yumminess". Somehow even more full-throttle than the hot 2020 vintage, the wine is already gorgeous but will further blossom with a few years of integration.

BACKGROUND

When consultant Alberto Antonini first came to the vineyard in January of 2001, he was shocked to hear that year in and year out, we enjoy the coincidence of Syrah and Sangiovese ripening together. Alberto had dreamt of such a parallel his entire career in Italy. More specifically, he thought co-fermenting red-hued, high-strung Sangiovese with dark, savory Syrah would create the benchmark for all Super Tuscan blends to follow. But in Italy, Alberto found that Syrah ripened a month ahead of Sangiovese, rendering his dream impossible – until he arrived in Ballard Canyon.

We prefer to co-ferment grapes rather than blending finished wine because the elements of each varietal integrate together through the process of fermentation. Primary flavor traits develop during the first portion of fermentation, and if that development happens with varietals already combined, the wine will be markedly different than trying to blend separate lots later. Of course, the reason few modern winemakers employ co-fermentation is the inherent lack of control. La Croce is truly vineyard-crafted.

Alberto turned out to be right. After our first stab at co-fermenting Sangiovese and Syrah in 2001, we were hooked. In 2004 we planted three clones of high-density Sangiovese along a ridgeline surrounded on either side with Syrah. Sangiovese trails behind Syrah in ripening, so we give it all-day sunshine on the hilltop while each Syrah block only receives partial-day direct exposure on either hillside.

VINTAGE

A cold spring led to a moderate summer without significant heat spikes through harvest. Over-all, 2021 harvest arrived late, with traditional reds beginning to hit peak ripeness at the end of September and through October. The La Croce block ripened at ideal timing in mid-October 2021, with plenty of time for the grapes to pick up nuanced flavor and concentration, without the vines running out of energy.

We harvested the earlier ripening east-facing Syrah hillside on October 7th alongside the faster-ripening Brunello clone on the hilltop. The east facing Syrah warms up quickly following sunrise and receives direct sunlight during the stillness of the morning. Next, we picked the west-facing Syrah hillside and the later ripening Rodino clone October 21-24. The West-facing Syrah warms up hours after the east-facing side, and only receives direct sunlight during the windy afternoon, when photosynthesis is less efficient. On each day, we filled the concrete fermenters with 50% Sangiovese and 50% Syrah.

14% Alc by Vol

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