

STOLPMAN

LA CROCE

BALLARD CANYON
2020

50% Sangiovese / 50% Syrah
590 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

September 26 (East facing Syrah / Brunello clones) & October 6 (West facing Syrah / Rodino Clone)

WINERY

Vinification

Co-fermented together, destemmed; no sulfur added

Vatting/Fermentation

Open top Concrete tanks for 17 days

Cooperage & Elevage

Neutral French 500L oak Puncheons for 16 months

SENSORY

La Croce shows class & restraint relative to the hedonistic "over-the-top" opulence of many reds from the 2020 vintage. The nose and flavor profile both exhibit the red to purple fruit continuum we dream of when co-fermenting Sangiovese and Syrah. With air, the lush, plush deep purple shrouds the red fruit. The voluptuous fruit profile envelopes the vibrant acidity and tannin doesn't emerge until long after the finish. Overall, 2020 La Croce shows the depth and luxurious polish of a top-notch Bordeaux but with the fruit intensity of Cali's elite.

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

The 2020 vintage started with much needed late rain in March and April. The cold moisture pushed back bud break and set up an anticipated late harvest. Ripening then accelerated after late summer heat waves. While the most significant heat wave arrived earlier in September over Labor Day weekend, another hot streak followed two weeks later. Harvests for La Croce occurred well after the intense heat, once the vines had time to recover.

We harvested the earlier ripening east-facing Syrah hillside on September 26th 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 on October 6th. 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.

14.1% Alc by Vol

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