



IPO WINES

COUNTRY
USA

REGION
California

APPELLATION
San Luis Obispo County

SOIL TYPE
Loamy

VARIETAL(S)
100% Syrah

FARMING
Sustainable

WINEMAKER
John Alban



2020 Alban "Lorraine" Syrah

IMPORTED BY IPO Wines

ABOUT THE PRODUCER

Starting in 1985, John Alban planted grapes for other people until he bought an estate in 1989. Alban Vineyards' is the first American winery and vineyard established exclusively for Rhone Varieties. Alban came to be a pioneer of the Rhone Rangers movement, and is considered one of the most influential American Rhone producers. Robert Parker's declared in The Wine Advocate that John Alban is "...the spiritual and qualitative leader of the movement..."

On beginning to grow Viognier, Alban stated "I almost single-handedly doubled the world's acreage," referring to a time when its cultivation was reduced to 50 acres (20 ha) in two areas of the Rhône Valley, Condrieu and Château-Grillet. Alban's work, along with that of Josh Jensen of Calera Wine Company in San Benito County, helped to significantly expand plantings of Viognier in California at a time when the varietal was near extinction.

"For the last 8000 years, wine has been the most prized beverage of our species. That is why we have been asking ourselves how best to assure our farm and viticultural practices are ready for the next 8000 years. Go ahead and chuckle! But then embrace how wonderfully real this goal is: the land our vineyards sit upon is hundreds of millions of years old. Its ability to support life is equally enduring. So we just need to protect what it will do naturally. It is this premise that gave birth to our viticultural techniques: Albanic farming. It is founded on the fact that if we bring to our soil exactly what we take, it can go on, and on, and on. In our early efforts to explain this concept in lay terms some 30 year ago, I coined the phrase 'closed loop farming': don't add or export anything. Easy enough to say, but 'wow' can it be challenging to achieve. How do you get everything back into the soil, coexist with weeds, and keep pests in balance? In the early 2000's we settled into the idea that we could spread all our lees, pomace, stems, and seeds in the vineyards and feed them to sheep as they mowed the rows and hoovered up decaying leaves. There is only a tiny amount of nitrogen in a bottle of wine so if everything else is returned, you can offset any export just by feeding the sheep your yearly green waste: we keep a 'sheep bin' in our kitchen and haul it out to them each day. The sheep compost everything under the vines and unlike mechanical mowing, their digestive tract destroys the eggs and larvae of pests atop the cover crop. Pest control isn't about eradication, it's about balancing the predators with the prey and not letting the latter get too big a head start in the spring. Because our native flock is ours and only ours, the loop stays closed. We don't eat them, milk them, or interfere with their natural life cycles in any way: no vaccines, medications, or hormones. They allow us to farm with just 3 natural components- elemental sulfur, carbonates (basically baking soda), and affection: our holy trinity for the next 8000 years." - John Alban

WINE NOTES

Adjacent to the original Reva's block is a small swath of land that is almost identical to the surrounding dirt except for a vein of fist sized stones that run through out the soil profile. For years I dreamed of making a wine solely from this little parcel. 1995 was the first year there would be sufficient grapes to keep the tiny spot separate and make a barrel of wine. It was also the year I met an intriguing Irish girl named Lorraine. The day before I would harvest this block separately for the first time, Lorraine called to ask if I could join her and some of her friends who were visiting from Scotland for dinner that night. I told Lorraine I would be picking grapes by 3 a.m. so...by then she interrupted with delight, "That's perfect, you can wear your harvest gear out with us and we'll drop you off at the vineyard in time to start! You'll have so much fun you'll end up making the best wine you've ever made." I am a big believer in omens,

and it was this last phrase that compelled me to take the chance and join them (or maybe I was smitten by the girl).

Over the next two years, I fell in love with, proposed, and married Lorraine. Not really knowing what I wanted to do with the one barrel harvested the night after (or of) my adventure with the Scots, I made what I thought would be a singular bottling labelled Lorraine and served almost all of it at our wedding. Lorraine works in wine distribution so many of our friends are in food, wine, and hospitality related businesses. We returned from our honeymoon to a number of messages asking where and when they could get their Lorraine. Perhaps not an appropriate question for a newlywed groom, but I was actually quite touched.