



## IPO WINES

**COUNTRY**  
USA

**REGION**  
California

**APPELLATION**  
San Luis Obispo County

**SOIL TYPE**  
Loamy

**VARIETAL(S)**  
100% Grenache

**FARMING**  
Sustainable

**WINEMAKER**  
John Alban



## 2020 Alban "Pandora"

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

At the very highest point on our ranch there is a unique and steep hillside. Over the course of 7 years, we slowly scratched terraces into this slope: a mix of pure white chalk laced with veins of fractured flint and sandstone. In the early years visiting winemakers went nuts when we showed them the site. Most were outraged when I told them we were planting Syrah and Grenache- at that time it sounded to them like we were putting a doormat on top of a silk rug. Times are changing.

Working this hillside, we struggle right along side the vines. These 10 acres of Syrah and Grenache make up Seymour's Vineyard. While the Syrah goes into a wine called Seymour's, the Grenache is the fruit for our Pandora.

In the myth, Pandora is the first woman- the Greek 'Eve'. She is fashioned out of clay and as you know,

handed a vessel that she is instructed not to open. Of course, curiosity forces her to take a look. In that moment, all the challenges of the world are released- much like the effect of the apple in Eden. What is all too often overlooked is that Pandora shuts the vessel in time to retain one attribute: Hope. Naturally as the first woman, she is the source of all hope for mankind.

Pandora is a very feminine wine that we hope has advanced the end of the idea that some grapes are nobler than others; that Grenache is too paltry to be planted on premier vineyard sites. I am happy to say, that over the 30 years we have worked with Grenache, a generation has emerged that really doesn't even know there were once, so called, noble varieties. In our opinion, there are only noble wines.

Aromatic and exotic with smoked herbs, juvenile fresh red fruits, fennel, and wet crushed stones; dense and long. Aged 34 months in larger French containers of various ages after being fermented open to by its native yeasts. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered.

98-100 points, "The 2020 Pandora is cut from the same cloth yet brings even more richness. Kirsch liqueur, black cherries, blueberries, graphite, and peppery spice all soar from the glass, and it has full-bodied richness, chalky minerality, ripe tannins, and an awesome finish. This puppy has perfection written all over it." - Jeb Dunnuck