



IPO WINES

COUNTRY
USA

REGION
California

APPELLATION
San Luis Obispo County

SOIL TYPE
Loamy

VARIETAL(S)
100% Viognier

FARMING
Sustainable

WINEMAKER
John Alban



2021 Alban Central Coast Viognier

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.

WINE NOTES

As hard as it is for me to believe, it has been more than 30 years since I took the sip that launched Alban Vineyards. Many of you know the story of a bottle of Condrieu that my dear friend Dan Stromberg brought to our mutual birthday celebration while we were both attending viticulture/enology school. At wine school, that sort of thing counts as studying, and we were both very diligent students.

Beyond the name on the bottle, I knew nothing about Condrieu- never heard even of it. A year later I was living in that tiny village- the homestead of Viognier, helping with harvest. While it all happened pretty fast, it wasn't as easy as it sounds.

As the recipient of a French wine studies scholarship, I had the opportunity to go just about anywhere I wished- so long as I worked for free, and didn't complain (perfect criteria for anyone wishing to start their own winery). Everything was going great until I asked for a 'post' in Condrieu. Nobody in Condrieu 'wanted' me. Not even for free! The short version is that the region had been in decline for decades and was just beginning to get back on its feet. The handful of growers who remained in the appellation were xenophobic; afraid that I would plant a bunch of Viognier back home and overburden the market. I want to stress that these folks were simply, and understandably scared. They had worked for decades hoping their appellation could re-emerge while teetering on the edge of extinction. While I could empathize, I was feeling a bit of youthful frustration. I argued that it was really in their best interests to help me. Just about no one in the U.S. had heard of Condrieu. The only way to tell the story of Viognier is to tell the story of Condrieu. If my wine caught folks' attention, the next wine they would try would likely be from Condrieu. This plea resonated for one grower, who upon promise of anonymity, agreed to let me work at his place.

My assertion that sharing information and showcasing Viognier, along with other Rhone varieties, would be beneficial to us all wasn't just the voice of desperation. This sentiment was, and is, in my soul and prompted me to found and promote Hospice du Rhone. As you all know, recent generations have seen an explosion in the popularity of Rhone varieties. What few understand is that Viognier was the spark. There has been a spectacular emergence of these varieties throughout the world. Its essence is a celebration of one of wine's greatest attributes- diversity around a common theme. Syrah, Grenache, and even Mourvedre may vie to become the international 'face' of the Rhone renaissance, but Viognier will forever be the heart.

Our Estate Viognier is rich, layered, and textured, with peach and tangerine it remains our goal to stay true to the hedonistic heart of Viognier and to the love of purity that is at the core of Alban Vineyards.

Fermented entirely in French barrels (10% new) by the native yeasts, bottled unfinned and unfiltered
August 2015; 550 cases produced

#92 points - "Matured mainly in stainless steel and amphorae, the 2021 Viognier has a delicate perfume of fresh quince, jasmine and almonds. The medium-bodied palate is fresh, gently rounded and layered with detailed fruits and a very long, gently nutty finish. Neither lean nor tropical, it strikes a fine balance that makes it ideal for the table." Wine advocate

#92 points - "Looking first at the 2021 Viognier Central Coast (which is released under the Central Coast label but nevertheless comes all from the estate in Edna Valley), it has a vivid gold hue as well as a great nose of crushed citrus, honeysuckle, and assorted white flower and acacia notes. Medium-bodied, seamless, and elegant, with just a kiss of background toast and brioche, it's a terrific expression of the variety and well worth seeking out." Jeb Dunnuck