IPO WINES

2021 Alban Grenache

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COUNTRY
USA

REGION
California

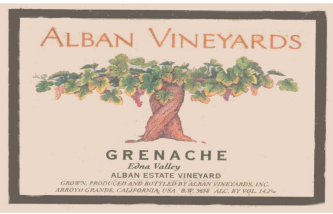
APPELLATION
San Luis Obispo County

SOIL TYPE
Loamy

VARIETAL(S)
5% Syrah
95% Grenache

FARMING
Sustainable

WINEMAKER
John Alban



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

Those of you who have followed Alban Vineyards for a while are likely aware that whereas Viognier sparked the winery, and Syrah may very well have ‘put it on the map’, Grenache has been our unwavering obsession. It started over an argument with a dear friend from the San Joaquin Valley who is a BRILLIANT grape grower- we met in school and he now supervises the largest vineyard operation in the world. Back in the day, he told me that of all my hair brained ideas, trying to make Grenache into a fancy pants red wine was the silliest of them all. A few years later I was apprenticing with Jacques Reynaud at Ch. Rayas- which actually may have been the ‘silliest’ thing I’ve ever done (I loved every minute of it), determined to figure out how to grow and produce a California Grenache that people might just respect. Obviously a lot has changed over the ensuing 30 years and Grenache is fast becoming a

Central Coast darling. For the west side of Paso Robles it has become the soul of a large portion of the area’s best wines.

95-97 points, "Based on 95% Grenache and 5% Syrah, the 2021 Grenache has a juicy, upfront style in its blackberries, blueberries, pepper, lavender, and violet-like aromas and flavors. With a big, exotic, full-bodied mouthfeel and a terrific mid-palate, it brings a powerful, opulent, yet classic 2021 focused style." - Jeb Dunnuck