



IPO WINES

COUNTRY
USA

REGION
California

APPELLATION
San Luis Obispo County

SOIL TYPE
Loamy

VARIETAL(S)
10% Viognier
90% Syrah

FARMING
Sustainable

WINEMAKER
John Alban



2021 Alban "Patrina" 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

While they are thrilled to make wines that many folks open to punctuate milestone celebrations, achievements, and very special moments, they very much cherish the opportunity to offer something they find remarkable and in sufficient quantity that you can enjoy it more 'routinely'. 2021 Patrina is big on aromatics and black fruits with iodine, a tiny pinch of white pepper, elegance and restraint. A wine you can open just about any time and with a broad spectrum of dishes. If you like graceful wines, 2021 is your vintage.

Patrina is a gypsy word for leaf and grass blades. They wanted a gypsy association for this wine because it is not a wine from a 'place' so much as one shaped by them; their traditions and joys. Gypsies have a very strong and romantic culture, but they are not tied to any particular location.

By mounding up patrin in specific configurations called Patrina, Gypsies mark secret trails that fellow clan members can follow to special gathering places. Patrina guide these nomads to the site of what starts out as a simple get together underscored with wine and song. These bohemian celebrations of nothing in particular inevitably escalate with great abandon into wildly hedonistic carousing. Their vineyards are a patchwork of isolated soil types that you may recognize as Reva, Lorraine, Seymour's and Pandora (very much wines of a place). Between and in route to these well healed sites are vineyards that are not so obviously distinct. They have blended these disparate and 'disenfranchised' blocks into a single wine called Patrina. Like the Gypsy trails from which Patrina derives its name, they hope these bottles lead you to some great merriment, or more.

While the grapes for Patrina are raised with the same detail and attentiveness as the rest of their vineyards, and then fermented open top with indigenous yeast, gentle pump overs and a few punch downs once soft, it is bottled unfinned and unfiltered after 'just' 28 months in 60% new French oak, bottled unfinned and unfiltered using gravity. to preserve its youthful exuberance. 4000 cases produced. All the density and concentration folks have come to expect from their reds with black and blue fruits, mineral notes, and flowers.

94 points, "The 2021 Patrina checks in as 90% Syrah and 10% Viognier that was bottled in March of 2024. It has a beautifully perfumed, complex, nuanced style in its darker berry-fruited, peppery, floral violet, and subtle orange blossom-like aromas and flavors. I love its overall balance, it has silky, polished tannins, and just a classic, seamless, incredibly impressive style. It's a terrific introduction to the wines of this incredible estate." - Jeb Dunnuck