



## IPO WINES

**COUNTRY**  
USA

**REGION**  
California

**APPELLATION**  
San Luis Obispo County

**SOIL TYPE**  
loamy

**VARIETAL(S)**  
100% Viognier

**FARMING**  
Sustainable

**WINEMAKER**  
John Alban



## 2022 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.

"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

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 co-found and promote Hospice du Rhone. In 2005, about 20 years after I pled my way into a job in Condrieu, the producers of that appellation and its neighbor- Cote Rotie, honored me as a Decurion. A sort of citizen for life in recognition of the attention and acclaim I helped bring to the region. It was one of the most humbling and unanticipated moments of my life.

A Central Coast bottling that is often more than 75% from our own vineyard. It showcases the forward heady stone fruit of this variety. It is fermented and aged entirely in stainless steel and bottled early. 93 points, "This estate makes one of the top Viogniers out there, and the 2022 Viognier Central Coast is a great entry point for readers looking to see what all the fuss is about. While it's released under the Central Coast appellation, it's all estate fruit from Edna Valley and has a beautiful, medium to full-bodied style as well as textbook aromatics of citrus oil, white flowers, ginger, and minty herbs. Brought up mostly in stainless steel (10% in barrels), it has beautiful acidity, terrific balance, and a great finish." - Jeb Dunnuck

92-94 points, "Still in barrel, the 2022 Viognier Estate has soft, youthful scents of apricot and peach, honeysuckle, white pepper and fresh bread. The medium-bodied palate offers impressively concentrated fruit, an alluringly oily texture and a long, perfumed finish. It will be bottled in August and released in the spring of 2024." - Wine Advocate