



Lagrein 2006
Honea Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley

Dark. Inky. Indigo. Other adjectives to describe the first impression of Lagrein? It's difficult to get past the mesmerizing "scuro" color of the wine, but words like intriguing, inviting and opulent come to mind.

The Alto-Adige in northern Italy nestles beneath the towering Alps and Dolomites. It's an interesting area that has gone back and forth from being Austrian and Italian, and the cultural influences of both are seen in the area and the wine. A heartiness that complements the mountain foods, an initial broodiness from the Tyrolean influence and then exuberance from the Italians!

The summers in the Alto-Adige are long and warm, with cool starry nights. This allows Lagrein to ripen to perfection and still retain a lively acidity that makes the wines so balanced and perfect for those hearty meals of "snow time". Palmina's Lagrein hails from the Honea Vineyard in the Santa Ynez Valley, and as in Italy, Lagrein is planted to a hillside block. And after the morning fog lifts, the vineyard enjoys long, sunny and warm days with cool, crisp evenings – a perfect spot for Lagrein. Lagrein's Block 6 was planted in 2002. 2006 was the first harvest of Lagrein from the vineyard, and although the yield was extremely small (just 45 cases of wine produced), the resulting wine is intense.

A late ripener, the tiny 2006 harvest of just a few bins of beautiful clusters were delivered to the winery and then de-stemmed into one 4'x4' fermenter. The color and aroma were astounding from the first punch-down! After the completion of fermentation, the 2006 Lagrein was moved to neutral French oak barrels, where it underwent malo-lactic fermentation and then aged for ten months before being bottled in the summer of 2007.

This is an expansive wine, so decant it into your favorite Pinot Noir or Nebbiolo wine glass. Marvel the glycerin coating of deep garnet, purple, dark aubergine, almost black color that coats the crystal as you give the glass a swirl. Rich aromas of ripe black plum and prune meld with a hint of tar and reminiscent notes from a grandfather's study – leather, cigar box, tobacco leaf, comfort. A first taste is surprising – a push/pull of sweet and savory flavors of blackberry cobbler, dark bittersweet cherry, black currants and beautifully balanced earthy tannins complementing a bright acidity. A burst of blueberries, a sigh of violets and just a whisper of vanilla bean are present on the finish. The mélange of flavors, acidity, structure and texture make this a wonderful wine with hearty foods.