

PALMINA

2007 *Subida* Tocai Friulano, Honea Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley



Take a vineyard that consistently produces Italian winegrapes of stunning quality and varietal purity. Add to that a grape that has its own unique persona, traits and character. Layer in a winemaker with a never-ending sense of experimentation and curiosity and finish with a hearty dollop of tradition and celebration. The result is the ultra small-lot release of 2007 *Subida*, which marks the second vintage release of this unique wine from Palmina.

Tocai Friulano (now known simply as Friulano in Italy due to recent ECC rules) is a grape of extraordinary complexity and versatility. Always known for its intense aromatic characteristics, Tocai Friulano has always been made in the classic Palmina way: stainless steel fermenta-

tion at cold temperatures. However, at Chrystal and Steve Clifton's wedding reception at La Subida Restaurant in Friuli Italy, friends of the region presented Steve and Chrystal with a white "wedding wine". This textural, complex and richly textured wine was Friulano, but barrel fermented by their friends Valter Scarbolo and Joe Bastianich.

Not one to sit on his laurels, owner/winemaker Steve Clifton started experimenting with Tocai Friulano winemaking with the 2006 vintage. In 2007, Steve explored even further afield, and crafted a small lot of Tocai Friulano as if it were a red wine. De-stemmed, left on skins in fermentation bins and punched down twice each day for 32 days, the new wine was then pressed with lees into neutral oak barrels. There it aged for an additional nine months on its own – no sulphur additions at all – before being racked off lees, filtered and bottled. The difference between the stainless steel version and the barrel fermented version, each of which was picked at exactly the same time, is simply astounding.

The aromatic characteristics of the Tocai Friulano grape are unveiled slowly, essence by essence as the wine warms, inviting and tempting a sip of the white-gold hued wine. Heady and yet subdued layers of acacia honey, pear anglaise and nighttime tropical notes of gardenia and honeysuckle unveil themselves with time and swirling. The first sip, though, reveals the distinctive creamy texture of this wine. It is round and viscous, with reminders of that perfect post-meal flan. Poached pear, mango and vanilla bean notes meld on the palate, accompanied by an additional reminder of key lime and just-ripe honeydew melon. There is a flinty minerality that lifts and lingers on the long and enduring finish. We recommend serving just slightly chilled, and paired with hearty and savory dishes. Our featured recipe is *Arancini* (literally translated as "little oranges", fried risotto rice croquettes), a delightful appetizer for the celebrations of any holiday season.

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