



2024 SIERRA MAR VINEYARD SYRAH

SIERRA MAR VINEYARD

Sierra Mar is the southernmost site that our family owns and manages. It is our highest in elevation at up to 1,100 feet above sea level. In 2007, Gary Francioni painstakingly planted it, and drilled a well which pumps water three miles up the hillsides to make irrigation possible. The heavily sloped terrain and thin soils encourage deep root systems and drainage. Its elevation often places Sierra Mar around the fogline, adding to its diversity and mystique. This slightly warmer site also experiences heavy winds in the afternoon along with cooler nights help retain natural acidity.

WINEMAKER NOTES

From a distinctive block at Sierra Mar, this Syrah delivers a bold yet balanced expression shaped by the vineyard's rugged conditions. Aromas of cassia, smoked meats, and white pepper lead into a full-bodied, viscous palate layered with black currant, anise, and hints of apricot. Co-fermented with 1% Viognier, the wine gains lift and polish. The finish is long and savory, with notes of plum and blueberry carried by fresh acidity and textured tannins.

VINTAGE SUMMARY

The 2024 vintage opened with a return to normal winter rainfall at approximately 13 inches. While our region remains inherently cool, the summer brought a run of 85+ degree days compared to especially cool recent vintages like 2023 and 2025. A brief burst of heat around Labor Day initiated harvest in our earlier-ripening blocks, and was followed by a cool, steady Fall that extended hangtime and allowed flavors to deepen. These conditions produced a harvest that unfolded in two distinct phases: early lots offered vibrant, juicy fruit with bright natural acidity, while later lots had developed concentrated flavors and richer textures. Together, these contrasting components created exceptional blending opportunities in the cellar.

Winemaker: Scott Shapley

Appellation: Santa Lucia Highlands

Farming: Sustainable (SIP Certified)

Clones: Alban, 39% Whole Cluster

Harvest: October 9, 2024

Oak: 100% French oak, 29% new

Aging: 14 months in barrel

Acid: 3.83 pH

Alcohol: 14.8%

2024: 97 pts, *Jeb Dunnuck*

2023: 97 pts, *Jeb Dunnuck*

2022: 96+ pts, *Lisa Perrotti-Brown, MW*

2021: 97 pts, *Jeb Dunnuck*

2020: Not produced due to CA wildfires

2019: 95 pts, *Jeb Dunnuck*

2018: 96 pts, *Jeb Dunnuck*

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TECH NOTE ARCHIVE

Vintage	Harvest	Days on Skins	Fermentation	Ageing	Alc.	Clones	pH	Growing Season
2024	10/9/24	21 days	39% whole-cluster with 1% Viognier	14 months in French oak; 29% new (Ermitage)	14.8%	Alban	3.83	Small berries with thick skins promoted wines with structure and deep character. Harvest unfolded in two phases with early lots bringing vibrant, juicy fruit and bright natural acidity, while later picks developed greater concentration and richer textures.
2023	11/3/23	26 days	47% whole-cluster with 1% Viognier	14 months in French oak; once-used and neutral	14.8%	Alban	3.75	Generous winter rains replenished vines. Budbreak, bloom, and veraison occurred 2 weeks later than average. Cool and mild spring and summer. Long hangtime with our latest harvest since 1999.
2022	10/5/22	23 days	55% whole-cluster with 1.5% Viognier	15 months in French oak; 25% new	14.5%	Alban 1, Bien Nacido	3.75	Low yields. Warm spring and summer punctuated by a labor day heat wave. Earlier than average harvest was aided by quicker ripening clusters due to low yields.
2021	10/20/21	27 days	43% whole-cluster with 1.4% Viognier	15 months in French oak; 33% new (Francois Frerer, Ermitage)	14.9%	BB, Alban 1	3.87	Fruit was dropped early in 2020, so vines entered the vintage with little stress. Low rainfall with growing milestones tracking 2-3 weeks behind. Very even temperatures and balanced wines.
2020	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Not produced due to California wildfires
2019	10/12/19	19 days	40% whole-cluster	16 months in French oak; 25% new (Francois Frerer)	14.8%	TBD	3.88	Cool temperatures and heavier-than-average fog cover, conditions that encouraged slow, even ripening. A late rise in warmth brought the vines into perfect balance for harvest. Elegant and polished wines.
2018	10/24/18	22 days	38% whole-cluster with 1% Viognier	16 months in French oak; 29% new	14.5%	TBD	3.79	Cool spring, slightly less than average rainfall. Perfect fruit set, warm days and cool nights during the summer. A cool fall allowed for a classic harvest with optimal conditions.
2017	10/6/17	26 days	30% whole-cluster with 1% Viognier	15 months in French oak; once-used and neutral	14.3%	TBD	3.7	Above average. winter and spring rain. Dry and cool summer with cool nights. A significant labor day heat wave accelerated harvest. Active canopy management and picking decisions preserved freshness.
2016	10/1/16	25 days	20% whole-cluster with 1.6% Viognier	15 months in French oak; once-used and neutral	14.5%	TBD	3.84	First non-drought year since 2012. Extended harvest time frame with clean and ripe fruit.