

Las Jaras Wines

2020 CARBONIC OLD VINES CARIGNAN

Mendocino County | Old Vines

We've always been intrigued by Carignan. It's a misunderstood variety that often gets planted where it doesn't belong. Carignan seems to perform its best when planted on benchland with properly draining loam soils and a warm climate to help it respire acid and round the tannins. When it's treated right Carignan is a thing of beauty: juicy, brambly, and spicy.

2020 was a very difficult year for winemakers on the West Coast. We had skies filled with smoke for months and it was quite difficult to determine if we were going to make wine that did not bear the mark of the vintage. As we thought about all of the grapes that would be left unharvested and all of the growers that would not get paid, we came up with a plan to make wines that did not show any signs of smoke taint. We decided not to make our more serious, macerated red wines and turned to carbonic maceration for nearly all of the red wines of the vintage. We chose to use the "true carbonic" method because it allows us to make wines where there is no skin maceration, and therefore no extraction of smoky compounds into the wine. The wines made using this method, where the tank is drained daily so that only the full clusters are in the tank, are incredibly light in color and tannin. We originally thought we wouldn't make a varietal Carignan wine this vintage but the wine turned out so delicious and tells the story of the vintage better than we can. This Carignan opens up with a nose of savory earth, boysenberry pie, blueberry, and stone. The palate incredibly concentrated and full of boysenberry bramble, mineral notes, and soft, melted tannin. The finish is long and rich. It's very intense and concentrated due to the drought year on these dry farmed vines. With this vintage we gave the wine an extra four months of barrel age to help it round out. That extra aging before release makes it a beautiful pairing for all sorts of food: Mediterranean fare, burgers, pizza, and more.



Vineyards

This is a single-vineyard wine, the grapes come from the Lee Testa Vineyard in the Calpella area of Mendocino County, near Ukiah. The vineyard is on the benchlands to the west of the valley, and is farmed by Gary Venturi, who owns the vineyard next door. These old vines were planted in the mid-1960s. The vineyard is dry-farmed organically. The soils are Yokayo series sandy loam that is very well drained. Due to Gary's fastidious suckering and canopy management, this is an incredibly clean vineyard, and gets only one or two sulfur dustings per season.

Winemaking

We had quite a warm growing season, but our grapes got plenty of hangtime before we picked them at 23 brix. Gary has a few vines of golden chasellas growing in an adjacent block, so we have him add them in with the pick every vintage. When the hand-picked grapes arrived at the winery, we sorted and destemmed them. No sulfur was added and we kept the tank jacket set at 72°F. We were very gentle when handling the grapes to avoid over-extraction. We only performed light punchdowns, which basically just wet the cap. We performed one punchdown a day until the native fermentation kicked off and then did two punchdowns a day once it was going. After the mid-point of fermentation, we backed off to one or no punchdowns. Once the tank was dry, we drained it overnight and pressed the skins and intact clusters in the morning. The free drain and the press wines were aged separately in 228-liter Burgundian barrels, 500L puncheons and 600-liter demi muids; with very little new oak coming from the demi muids. The wines were aged in a cool room where the wines underwent native malolactic fermentation. We racked the barrels about four months before bottling and then back to clean barrels. The wines were racked a second time a few days before bottling, when the wine was limp. This is our method of creating clean wines like this one that don't require fining or filtration.

Label Art by Chloe Wise

*Production: 448 cases | ABV: 13.56% | TA: 6.1 g/L | pH: 3.32 | VA: 0.40 g/L | DCO2: 775ppm
Total SO2: 39ppm | RS: 1.1 g/L | Turbidity at bottling: 10 NTU*

