



CAVE DOG

2019 NAPA VALLEY ALBARIÑO

Twenty-two years ago I started something: Albariño in the New World. Right here on a plot of tough soil in southern Napa Valley in 1997 I established a small plot of Albariño vines with budwood that originated from the Morgadio estate in Rias Baixas, Galicia. Those vines produced the first New World bottles of the variety with vintage 1999. I've made Albariño from this vineyard every year since (except for 2008, when I was working in Spain), first under the Havens Wine Cellars brand, then more recently with my friend Morgan Twain-Peterson under the Abrente label. Since 2016 this fruit has become Cave Dog Albariño.

2019 provided us with a variation in growing patterns, with a late Spring and substantial rain after budbreak. This meant that our harvest dates were all delayed, even though (counter to early estimates) the yields were down substantially from 2018. Moderately warm weather in the week leading up to harvest allowed us to pinpoint our picking date.

A remarkable opportunity presented itself to us this year: my old friend and former grape-supplier, Lee Hudson, offered me the opportunity to buy a couple of orphan varieties from his Carneros vineyard: Albariño and Arneis, the "little rascal" variety of Piemonte that was almost extinct until a surge of recent interest. While we at first thought of keeping this little rascal separate, we found that it fit perfectly into the Cave Dog tradition in this supporting role. I can say with confidence that this is the only Albariño/Arneis blend you are going to encounter (until next vintage here!).

In this year's Albariño that translates to an elegant, bright wine that has cut and linear structure. The alcohol is exactly the same as the previous vintage, and as usual, I blocked malo-lactic fermentation to keep the primary fruit in the spotlight. While this wine's clarity is undeniable, the energetic fruit peeks out already, almost a sweet perception in the finish, despite the wine being completely dry ($<.2$ gr/L).

The 2019 Albariño has a floral greeting that jumps from the glass, with notes of guava and lychee. Its natural acidity is substantial, but the fruit richness offers a balance that makes it luscious. I like to drink this wine by itself, with seafood, anything spicy, whether Asian or new world spices, and to be honest, I think it pairs with more foods than virtually any white variety. It's gratifying to me to see the enthusiasm for this variety spreading to other winemakers, and I'm really happy to still be making this wine 22 years after starting the variety here.

VARIETIES: 85% Albariño, 15% Arneis

VINEYARD: Stewart Ranch, Napa Valley

HARVEST: September 7, 2019

HUDSON VINEYARD: September 10, 2019 (Arneis & Albariño)

HARVEST STATS: 21.5 Brix, 3.07 pH, 9.9 TA

FINISHED ALCOHOL: 13.0%

AGING: 4 months on lees in stainless steel and neutral white-oak barrels

BOTTLED: 225 cases

