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Wine Club of Cantiga Wineworks



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The Last "Surrah"

With this club shipment, we celebrate the end of an era—the final vintage in our comparison study of French-clone Syrah and Australian-clone Shiraz. Inspired by our family's long-time love affair with Shiraz, the study spans seventeen years and seven vintages. It explores the sensory characteristics of the two grapes, grown side-by-side in our estate vineyard, with identical farming and winemaking techniques. Our investigation now draws to a natural close with the replanting of our Syrah block, following the "Syrah Decline" that has recently plagued our region. 2016 was the final vintage of our gorgeous French-clone Syrah. Our attention now shifts to our hardier Australian vines, but don't worry—we will continue to contract Syrah from neighboring vineyards.

The central question: Are Syrah and Shiraz the same, as many in the industry claim? Or have 200 years of cultivation in different hemispheres produced enough differences to consider them unique grapes? We have put the question to our club members through guided tastings over the years, and many of you have weighed in. We have drawn some of our own conclusions...have you?

We will follow up shortly with a final opportunity to share your thoughts and reflections. You will receive a tasting guide and a brief online survey to complete at your own pace and convenience. Comparing the two wines can be a fun exercise in fine-tuning your pallet and challenging yourself to "think while you drink." There are no right or wrong answers here, and your personal findings are as valuable as any.

Taste the wines in whatever manner and order works for you. However, if you wish to be a little more formal and do a side-by-side comparison, decant them or let them breathe for a bit. Pair them with food. Enjoy them with friends. Or you could choose to lay them down and substitute a more aged pair from your cellar. But most importantly, take a moment to raise a glass to our Last Surrah!

In this shipment:

2016 Shiraz, Estate (Pre-Release)

Harvest Brix: 24.8 pH: 3.84 TA: 5.59 Alc: 14.5% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases produced: 93 Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

The Shiraz grape is thought to be named after the city of Shiraz in Iran, near where the process of wine making possibly originated 7000 years ago. An article by Anahita Shams for BBC News (Feb. 2017) discusses the thriving wine industry in Shiraz from around 2,500 BC up until 1979, when Iran's Islamic rulers banned alcohol.

Regardless of its origin, it seems to have spread via France. Ship manifests show that in 1832 it was introduced into Australia by James Busby, an immigrant who brought with him vine clippings labeled as 'scyras' from France. In

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his journal, Busby wrote: “According to the tradition of the neighbourhood the plant - scyras - was originally brought from Shiraz in Persia.” Since then, the Australians have developed Shiraz as their foremost wine grape.

In 2002-03, we planted two blocks of Australian Shiraz—one from a UC Davis heat treatment and the other in the form of cuttings taken from Ventana Vineyard, one of the original plantings of Shiraz in California. Some of you may remember that we made several early vintages of Monterey Shiraz from Ventana grapes, and that the Rorden family has a history with that vineyard long predating Cantiga. Our first substantial harvest from our estate planting was in 2007 and were struck by its similarity to the bolder, mountain grown Shirazes from Australia. We have been making a small, highly cherished batch every year since then.

NOTE: Our **Ambassadors** and **Professional Winos** will receive a single bottle of **2013 Library Shiraz** along with the current release.

2016 Syrah, Estate (Exclusive Club Release)

Harvest Brix: 24.4 pH: 3.84 TA: 5.84 Alc: 14.3% RS: 0% ML: 0%
Cases: 60 Aging: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

The ancient connection between the grapes of Persia and France is shrouded in mystery and speculation. Legend tells us that the grape was brought from the Middle East into southern France by a returning crusader, Guy De'Sterimberg. He became a hermit and developed a vineyard on a steep hill where he lived in the Rhône River Valley. It became known as the *Hermitage*. However, DNA testing conducted in 1998 on French Syrah—the later name for Hermitage—that seems to instead link the Syrah grape to local French varieties, thus throwing into question the genetic link between Syrah grapes and the wines of ancient Shiraz.

Syrah first came to the United States in 1878, but it wasn't until the 1970s that the grape spread widely through California, adapting particularly well in the Sierra Foothills and Central Coast. It is popular both as a pure variety and as the structural backbone of Rhône-style blends.

Alongside our Shiraz, we planted a block of our estate vineyard with two French Syrah clones, and in 2007 we crushed the first substantial harvest from these vines. From the start, we were struck by the depth and concentration of flavor and the boldness of structure. The quality eclipsed any other Syrah grapes we could find. However, the quality was inversely proportionate to the quantity, making this an exclusive wine for our club. Over the past decade the production gradually declined, and we recently replanted it with the Australian clone. The 2016 vintage you are receiving is our Last “Surrah.”

NOTE: Our **Ambassadors** and **Professional Winos** will receive a single bottle of **2013 Library Syrah** along with the current release.

2018 Barbera, Sierra Foothills

Harvest Brix: 25.5 pH: 3.33 TA: 6.95 Alc: 15.0% RS: 0.0% ML: 0%
Cases produced: 181 Aging: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

Cantiga's Barbera is a popular favorite for many, but it is one we only make every few years. Fortunately, we had an abundance in 2018 and are able to offer it to our club a second time. Over the past year, the wine's bright acidity has mellowed slightly, allowing the depth of the fruit to unfold and the essence of the varietal characteristics to shine. You might detect pomegranate and plum fruit notes, and a whiff of rose petals and violets. As always, enjoy this wine with Italian food. It's an absolute staple for pizza night!