

# Cambiata Tannat, 2009 Rocosa Loma Vineyard

## THE SECRET TO MAKING GREAT TANNAT or I COULD BE A PHILISTINE WINEMAKER

Because of its ability to absorb oxygen and stay reductive, qualities that contribute to the grape's heart healthy benefits, high quality Tannat requires significantly more barrel time than other big red wines. Because of this added expense, a financial advisor might consider a winery's aspiration to pursue great Tannat a questionable business decision. In the 1990s, fiscally responsible winemakers from Madiran pioneered micro oxygenation as a convenient method for rounding out Tannat. The technique helps make the wine more palatable for those not born and raised in the Madiran and allows winemakers to improve their cash positions by releasing the wine months earlier. Tannat is gaining in popularity and possibly the increase in consumption can be attributed to the benefits of micro-ox; per Michel Rolland it certainly helps in Bordeaux despite the region's heritage claim of old world ways and its restrictive cannon, the cru caste. Nevertheless, I make my Tannat the old fashioned way; I let it sit, always at least two years, sometimes closer to three. Besides allowing the wine to develop slowly, the added barrel time concentrates flavors and facilitates the breakdown of yeast and sediment, enriching the wine with mouth filling polysaccharides. Can I be categorized as a Philistine winemaker for avoiding micro oxygenation or for simply pursuing this old world grape? Am I unreasonably holding on to the past? Am I naive to think that bringing cool climate Tannat to a relatively Tannat free market is relevant?

Goethe said "Everything has been thought of before; the task is to think of it again in ways that are appropriate in one's current circumstances." New technology certainly influences current circumstances but turning back from technology can revive character perhaps inadvertently lost. We added yeast to grape must for "quality control" but stopped because some wine drinkers prefer the voice of providence working through their wine. Perhaps the wine drinker who prefers Tannat's rustic texture and flavors also prefers analog music to digital sound or chooses pesto made by mortar and pestle rather than a time-saving food processor. Tannat could be the perfect wine for a Philistine wine drinker wanting to preserve agrarian heritage or conversely it could be perfect for the progressive chef looking for less mainstream wines to accompany and complete an expanding culinary repertoire. Either way, Tannat is a wine that seems more comfortable in a rural and countrified setting. It makes commentary on our dinner table the way the slow food movement provokes, with a hurrah towards primitivism.

From the vineyard: We farm two clones of Tannat side by side. Because the 2009 harvest was cool and we experienced a few rain storms, one of the clones fared better than the other and consequently this year's blend contains more of what we refer to as the "loose cluster clone." This clone is a bit more tannic than the other so expect the 2009 wine to really open up in the glass and easily handle the most savory and flavorful cuisine. Don't be afraid to add anchovies to your meat sauces and stews; this wine will tame and complement.

From the Cellar: The grapes for this wine were harvested cold and we let them sit in tank until they naturally started to ferment. We pumped over the fermentation in the morning and in the evening completed a "rack and return" tank draining to fully break up the cap. We pressed at dryness, let the wine settle a day and then moved it to barrel where it sat, except for one racking, for 28 months. We used 40% new French oak.

From the Winemaker: This wine is a great story teller when served with slow cooked shanks (particularly lamb) or with venison and savory stews. While this wine is ready to drink, you will be well rewarded if you lay a few bottles down for drinking in 10+ years.

433 cases produced released January 1, 2013

100% 2009 Tannat from the Rocosa Loma Vineyard, Monterey

Harvested between October 27<sup>th</sup> and November 3<sup>rd</sup>

Harvest Brix = 25.0, TA = 0.68, pH = 3.67, Alcohol 14.5%, Residual Sugar = zero

91 points from Wine Enthusiast, 91 Points Steve Tanzer, International Wine Cellar

Gold Medal: Sunset Magazine Wine Competition, Gold Medal: Orange County Wine Competition

