

2023 Vina Cota Oklai

Promina, Croatia

In the ocean of futility that is the wine business, very few things are as frustrating as trying to paint the full experience of drinking a wine at its origin without resorting to box checking or overused superlatives. But when we visited Petar Cota's (TSO-tah) corner of the Dalmatian hinterlands, we immediately knew it would be one of these ineffable experiences. After arriving at sunset to hike to the spectacular Manojlovački waterfalls, rousing the Roman military camp of Burnum (dating back to Augustus), making a night visit to the vineyards we ended up at Petar's home and cellar in the village of Oklaj. And after an incredible meal, learning about the family history and tasting through finished wines and many experiments in the cellar, an equation emerged: Krka River + Dinaric alps + Adriatic climate + Bura winds + Karst limestone + local grapes + good people = Vina Cota

VINEYARDS

The Krka river is the largest travertine cascade system in Europe. There are 17 stunning waterfalls of crystalline water with an incredible diversity of flora and fauna. Its source gushes out from underneath the Dinaric alps, highest mountains in Croatia. They keep the harsher weather at arms length while the coastal mountains keep the sea's direct influence at bay. These mountains are also the source of the famous Bura winds, dry, cold and intense high pressure winds that flow down towards the warmer low pressure Adriatic. They can be so violent as to close highways, tear off roof tiles, and keep ferries moored to their docks. Equally important, they cool and dry the vines. The South-easterly Jugo wind (aka Sirocco) also hits here. Warm and full of disease-causing moisture, the Jugo is bad. Nevertheless, both winds require heavy cover crops and foot stomping fertilizer into the soil to prevent them to be blown away. Nitrogen fixing is tricky here and requires a lot of manual labor. And the stones! You really need to drive through the Dalmatian Coast to fully understand this. Stones are to Dalmatia what shrimp are to Bubba Gump. And while we normally jump to Friuli and the Carso for hot limestone and Dolomite rock talk, it actually runs from that eastern edge of the Italian/Slovenian border all the way down through Dalmatia as well. Countless sinkholes, caves, and underground rivers litter this landscape and flavor the water that the vines drink.

WINE MAKING

Petar enjoys his day job in aluminum construction and his brother is an accomplished furniture carpenter. Both are using these skills to rebuild older structures on their property along with new ones. There's also a direct link between construction and winemaking. A measure twice cut once philosophy in the cellar insofar as keeping things practical, efficient, maintaining an attention to detail, and being patient. A similar zone for both pursuits.

NOTES & PAIRINGS

A co-fermented blend of Lasina, Plavina and Merlot. In addition to 2022 being an exceptional year practically devoid of diseases, this fruit also comes from the highest elevations they farm. The co-ferm is Lasina dominant, which is saying something since there's roughly 17 hectares planted in the whole country. It has low tannins, powerful aromas, high sugar potential, but fairly mellow in terms of acidity. This is where Plavina comes in. While it is the second most planted red in Dalmatia (~500 hectares), it's still less than one third of the most planted red which is Plavac Mali. Nevertheless, it's the perfect counterbalance to Lasina due to its high acidity and low sugar content. Merlot grows really well here and rounds out the edges with salty ripe fruit and structure. Everything was macerated for 4-5 days and then spontaneously fermented in polyethylene tanks, stainless steel and used oak barrels. Bottled unfinned and unfiltered with zero additions, it's light in terms of weight and alcohol, but has plenty of ripeness and texture. A year round red.

ANALYTICS & PRONUNCIATION

PRODUCER: Vina Cota (Vina Tso-tah)

APPELLATION: Promina

GRAPE COMPOSITION: Lasina, Plavina, Merlot

CLIMATE: Mediterranean

SOILS: Clay, limestone

MACERATION & AGING: 3 days of maceration

ALCOHOL: 12.8%

RESIDUAL SUGAR: 1.8 g/l

ACIDITY: 6.1 g/l



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PO Box 1270 | Los Altos, California 94023 | USA

www.DanchAndGranger.com

info@DanchAndGranger.com