



# Merry Monks

Wine Club of Cantiga Wineworks

PO Box 66, Somerset, CA 95684

(530) 621-1696

merrymonks@cantigawine.com



February 1, 2018

WC 2018-Q1

## The Question of Origin

When speaking of country of origin of a grape varietal, what exactly do we mean? Don't grapevines, like humans, claim a common origin? What happened during the epic span of their migration and evolution that adapted them to specific environments and gave them their unique characteristics? Well, since you asked...

### A little history...

For those of you who love a good read and share our interest in the history of our craft, we would recommend Patrick E. McGovern's book, *Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viticulture* (Princeton University Press, 2003). Drawing on archaeology, archaeobotany and DNA studies, McGovern traces the origin of the cultivated wine grape to Transcaucasia (specifically Georgia and Armenia). Although the wild grape vine (*vitis vinifera*) spans the Mediterranean basin, it was in the Neolithic (8500-4000 BC) settlements of the Near East that humans first began to cultivate the fruit and make wine.

With human migration came the spread of early grape cultivars, among other agricultural products. McGovern points out a fascinating correlation between the spread of Proto-Indo-European language and the spread of agriculture. Linguists estimate the first speakers of PIE to have migrated from Transcaucasia and Eastern Turkey around 5000 BC, heading to Iran, Egypt and the Balkans. There is evidence that they brought viticulture and viniculture with them.

With the exception of the Balkan Peninsula, most of Europe shows no evidence of grape vine domestication until much later, in the Iron Age (ca. 800 BC). Most likely, a cultivar spread westward via Greek colonists and was subsequently interbred with local wild grapes. This would help explain the wide range of genetic distinctions throughout Europe. *Vitis vinifera*'s amazing variety today is largely due to cultivation and selection.

Amazing genealogical work with grapevines is being done, with the help of DNA analysis. We are only at the beginning of creating a picture of how and when different grape varieties were developed and spread, and the interconnections between them. And the story continues even today, with globalization and the export of cultivars to different regions (cabernet grown in China?!), where they continue to evolve and adapt to their new environments.

We are pleased to offer you three exciting wines in your shipment, each with its own unique history and origin:

### 2015 Barbera, Cooper Vineyard (Club pre-release)

Harvest Brix: 26.4      pH: 3.57      TA: 6.75      Alc: 15.4%      RS: 0.1%      ML: 0%  
Cases produced: 131      Barrel age: 15 months in mostly neutral European oak

Barbera is the third most planted wine grape in Italy, focused most notably in the Piedmont area, where it was first documented in the thirteenth century. Recent DNA evidence suggest that Barbera may be related to the French-Spanish Mourvedre. In the 19th and 20th century, waves of Italian immigrants brought Barbera to California—mostly in the San Joaquin Valley but some in the Sierra Foothills. Today, the Sierra Foothills are considered an ideal region for Barbera, and the resulting wines are exceptional. The wines produced from Barbera are characterized by their medium body, bright acidity, deep color and abundant fruit (particularly pomegranate and cherry notes). Cantiga's Barbera is made in an Italian style, retaining its natural acidity and pure fruit characteristics. It is ideally paired with Italian cuisine!

ESTATE WINERY & TASTING ROOM: 5980 Meyers Lane, Somerset, CA 95684

[www.cantigawine.com](http://www.cantigawine.com)

## 2012 Zinfandel, Herbert Vineyard

Harvest Brix: 24.6      pH: 3.43      TA: 6.88      Alc: 14.9%      RS: 0%      ML: 0%  
Cases produced: 308      Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

“In recent history, Zinfandel was California’s ‘mystery grape’ because its origins were unknown. DNA fingerprinting has confirmed that Italy’s Primitivo and Crljenak Kastelanski, an ancient Croatian variety, are genetically identical to Zinfandel grapes. However, differences in vine vigor and cluster size distinguish Zinfandel from its genetic twins, and further differences in cultivation, terroir and winemaking combine to give California Zinfandel its own particular flavor profile with a truly American name, history and style... Studies indicate that the grape used for making California Zinfandel probably originated in Croatia. Historians believe that in the 1820s, a nursery owner brought Zinfandel cuttings that were Croatian in origin to the United States from an Austrian collection... Zinfandel was introduced to California during the Gold Rush somewhere between 1852 and 1857 and became widely planted because it thrived so well in the state’s climate and soil. Today, Zinfandel is the third-leading wine grape variety in California.” (Cited from WineInstitute.org)

At Cantiga, as with all our wines we make our Zinfandel in the European style—medium bodied with bright acidity, clean raspberry fruit and no residual sugar. This contrasts with the popular style of blending, oak treatment, malolactic and residual sugar—as well as the infamous white zinfandel—that are more commonly seen in California. We are thrilled that the abundance of this vintage allows us to offer our club a second release of this wine, as it has truly blossomed in the nine months since its release.

## 2011 “Library” Shiraz, Estate (Club-only release for our Cellar Groupie 3-bottle members)

Harvest Brix: 25.9      pH: 3.78      TA: 5.83      Alc: 14.9%      RS: 0%      ML: 0%  
Cases produced: 106      Barrel age: 3 years in mostly neutral European oak

Legend has it that the Shiraz (Syrah, Fr.) 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. According to this story, the grape was brought 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—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.

Nevertheless, the Shiraz grape was introduced into Australia in 1832 by James Busby, an immigrant who brought with him vine clippings from France. The Australians have been developing Shiraz as their foremost wine grape for two centuries.

In the 1970s, an Australian Shiraz clone was also introduced in California. It is available in several “heat treatments” (resulting from tests for resistance to pests and disease at UC Davis), but these are generally believed to be strains of the same Australian clone. We have two plantings of Shiraz at Cantiga; one is a current heat treatment selection and the other was planted from cuttings taken from the original planting of Shiraz in California. Our Shiraz vines produce a very low yield per acre and give us exceptionally high-quality, rich, concentrated fruit with blueberry and pepper notes. Our Shiraz is not only outstanding with Australian lamb; it also complements spicy Middle Eastern and Indian cuisines.

## Library Shiraz “Vertical” (Club-only release for our Professional Wino and Ambassador of Oenos members)

We are very excited to be able to offer a “vertical” run of Library Estate Shiraz vintages to our upper tier clubs! Our Professional Wino (6-bottle) members will receive the 2009 and 2010 vintages (1 bottle of each), while our Ambassador (12-bottle) members will receive the 2007 through 2010 vintages (1 bottle of each). These are some of our most rare and special wines! If you are interested in expanding your run to include the 2011 vintage, please let us know and we can check for availability.

*We hope you enjoy, and we thank you for your patronage!*