



# BIRICHINO MALVASIA BIANCA 2010

**You can't be too rich**, too beautiful, or too *birichino*. For the Italians it connotes mischievous, impish, or nymphean- a mark of vitality and embrace of *La Dolce Vita* [in this case rendered *molto secco*]. Of Classical Greek origin, Malvasia threaded her way through the forests of Calabria before slipping ashore in California under cover of darkness. Her fragrance of jasmine, lime blossom and elderflower suggest something quite sweet and sybaritic, though as the first sip passes the lips, she is revealed bone dry, crystalline, and clear.

## WINEMAKING NOTES from John Locke and Alex Krause – Birichini at Large

Temperamentally, we are very sympathetic with the ideals of the Natural Wine Movement. Our approach, therefore, is to maximize the flavor and complexity resident in the grapes themselves, without adding anything not there in the first place. Our task is to grow the grapes in a spot and in such a fashion as to have potential for clusters oozing with complexity, mineral crunch and perfume, yet capable of revealing these virtues with elegance and balance. We then pick ripe enough to achieve all the good stuff, but not so ripe as to end up with a dearth of acidity and clarity, or an excess of alcohol. A combination of gentle Champagne and long escalation press cycles help us wring every sliver of aromatic potential out of the skins and pulp between the moment of harvest and the start of fermentation, which occurs in stainless steel. Judicious lees contact and a little *bâtonnage* through the winter and spring contribute a lovely, creamy textural foil to *malvasia's* nervy acidity, while also augmenting the wine's natural resistance to oxidation and preserving freshness.

## HARVEST NOTES

With each vintage, as the days grow shorter and the fruit enters the home stretch, we are nervous parents shuttling back and forth checking on our precious fruit, making sure no-one's getting sunburned, or not wearing enough chlorophyll, and we keep one hairy eyeball on the weather forecast until the last cluster is in the barn. 2010 made us [and most California vintners] more nervous than we care to remember, with an atypically long, cold, summer familiar to Mark Twain, a brief but infernal blast of heat in August followed by an unseasonably early start to the winter rainy season. Fortunately, the *malvasia* vineyard is sited on a bench in the rain shadow of the Santa Lucia Mountains to the West, and with extremely small fruit loads and deep roots, during the hot spell we didn't see any sign of water stress. When temperatures fell back to more moderate levels, ripening continued on trajectory. By the first week of October, the fruit displayed more of everything; aromatic intensity, power, and the natural acidity to sustain it. This record long, cool growing season produced a wine of remarkable flavor and density. Let us just say "11" and nothing further.

## PAIRINGS

Little Malvasia has learned, through her worldly travels, to flatter a diverse array of cuisine, from tea smoked duck, to a simply sautéed scallop, to *pasta al pesto*. Other known associates include lemon rosemary chicken, calamari, snow crab, steamed mussels, sheep or goat's milk cheeses, citrus salads, pan-Asian cuisine [curries, lemongrass, ginger, etc.], braised lamb shank with caramelized onions [really!!], patio furniture.

**THE LABEL** Annabelle Verhoye, a New York illustrator born in Germany and raised in France, has contributed extensively to American, European and Asian magazines and journals, among them *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The (Asian) Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*. Her clients have included *Walt Disney*, *Playboy*, *Taschen*, *Chronicle Books*, and *Bonny Doon Vineyard*. She captured elegantly the feminine, floral mystique and the lush tropical aspect of *malvasia*, while paying homage to its roots in the forests of Calabria. [www.annabelleverhoye.com](http://www.annabelleverhoye.com)

**VITAL STATISTICS:** Harvest: Oct. 7, 2011 at 23° Brix TA: 7.1g/l pH: 3.39 Alc.: 13.0% RS: 0.1g/l (dry!)  
**VARIETY:** 100% Malvasia Bianca **COLOR:** Pale straw with emerald accents **SERVICE:** 13° C

'09 PRESS: *Phaneuf 2010* ★★ ★ **LA PRESSE** \*\*\* "Délicieux."

*Wine Enthusiast* Editor's Choice, Best Buy, 90 Points, Dec. 2010

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