



The 2006 Vellutini Ranch Syrah

In honor of the matriarchal component of the Martinelli family, we named this vineyard, "Vellutini Ranch." It lies on Martinelli Road where the historical and most well known section of the property, Jackass Hill, exists. "Vellutini" was Luisa Martinelli's maiden name. Giuseppe Martinelli has received all of the credit for the planting and farming of Jackass Hill, but family lore has it that Luisa was the person who wore the pants in the family, or in this case, was in charge of the firearms. She did all of the hunting. When Giuseppe was a young boy in Italy, he had a gun blow up in his hands during discharge. He never touched a gun again. The Martinellis were a farming family in rural 19th century America, so guns were a very important tool and crucial to survival for that way of life. The surrounding forests were filled with game and Luisa took advantage of the plethora of critters living there to feed her family. Family legend has it that in one year's time, she caught, roasted and stewed, 425 jackrabbits. The exact number of squirrels consumed during this same time has never been verbally recorded by the family, yet birds were known as a particularly high favorite of Luisa's. To fool the Game Warden she would string the fallen creatures around her hips beneath her long skirts. One day, coming down off of the wooded hill after a successful hunt, there stood the Warden directly in her path, looking all important with his chest puffed out and badge shining. He grinned at her and said, "I know you have been poaching again!" Luisa grinned merrily back and said, "You can only prove it by checking under my skirt!" It traditionally remained that in this manner Luisa was forever able to avoid the inconvenience of a citation and earn the grudging respect of the local Game Warden.

The Syrah vineyard is only one acre in size, planted in 2001 with clone 877 and 420A rootstock. It sits on the western edge of the Russian River Valley on a north east slope, which receives the first ray of early morning sunshine. The Vellutini Ranch vineyards are bordered on the east by Jackass Hill and on the south by Jackass Vineyard, sharing the same Franciscan soil type. Giuseppe and Luisa sold the property to Luisa's two brothers in 1916, who planted Zinfandel there. The land eventually passed to Luisa's nephew, Marino Vellutini, who stopped farming the vineyard in 1970 and the old Zin vines eventually died. Lee and Carolyn Martinelli bought back the property from their Vellutini cousins in year 2000. Along with the hired help of their teenaged grandson, Anthony Britton, Jr., they planted the steep slopes with Zinfandel and Syrah. The two vineyards are comprised of eight small blocks. The Zinfandel is planted with bud wood from Jackass Hill and Jackass Vineyard. (*The first release of the 2007 Vellutini Ranch Zinfandel will be coming this fall.*)

This is the inaugural release of the Vellutini Ranch Syrah. The wine has a perfumed nose of violets, smoke, leather, coffee bean, and wild game, with rich lingering flavors of black raspberry, ripe cherry, plum sauce, brown sugar, sweet meats, bacon fat, tar, finishing with sweet tannins.

Enjoy the wines and cheers to all!

Julianna Martinelli ~ Spring 2009