

Wine of the week: VIE 2005 Roussanne

Another mystery solved

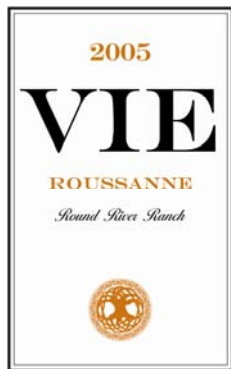
Our columnist finds a new winery focusing on rare Rhône varietals

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Bryan Kane is a longtime wine enthusiast and home winemaker who developed a taste for Rhône varietals and struggled repeatedly to find enough California grapes for his home bottlings.

After years of begging top vineyards for seconds – flawed or unripe bunches left on the vine after harvest – Kane decided to start a commercial venture that would enable him to buy top-quality grapes from the start.



His new winery, named simply VIE, ("life" in French), focuses on Syrah, Mourvèdre, Grenache, Roussanne and Zinfandel grapes sourced from low-yielding vineyards that produce fruit good enough to make wine with a minimum of intervention.

Consulting winemaker Scott Shapley, formerly assistant winemaker at Rhône stars Novy and Siduri, adds professional know-how.

This year marks Kane's third commercial vintage and the first year he has released a white wine, which just so happens to be our Wine of the Week.

Like so many Rhône varietals planted in California, this 4.5-acre planting in Lake County's Bachelor Valley was first thought to be something else.

After the vines began producing, the owners discovered that they had planted the rarer Roussanne instead of the planned Viognier.

As with most of his wines, Kane uses indigenous yeasts, ages the wine in used French oak (to keep the wood from dominating) and returns the final blend to barrels for another six or so months of development.

The wine has substantial body and a viscous character that sets it apart from Chardonnay.

Flavors of lemon, pear and unripe pineapple dominate, with notes of caramel, oak and a stony, mineral finish that cuts clean on the palate.

Outstanding with roast chicken or turkey.