

Clay Station Winery of Lodi, California represents a refreshing perspective on the usual wine industry offerings by focusing on releasing non-traditional estate-grown varietal wines from one of California's emerging quality winegrowing regions. Long an unsung source of exciting and diverse quality grape varieties, such as Viognier, Zinfandel, Syrah and Carignane, many from old vines, Lodi now enjoys the spotlight as it gains national recognition for the quality of its wines.

The Clay Station property is a 1,250 acre vineyard planted to 7 different grape varieties, and 300 acres have been set aside for natural habitat in keeping with the sustainable agricultural focus that the Lodi region has been pioneering for over a decade. The iron rich, gravelly clay soils of this northeastern corner of Lodi, at the foothills of the Sierra Nevada range offers a great microclimate for the cultivation of many different varieties including this Viognier. All told, the Lodi region has 276 acres of Viognier under vine.

The 2003 Clay Station Viognier is an elegant fruit forward white wine with perfumed, floral notes of ripe peach, orange rind, guava, honeysuckle and jasmine. It is an opulent wine with a remarkable silky viscosity and a long, lingering finish. It is available nationally and retails for \$15 a 750 ml bottle.

For some fun with your readers pass on these trivia questions that will test their Viognier knowledge. Questions courtesy of Wine Smarts from Smartsco always offering some drink for thought....

**Which of the following describes a wine made from Viognier grapes?**

- a) Grapefruit, grass
- b) Blackberry, cedar
- c) Perfumey, peaches, orange blossom
- d) Astringent, cherry, plum

Answer: c) Perfumey, peaches, orange blossom.

**Which food would be a great match with Viognier?**

- a) Hot dogs
- b) Steamed sole
- c) Thai-spice red snapper
- d) All of the above

Answer: d) All of the above.

**Wines made from the luscious Viognier grape are often blended with which grapes?**

- a) Marsanne
- b) Chardonnary
- c) Zinfandel
- d) Riesling

Answer a) Marsanne

**Extra 'Lodi' Credit!**

**When was Lodi recognized as a distinct appellation, or American Viticultural Area?**

- a) 1946
- b) 1956
- c) 1966
- d) 1986

Answer: d) 1986