

BEST SAUVIGNON BLANC

Sbragia Family Vineyards



"We treat everyone who walks through the door as if they're family." —Ed Sbragia

By Julie Fadda Powers

"I like wines that don't hurt me," says Ed Sbragia, owner/winemaker at Sbragia Family Vineyards, of his style when it comes to making his Dry Creek Valley Sauvignon Blanc. "At first we only used grapes from the Home Ranch vineyard, but then we expanded to include the Schmidt Ranch vineyard. The result is a more mild, rounded flavor." When he says "we," he's referring to both himself and his son, Adam Sbragia, since they're a father/son winemaking team. "He does all the work and I take all the credit," says Ed with a smile.

The family's winemaking philosophy follows Ed's father, Gino's, motto: "Keep the cellar clean and the barrels topped." It strives to use the best grapes and a minimalist approach with 100 percent French oak barrels (the amount of new ones used depends on the grapes).

The Sauvignon Blanc is fermented in 100 percent stainless steel tanks, then placed in seasoned barrels until bottling. The 2012 vintage features tropical and citrus aromas, with grapefruit and lemongrass on the finish. As the winery's highest production wine, a total of 5,030 cases were produced that year. Total production for all the winery's offerings, which also include Chardonnay, Merlot, Zinfandel and Cabernet Sauvignon, is about 12,000 cases annually.

The Sbragia family has been farming in Dry Creek Valley for several generations, beginning with prunes and apples. The first grapes were planted in the 1950s. "I like grapes a lot better than prunes," says Sbragia, who grew up in Dry Creek Valley and promised his father he'd one day get the family name on a bottle. Meantime, he heralded a rewarding, 32-year career as winemaker at Beringer Vineyards, where he continues to consult and also represent its wines worldwide. (He's also the only winemaker to get *Wine Spectator's* wine of the year with a white wine, a Beringer Chardonnay made with grapes from Napa's Gamble Ranch Vineyard; an award he also won with his Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.)

It was at Beringer where Sbragia first began crafting wine under his own label. The first vintage was 2001. In 2006, he purchased the Dry Creek Valley winery in which Sbragia Family Vineyards are now made. The 20-acre property has a 7-acre Zinfandel vineyard, called "La Promessa" (the promise), named for the promise Ed made to his father years before. Its views of the valley



Adam and Ed Sbragia are the father-and-son winemaking team at Sbragia Family Vineyards.



are outstanding, and it hosts several events and weddings each year. But a simple wine tasting visit is enough to

bring people back. The

hospitality is top-notch, as are the wines. "We treat everyone who walks through the door as if they're family," says Ed.

"There are 1,000+ wineries in Napa and Sonoma counties. It's kind of a miracle to have someone walk through the door. So we treat them with respect."

Sbragia owns five vineyards in Dry Creek Valley, including La Promessa, Gino's Vineyard and Home Ranch (where Ed grew up), which grows Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Zinfandel. It purchases grapes from other vineyards in both Sonoma and Napa counties. When asked which grapes he prefers (Napa or Sonoma), Ed simply can't decide.

After tasting through the winery's phenomenal lineup, I couldn't decide, either. It's rare I come upon a winery where I truly enjoy *every single thing* I taste—but that was the case at Sbragia.

"We all feel we make the best wine," says Ed of winning BEST Sauvignon Blanc. "When a group of people say the same thing, it says something about the hard work we've done in the vineyard and the winery. Thank you!" ♦



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