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## Orinda's Crane Terrace Winery joins bonded ranks of AVA

By Vera Kochan



Crane Terrace vines planted on the cave exterior  
Photos Vera Kochan

Nestled on a private estate in Orinda's Sleepy Hollow neighborhood, Crane Terrace Winery, a 2-year Lamorinda Wine Growers Association member, had once produced their wines exclusively for personal enjoyment or sharing with friends. Having gone through the rigors of becoming bonded this past July, the winery is now entitled to sell to the public.

Crane Terrace's General Manager Leanne Pilot was more than knowledgeable about every aspect of the business and its history since starting with the winery in 2016 as a property manager. Coming from Chicago and working in the IT industry, Pilot's move to California exposed her to a lot of great wines, and a new passion was born.

Initially, the winery's approximately 4,500 grape vines were planted in 2004, along hillsides that could easily resemble Italy's Tuscany region. This extensive number of vines makes Crane Terrace the largest winery in the Lamorinda American Viticultural Area (AVA). The entire property encompasses 8 acres, but only 3-4 acres are devoted to the vines which grow along steep slopes producing Syrah, Grenache, Chardonnay, and Roussanne. Crane Terrace's first vintage was bottled in 2006, and in 2010 a lengthy cave was dug through one of the hillsides and now serves as a cool storage area furnished with chandeliers, soft lights, a polished banquet-style table and chairs for either tastings or meetings. "The wines kept getting better and better," said Pilot. "We needed to go beyond just making wine for friends and family." Crane Terrace's 2017 Chardonnay back label states, "Grown in the East Bay hills on our family's private estate vineyard, our Chardonnay grapes are biodynamically farmed and tended by hand using 'old world' care and techniques that produce low yielding high quality fruit. This wine was produced in temperature controlled stainless steel and aged in the finest French cooperage producing a wine that's rich in character."

"We are completely hand-farmed and don't use any pesticides or toxins," explained Pilot, adding that they use a vineyard management company that comes to prune the vines and do the picking at harvest-time.

Crane Terrace bottles, on average, 50 cases of Grenache, 50

cases of Chardonnay and 300 cases of Syrah. "We've blended the Roussanne with the Grenache in the past, or our winemaker will use it for some other purpose of his own," Pilot explained.

The winemaker's tasting notes for their 2021 Chardonnay are: "Nose – Very 'Chablis-like' with notes of citrus and hints of vanilla. On the palate, this wine is structured with solid acid, lemon, mineral, and green apple." The recommended pairing is to serve it with seafood.

With their 2021 Grenache: "Nose -- Restrained notes of strawberry, flint, and cedar. On the palate this wine is suitably structured with solid acidity, meaty with notes of strawberry, and violets, and of light body." The recommended pairing is savory, grilled meats with smoky barbecue sauces and grilled vegetables such as zucchini or eggplant.

The 2021 Syrah: "Nose – filled with leather, tobacco, and hints of olallieberry. On the palate, you'll find notes of raspberry, blackberry, black pepper, with structured acidity and medium to light body for a Syrah." Suggested pairing with duck, grilled chicken and an assortment of hard artisanal cheeses.

Crane Terraces poured at Moraga's 2022 Pear and Wine Festival and more recently at last month's Lafayette Art and Wine Festival. Pilot is on the cusp of completing a new website. In the meantime, anyone wishing to contact the winery can email Pilot at [Leannepilot@craneterracewinery.com](mailto:Leannepilot@craneterracewinery.com). Local deliveries will be available.



Vines planted along the hillside at Crane Terrace Winery Photos Vera Kochan



Inside Crane Terrace Winery cave Photos Vera Kochan

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