

# cambiata

## AN ESTATE WINERY

### **HISTORY:**

Cambiata is a small independently-owned winery. For 25 years I have made wine and grown grapes for quality California wineries. In 2002, following the fortunate securement of a long-term Monterey vineyard lease, I decided to produce wines under my own label. Simply, this venture came about from my enjoyment of making wine and the desire to have full control over winemaking and the end result. My intention is to make distinctive wines for wine enthusiasts who appreciate learning about and enjoying great food wines, wines that go beyond the Franco triumvirate of Bordeaux, Burgundy and Rhone.

### **PHILOSOPHY:**

By choosing Cambiata for my label, I wanted to work with a concept that broadened the vocabulary of the way that we usually think about wine.

Cambiata in musical language means more than the literal translation of “exchange” or “changed note.” It is the added tonal dimension that occurs when two chords momentarily share properties, so that the transition has greater depth and melliflence. It was a radical idea back in the sixteenth century and was almost outlawed, along with a large group of polyphonic idioms.

The cambiata is expressed on my label with the idea of divine proportion. People gravitate towards objects or art that incorporate divine proportion: the Parthenon, the Taj Mahal, The Last Supper. These proportions are also common in nature, and, for example, are seen in the rose and the nautilus shell. On the Cambiata label the use of the spiral refers to the recursive shape of the nautilus, and of the recursive character of the wine, elements that continue to appear vintage after vintage, and work to better define, expand and make the *terroir* more evident--somewhat like the time dimension that's needed for the musical cambiata to work. Divine proportion, then, is a metaphor for the balance between *terroir* and wine, where the wine proportionally expresses the vineyard.

I chose “Gradus Ad Parnassum,” the title of Joseph Fux’s 1725 music textbook, as Cambiata’s motto, and this appears on the wine’s label. This pedagogical thesis, translated from Latin under the supervision of Bach and still in print today, was used by Leopold Mozart to teach his young son, Wolfgang Amadeus, the fundamentals of counterpoint--one essential fundamental being the beautifully melodic and vivaciously harmonic Nota Cambiata. “Gradus ad Parnassum” translates as Steps to Parnassus, the mountain of the muses. Fux chose the title to implore his students to rigorously study and practice, to climb the metaphorical mountain. Over vintages, a winemaker’s ability grows with the knowledge he engages. You can make fine wine from the start if you hire good help but to make wine with soul you yourself must study, develop philosophies and rigorously follow those beliefs. “Without method,” Fux writes, “the passionate and the ambitious will remain forever desperately athirst.” This fable carries Fux’s lesson--that the muses will only grant mastery to those who do the climbing.

### **WINEMAKING AND WINES:**

I personally survey every row in the vineyard and top every barrel with my own hands. I focus my attention on the meticulous winemaking and farming practices that give rise to wines with distinct character and varietal expression and a clear sense of place. Cambiata wines must be worthy of fine foods and impeccably balanced.

Why Tannat and Albariño? I didn’t set out to plant unfamiliar varieties but when the opportunity arose to plant this small vineyard I found myself drawn to working with varieties that I thought were intriguing and that were relatively unexplored in the U.S. I also wanted to bring some new flavors to the wine enthusiast’s table. Anyone who has tasted Albariño and Tannat from their indigenous appellations is usually a fervent fan. I find them to be remarkable wine varieties that hopefully will have a bright future as the number of wine aficionados continues to grow.

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Albariño is just a beautiful grape. It is the customary white wine in northwestern Spain's fishing villages--not surprisingly, it goes superbly well with seafood. What I like so much about this grape is not just its crisp acidity but also the opulence that develops on the palate. This combination is what makes it so enormously versatile with food. In the nose, the citrus and spice aromas are complex but not overpowering. You could say Cambiata Albariño has forward aromas like Viognier, richness similar to Chardonnay and the crispness of Pinot Gris. Albariño, however, is singular, distinctive, delicious and definitely worth sharing with your best friends.

Tannat means tannin and therein lies the potential and the problem. No other grape seems to be surrounded by as much mysticism as Tannat, as if in its dark tannic depths lives a spirit that will challenge your sensibilities. After drinking this wine, will everything you thought you knew about red wine be suspect? Probably not but as a winemaker, I have never seen a wine behave so independently and imperviously to cellar treatments. When we tried to soften it, it only became tougher. We racked it, we splashed it and we still had to keep moving the bottling date further into the future. After months, we finally started to see the assembling of tannic structure and the emergence of an intense core of blackberry fruit. The results had lived up to Tannat's reputation. The Pyrenean Basque grape growers hold dear to their old Tannat vines, even though they are so close to Bordeaux. Creating a convincing version of this challenging varietal made me feel that I had a small part in this esteemed old winemakers club.



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