

# Dan Berger's Vintage Experiences

## The Weekly Wine Commentary

Volume XVII, Issue 29

September 5, 2013

### Screwcapped Reds

When Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon banished corks from his winery, he knew (better than almost anyone) what problems he would face.

Besides all the marketing issues, one was how to treat red wines at bottling. Typically a wine made to be aged a bit would have a dose of sulfur dioxide added just before the cork is inserted. But if the same exact amount of sulfur is used in a screwcapped wine, which typically creates a better seal than most corks, and then the wine is opened earlier than its target date, non-wine people (including some reviewers I know!) are treated to a whiff of an aroma that is not pleasant and which they midunderstand.

The wine smells reduced. And even though this aroma typically “blows off” once the wine has had a chance to sit in a glass for a while,

some people assume the wine is bad.

In fact, that small whiff of sulfur indicates to me that the wine will live well in the bottle, which is evident in two of the most recent Bonny Doon reds—Old Telegram and a terrific if exotic Syrah; see Tasting Notes.

One reason many wine makers shy away from screwcaps for their finer wines is this fear they have of not knowing when the wines will be opened. A wine that would benefit from bottle aging and gets a bit more sulfur to protect the wine from the ravages of oxygen might smell a bit odd if opened too soon.

The two above wines are simply sensational (and rated Exceptional), though some people won't give them enough time after removing the caps.

Also, some may assume that as capped wine, they must be consumed young. But they also will age well.

### Wine of the Week

2011 **Bonny Doon Contra**, Contra Costa County (\$16): A blend of Carignan and Mourvedre with other grapes, it has what Randall Grahm says is rustic elegance, an oxymoron, he notes. Carignan offers a lot of simplistic red fruit; complexity and minerality come from other varieties, notably blueberry from the Mourvedre and a hint of pomegranate from 9% Grenache. This stellar and decidedly quaffable wine needs at least an hour in a decanter to develop its depth. Best slightly chilled.



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### Tasting Notes

The wines below were tasted open within the last week.

#### Exceptional

2010 **Bonny Doon** Mourvedre, California, "Old Telegram" (\$45); This wine from old vines of San Benito County offers meaty and deep blueberry aromas. A great wine that should age well. Hard to find; call winery at 831-425-3625.



2010 **Bonny Doon** Syrah, Edna Valley, Jespersen Vineyard (\$40): The most difficult wine of the latest BD offerings to rate, this superb wine is for those who understand the distinctive herbal nature of the grape, with its wild, rustic/earthy tones. Phenomenal balance, with tannin for aging, but it also has fascinating fruit and a soil note! To order call winery at 831-425-3625.



2012 **Bonny Doon** Clos du Gilroy Grenache, Central Coast (\$18): Beaujolais lives! Fresh jam and a nouveau spice note, loads of hot-weather quaffability, with a classic varietal mid-palate and a delightful finish. Terrific wine!

