

Source: Wine Advocate #190, August 2010

It's good to see the highly commercial Randall Grahm finally get more serious about wine quality. Of course, he long ago laughed his way to the bank, selling hundreds of thousands of cases, promoting "terroir" while making massive quantities of commercial wines that had little evidence of any serious terroir or character. However, he seems to have found religion over the last few years. Grahm has decided to offer his Cigare Volant, a California take on France's Chateaufeuf du Pape, in three formats – his regular cuvee, one aged in large, presumably old wood foudres, and one aged in smaller demi-muids (which are still bigger than conventional barrels). All three are worth buying and drinking. Each is a blend of 60% Grenache, 32% Syrah, and the rest Mourvedre and Cinsault.

2007 LE CIGARE VOLANT

From: Santa Cruz, Central Coast, California, USA
 Variety: Rhone Blend
 Estimated Cost: \$36

The 2007 regular bottling, the Le Cigare Volant (Normale), is almost Burgundian in its floral, black cherry, plum, and foresty notes. The wine is round, medium-bodied, elegant, and should drink nicely for 4-6 years.



2007 BIEN NACIDO SYRAH

From: Santa Maria Valley Santa Barbara, Central Coast, California, USA
 Variety: Syrah
 Drink: 2010 - 2020
 Estimated Cost: \$40

Far more interesting is Grahm's 2007 Syrah Bien Nacido. Attractive bacon/lard notes intermixed with creme de cassis and tapenade, are present in this dark ruby/purple-tinged wine. Built with more power, intensity, and muscle, yet at the same time retaining its elegance, this is a wine that should drink nicely for up to a decade.



2008 LE CIGARE BLANC Beeswax Vineyard

From: Central Coast, California, USA
 Variety: Proprietary Blend
 Drink: 2010-2012
 Estimated Cost: \$22

Grahm has come through with a strong blend of Roussanne and Grenache Blanc with his 2008 Le Cigare Blanc from the Beeswax Vineyard. Crisp honeysuckle, nectarine, and mango notes are present in this elegant, medium-bodied, richly fruity, fresh, lively wine, which should have lots of flexibility with food and drink well for 1-2 years.

