

2010 ALBARIÑO • Ca' del Solo Vineyard & Jespersen Ranch • Central Coast

88

(\$18) Light yellow. An aromatic bouquet displays melon, quince, honeysuckle and jasmine. A fresh, silky midweight with juicy pit fruit and honeydew flavors and a hint of bitter orange pith. The smooth finish features good cut and grip, and a repeating orange note.



2009 LE CIGARE BLANC • Beeswax Vineyard • Arroyo Seco

90

(\$24) (58% grenache blanc and 42% roussanne) Green-tinged gold. Poached pear, melon and honey on the nose, with anise and bay leaf nuances adding complexity. Deep, chewy and broad, offering spice-accented orchard and pit fruit flavors sharpened by a bitter lemon pith nuance. Finishes smooth and sweet, with a touch of musky bee pollen.



2009 LE CIGARE BLANC RÉSERVE • *En Bonbonne* • Arroyo Seco

91

(\$35) (60.5% grenache blanc and 39.5% roussanne) Light, green-tinged gold. Herb-accented aromas of lime pith, white peach and pear skin, with hints of quinine and honey. Yellow plum, tangerine and orchard fruit flavors gain power and depth with air but retain very good focus. Bright and dry on the finish, which strongly echoes the mineral notes and hangs with very good chewy tenacity.



2010 CONTRA • Old Vine Field Blend • California

88

(\$15) Bright purple. Musky dark berry and cherry aromas show a distinctly primary, slightly jammy character. Grapy dark fruit flavors display good energy and a refreshingly bitter character, with good back-end bite. Finishes tangy, fruity and persistent.



2010 CLOS DE GILROY • Grenache • Central Coast

89

(\$18) Bright violet color. Black raspberry and cherry aromas are lifted by a note of peppery spice. A touch jammy, but the lively red and dark berry flavors display good clarity. A refreshingly bitter note of licorice comes up on the finish, which clings with very good tenacity. This wine is ridiculously easy to drink.



2008 SYRAH LE POUSSEUR • Central Coast

88

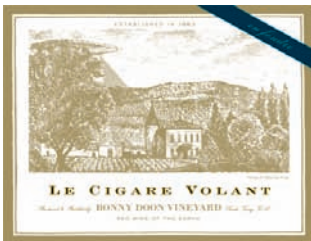
(\$20) Dark ruby. Cherry and dark chocolate on the nose, with complicating notes of licorice and cracked pepper. Firm, focused and on the dry side, with chewy dark fruit flavors and a touch of bitter herbs. Becomes more floral with air and finishes on a gently smoky note, with good grip and cut. I like this wine's balance and focus but would have enjoyed some more sweetness and flesh; aeration helps, and so might some bottle age.



2007 LE CIGARE VOLANT • California

91

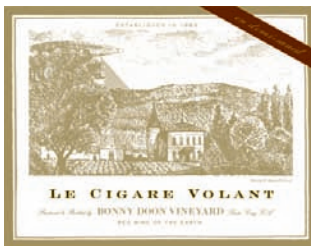
(\$35) (60% grenache, 32% syrah, 4% mourvedre and 4% cinsault): Bright ruby. Raspberry, bitter cherry, herbs and dried flowers on the nose and palate, along with subtle smokiness and a touch of candied licorice. Gain weight and spiciness with air and finishes very long, with clinging cherry and bitter chocolate flavors. This wine's structure bodes well for cellaring.



2007 LE CIGARE VOLANT • *en foudre* • California

92

(\$35) (60% grenache, 32% syrah, 4% mourvedre and 4% cinsault): Deep, bright ruby. Sexy, expressive aromas of red and dark berry preserves, incense and fresh flowers. Broad, supple and sweet, with very good depth and a seamless texture. Sappy black raspberry and anise flavors cling on the long, spice-accented finish. This bottling is more open-knit than the regular Cigare Volant and drinks very well right now.



2007 LE CIGARE VOLANT • *en demi-muid* • California

92

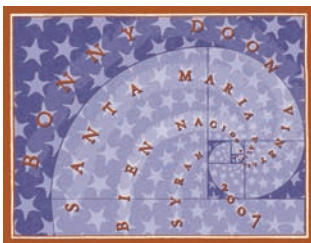
(\$35) (60% grenache, 32% syrah and 4% each of mourvedre and cinsault): Saturated ruby. Deep, spicy aromas of black and blue fruits, pipe tobacco and violet, with a suave mineral underpinning. Fleshy black raspberry and mulberry flavors are energized by building spice and cracked pepper qualities. Finishes with sweet dark berry compote and excellent clarity and persistence. Powerful but nicely balanced blend with the structure to age.



2007 SYRAH "ALAMO CREEK" • San Luis Obispo County

90

(\$35) Bright purple. Smoky, oak-spiced aromas of blackberry, blueberry and licorice, with a hint of pungent flowers. Broad and fleshy on entry, then firmer in the middle, with very good depth to its dark fruit and bitter chocolate flavors. Finishes with solid tannic grip and very good spicy persistence. This wine benefits from decanting.



2007 SYRAH "BIEN NACIDO (X-Block)" • Santa Maria Valley

91

(\$40) Opaque violet color. Seductive aromas of dark berry preserves, olive, violet and smoky minerals. Sweet, expansive black raspberry and cassis flavors are complemented by floral pastille and fruitcake qualities, with velvety tannins adding shape. Shows both power and finesse, closing sweet and smoky.