

2008 LE CIGARE VOLANT RÉSERVE • *En Bonbonne* • Central Coast

91

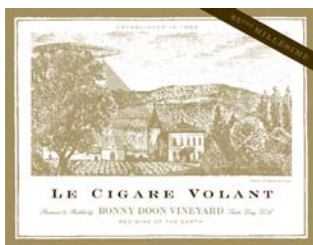
(\$65) (45% grenache, 30% syrah, 13% mourvedre, 7% cinsault and 5% carignane): Bright ruby. Pungent, spice-accented aromas of cherry, dark berries, anise and dried rose, along with a subtle black pepper nuance. Fleshy and gently sweet on entry, then firmer in the mid-palate, offering bitter cherry and blackberry flavors given spine by zesty acidity. Dusty tannins add grip to the penetrating, smoky finish, which lingers with very good floral persistence. This wine is aged in glass demi-johns before bottling.



2010 LE CIGARE BLANC • Beeswax Vineyard • Arroyo Seco

90

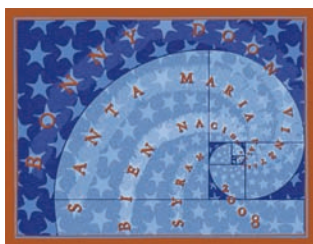
(\$26) (55% roussanne and 45% grenache blanc): Pale gold. Poached pear, quince and chamomile on the pungent, spicy nose. At once rich and lively, with bitter pear skin and peach pit flavors that gain sweetness with air. A floral note comes up on the incisive finish, which clings with very good authority. My personal history with this bottling suggests that it will be even better with a few more years of bottle age.



2008 LE CIGARE VOLANT • *25ème Millesime* • Central Coast

90

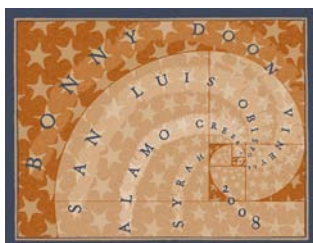
(\$38) (45% grenache, 30% syrah, 13% mourvedre, 7% cinsault and 5% carignane): Bright ruby. Pungent cherry, blackcurrant and botanical herbs on the nose, with a slow-building floral nuance and a hint of peppery spices. Sappy dark berry flavors show very good intensity and gain spiciness and smokiness with air. Supple tannins gain power on the gently gripping finish, which leaves a note of bitter cherry behind.



2008 SYRAH "BIEN NACIDO, X-Block" • Santa Maria Valley

90

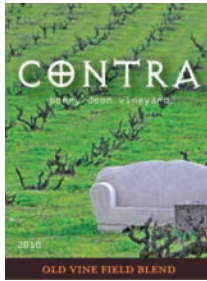
(\$42) Dark ruby. Fresh dark fruits on the nose, with complicating notes of anise, violet and pipe tobacco. Smoky blackcurrant and bitter cherry flavors are given lift and spine by juicy acidity and pick up a hint of candied flowers with air. Shows a suave marriage of dark berry fruit and spices on the long, gently tannic finish.



2008 SYRAH "ALAMO CREEK" • San Luis Obispo County

90

(\$35) Opaque ruby. Dark berry preserves, olive and smoky Indian spices on the fragrant nose and in the mouth. Displays very good depth and energy, with a late jolt of cracked pepper adding bite. Dusty tannins give shape and grip to the long, smoke-accented finish. I'd give this taut, structured wine at least a few years to unwind, or at least decant it for a couple of hours.



2010 CONTRA · Old Vine Field Blend · California

88

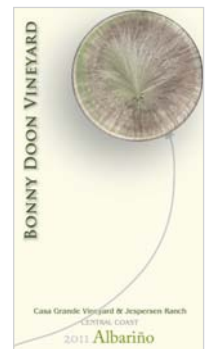
(\$16) (Based on carignane from vines that are reportedly over a century old): Bright violet color. Jammy black and blue fruits on the nose and palate. Plump and intensely fruity, with smoke and peppery spice notes carrying through the sweet, clinging finish. No lack of fruit here.



2009 SYRAH LE POUSSEUR · Central Coast

88

(\$25) Inky ruby. Cherry, anise, cracked pepper and herbs on the aromatic nose. Juicy, spicy and moderately dense, with good focus to its dark berry, bitter chocolate and licorice flavors. Finishes with good length, silky tannins and palate-numbing notes of black pepper and menthol.



2011 ALBARIÑO · Casa Grande Vineyard & Jespersen Ranch · Central Coast

88

(\$18) Light yellow. Dried citrus fruits and herbs on the nose and in the mouth. Firm and refreshingly bitter, with good finishing grip and a lingering note of lemon thyme. This refreshing albariño could easily blend into a flight of the real deal from the variety's Rias Baixas homeland.



2007 NEBBIOLO · Ca' del Solo Estate Vineyard · Monterey County

87

(\$40) Medium red. Lively red berry and floral aromas show good clarity and subtle herbacity. Light and brisk, offering tangy redcurrant and bitter cherry flavors and a hint of white pepper. Finishes dry and taut, with good cut and decent length.