

CHRIS KNAP'S WINE OF THE WEEK



Crazy like a Doon

2004 BONNY DOON
LE CIGARE BLANC

RATING: ★★★★★

As if we needed any proof that Randall Grahm, Bonny Doon's "Rhône Deranger," has very little interest in actually making money, consider this week's wine, labeled simply "Le Cigare Blanc White Wine."

Featured on the label is what appears to be an odd spacecraft beaming down – something – to a château-like vineyard below.

Featured on the top is a screw cap.

Who in their right mind would pick this up while standing in a wine store faced with a raft of safer choices, like 50 different Chardonnays, 25 Sauvignon Blancs and a dozen or so Pinot Grigios.

Well, uh, me.

If you know Bonny Doon,

you know that "Le Cigare Volant" (Flying Cigar) is Grahm's paean to Châteauneuf-du-Pape, the powerful red from the Southern Rhône.

(The story about the "flying cigar," according to Grahm, is that the Châteauneuf-du-Pape village council passed an ordinance in the 1950s banning UFOs from landing on their grapes. I suppose I could insist that Grahm provide documentation, but it seems like too much work.)

Anyway, so Le Cigare Blanc is Grahm's version of White Châteauneuf, and at the risk of being hit by that UFO beam, I'd say the blanc is more successful than the rouge volant, at least his 2003 version.

The blanc is dominated by the Rhône varietal Roussanne (73 percent) and rounded out with Grenache Blanc.

The wine is intense and velvety, with flavors of white peach, honeydew melon and citrus blossom, and a bracing, stony minerality on the finish.

It's a great white with any full-flavored fish and is perhaps the best possible wine with roasted chicken.

Region: California

Varietals: Roussanne, Grenache Blanc

Price: It's available for \$20 at www.bonnydoonvineyard.com

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