

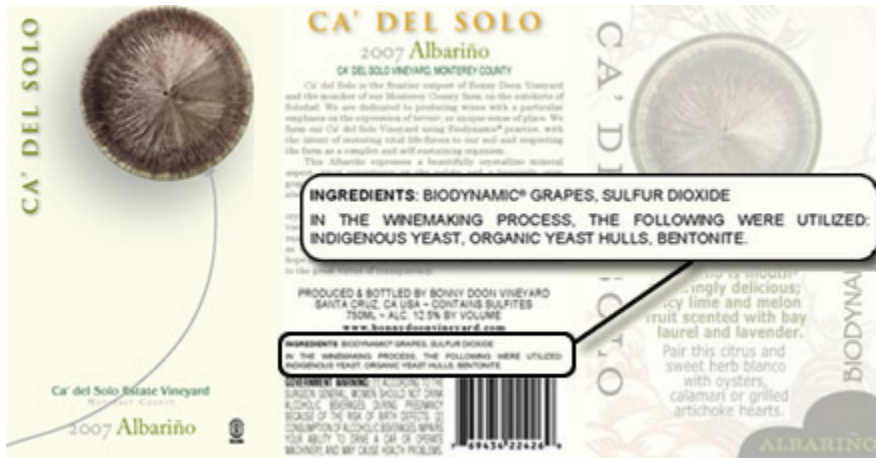
WINES & VINES

12.19.2007

Bonny Doon Tells All

Ca' del Solo labels will reveal even processing agents

by Laurie Daniel



Santa Cruz, Calif. -- Bonny Doon Vineyard's Randall Grahm, a winemaker known for his irreverent approach to the wine industry, is taking yet another innovative step: Early next year, he will start using ingredient labels on his wines.

The 2007 whites and 2006 reds will carry the new back labels, starting with the 2007 Albariño and 2007 Muscat, both of which are produced under Bonny Doon's Ca' del Solo label. The wines, made from grapes grown at Bonny Doon's Biodynamic-certified vineyard near Soledad, are scheduled to be released in February 2008.

"I'm really very sincere about trying to become a minimalist in our levels of intervention in the wines," Grahm said. "Whatever we put in the wine, whether it's good, bad or ugly, it's going to go on our label. It holds us to a higher standard. We have to be more rigorous ourselves. If we stumble and we have to add this or that, we'll put it on the label."

Grahm added that he thinks such a move will be good for the industry. "I don't really want to tell people how to make their wines, and I don't want to preach," he said, "but I just want to set a good example. It's a little provocative, but I think it's a good thing."

The new back label for the Albariño, for example, lists ingredients in the wine -- Biodynamic grapes, sulfur dioxide -- as well as ingredients used in the winemaking process -- indigenous yeast, organic yeast hulls and bentonite (used to clarify the wine). The label says that by "enumerating the ingredients used in processing, we hope to demonstrate our commitment to natural, vital wines and to the great virtue of transparency."

The TTB is moving toward approval of a rule that may require wine labels to list common allergens contained in a wine, as well as allergens used in processing wine -- such as eggs used for fining or fish (another fining agent, isinglass, is derived from sturgeon) -- even if none of the substance remains in the finished wine. The wine

industry has opposed the requirement, saying such labels could confuse consumers.

As for Bonny Doon's move, Wine Institute general counsel Wendell Lee said, "I don't think we would have any problem with voluntary ingredient labeling." He added that the Wine Institute had not taken a position on mandatory ingredient labels that go beyond the proposed allergen labels. "We haven't really discussed this in any great detail," he said.

Grahm acknowledged that consumers might be a little confused by the labels -- at first. "It will confuse them a little bit," he said. "But I think it will start the process toward being more demanding and more inquisitive about what's in their wine. It will move the process in the right direction, at all levels. Obviously the only people who will be able to initially decode this stuff will be people in the industry and sommeliers and this and that. But eventually I think it will begin to filter down."

The new labels don't state how much sulfur dioxide the wine contains, but Grahm hopes to add that soon. "We're looking at getting the technology where we can actually indicate the amount of sulfur, at least at bottling, because it's obviously a moving target," he said. "We're just taking one step at a time."

Bonny Doon's regular customers have become accustomed to the innovations and eccentricities of the man referred to as "the original Rhone deranger" on the winery's Web site. So Grahm predicts that "for our customer, this will be a colossal non-issue," just as it was when he started bottling all his wines under screw caps. But he realizes that this type of labeling might be a tougher issue for big wineries.

"If you'll notice, the entire world has not beaten a path to screw caps, either," he said. "So I'm not suggesting that everyone is just going to drop everything and start putting ingredient labeling on their bottles. But I think a few people might."

[SUBSCRIBE TO WINES & VINES PRINT EDITION»](#)

[CONTACT OUR EDITORIAL STAFF»](#)

[CURRENT NEWS INDEX»](#)

WINES & VINES

415.453.9700 | Fax: 415.453.2517

info@winesandvines.com