

This bottling Le Cigare Volant is identical to our *normale*, but, owing to its unorthodox *élevage*, quite different in its presentation. After a short tenure in barrel, assemblage, and completion of malolactic fermentation, the wine was removed to 5-gallon glass carboys (*bonbonnes*), where it reposed *sur lie* for 23 months. This yielded a rare degree of integration and complexity, plus a preternatural degree of savoriness. Our Flying Cigar is based on the traditional Southern Rhône style *encépagement*.

WINEMAKER NOTES

Winemaking, like life, is a bit of a dream. One imagined (some years ago) that one might produce a sort of *hommage* to Châteauneuf-du-Pape, a Rhônish-style blend in California, and somehow, miraculously, the wine materialized in this terrestrial sphere; it has been, in balance, a more or less viable, ongoing proposition. Over the years, I've had my ups and doons with the southern Rhône's most well known appellation. In general, I've not been so crazy about its escalating levels of over-extraction and ripeness, seemingly in commercial call and response to its most avid Marylandian partisan. With the exception of the redoubtable Château Rayas, I find that I can, at this juncture, largely take or leave C-du-P. But, possibly more to the point, I've come to realize that everything in my winemaking world has really been a displacement of my deep, secret desire to produce pinot noir, or more accurately, red Burgundy.¹

The idea of "raising" the wine in glass demijohns was also a bit of a fever dream, occasioned in part by the many hours I spent in deep contemplation of the mysteries of redox chemistry; there was something dream-like (*à la* Carlos Castaneda and Don Juan) about the many hours driving around southern France with Patrick Ducournau,² deep thinker about oxygen and wine.³ I've already written quite a bit about the nature of the esoteric *élevage en bonbonne*—*bâtonage magnetique*, etc., the opportunity for the wine to digest a substantial volume of yeast lees, and the extraordinary texture and savoriness this protocol engenders.

TASTING NOTES

This is the fifth vintage in our ongoing experimental protocol with anaerobic *élevage* of Cigare in 5-gallon glass bottles. Beautiful, deep violet robe, not quite saturated color, but nary a trace of rust. First nose is peppermint, cherries, and of course deep, loamy earth—almost the scent of decaying leaves. What I've loved best about the Cigare Réserve wines is their texture—utterly seamless and sleek, and secondarily, their quality of umami, no doubt a function of the glutamate released from the autolysis of yeast cells during the *élevage*. The wine has a very satisfying richness, an aura of confident power and authority, but it is in no way overbearing.

INGREDIENTS

Grapes, tartaric acid, and sulfur dioxide.

In the winemaking process, the following were utilized: Indigenous yeast, yeast nutrients, French oak chips.

¹The genius of great Burgundy is that it can be a seamless synthesis of Apollonian and Dionysian (well, maybe mostly Dionysian) elements—power, grace and sensuality. It defies all attempts at true characterization, evoking Margaret Cho's famous meditation on her own sexuality.

²Patrick had lost his driving license, so he was obliged to have someone drive him.

³And inventor of *microbullage*, or micro-oxygenation.



VITAL STATISTICS

Varietal Blend:

37% Mourvèdre, 34% Grenache,
20% Syrah, 9% Cinsault

Appellation: Central Coast

Vineyards: 21.5% Ventana, 20% Del Barba,
14% Rancho Solo, 12% Evangelho,
10.5% Bien Nacido, 10% Alamo Creek,
9% Bechtold, 3% Gonsalves

Cellaring: Ideally hold for a year or two
(April 2017), 15-20+ years ageability

Alcohol by Volume: 14.5%

TA: 5.8 g/L

pH: 3.34

Production: 966 cases

REGION



WINEMAKER

Randall Grahm



SENSITIVE CRYSTALLIZATION

Balanced and integrated, the '11 Le Cigare Volant crystallization exhibits beautiful aromatics and savory floral, fruit and mineral tones. Expressive centralized fruit characters, give way to complex mineral aspects, organization, symmetry and nuanced expression.

