

I have written in various places about the inspiration to age wine in demijohns/carboys/*bonbonnes*. Some of it has come from my fascination with oxidation/reduction chemistry, an aspect of wine art/science not well understood and its importance greatly unappreciated. Years ago, as a young pup I tasted wine from carboy with Dan Wheeler of Nicasio Cellars in his do-it-yourself-hand-dug cave in Soquel, and was astonished at how youthful were the wines, twenty plus years later, almost as if they had been placed in suspended animation. At about the same time, I also happened to taste the wines from Emidio Pepe in Abruzzo, who also aged his product in demijohns, likewise evincing extraordinary youthfulness and vitality.

TASTING NOTES

The “nose” of the ‘11 Réserve bottling shares some of the unusual qualities of its *normale* counterpart, to wit, an unusual suggestion of citrus (grapefruit), which upon closer inspection morphs into plum or peach skin. If you sniff deeper, you get a hint of *crème brûlée* and butterscotch. And while in many quarters there is still a cloud of uncertainty hanging over the term “minerality,”—and I do rather literally mean “cloud,” because for me a “mineral” nose is one that sort of gathers like a storm cloud (there is electricity in the air)—the wine has a certain quality that I always associate with the Old World, a stony flintiness. In the mouth, there’s a recap of the stone fruit, but you get more of an intimation of the stone itself. That is to say, a certain astringency, austerity... and salinity(!) in non-trivial measure. This is definitely a meditation wine that summons the taster to attention, and will reward the unregenerate seeker of truth and soul/soil.

VINEYARD | PRODUCTION NOTES

We did some small encouraging experiments years ago, then more or less forgot about them until relatively recently, at which point we began the carboy ageing project with red Cigare. It wasn’t until ‘09 that it dooned on me that perhaps there were even more interesting things to discover with the white. The ‘11 Cigare Blanc Réserve, our third vintage of this wine, is absolutely amazing, an advance over the ‘10. To refresh everyone’s memory, this wine is more or less the same blend as our standard issue Cigare Blanc, apart from the fact that we’ve allowed it to undergo malolactic fermentation, and at that point, we gave it a light SO₂ addition, racked it to glass demijohn (*bonbonne*), where it reposed for a year and a half, getting anaerobically stirred more or less fortnightly. The wine derives entirely from the Beeswax Vineyard, located at the mouth of the Arroyo Seco.



VITAL STATISTICS

Varietal Blend:

62% grenache blanc, 38% roussanne

Vineyard: Beeswax

Appellation: Arroyo Seco

Alcohol by Volume: 12.5%

TA: 6.7 g/L

pH: 3.43

Production: 480 cases

Optimal drinkability:

Drink now-2020

REGION



BEESWAX VINEYARD



INGREDIENTS

Grapes, tartaric acid, and sulfur dioxide.

In the winemaking process, the following were utilized:

Indigenous yeast, cultured yeast, yeast nutrients, French oak barrels and bentonite.

At time of bottling, this product contained: 75 ppm total SO₂ and 30 ppm free SO₂.

