

2014 LE CIGARE BLANC RÉSERVE

en bonbonne

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

This is the fifth iteration of Le Cigare Blanc Réserve, and we continue to learn more about the mysteries of *élevage* in glass demijohn. The Burgundians have long understood the power of a reductive *élevage*, albeit *en barrique* typically, that is to say, the presence of a significant percentage of lees in the wine as the wine ages contributes both to a textural richness via yeast autolysis, and the slight reductive funkiness (presumably trace levels of mercaptan) contributing both to the distinctive toasty, hazelnut nose, as well as to a sort of energized zinginess, a kind of recharging of the wine's battery, as it were. Thus, the inspiration of this work with *bonbonnes*, and the effort to push the distinctiveness of this type of *élevage* to a new boundary. With this in mind, one finds in the Cigare Blanc Réserve many of the qualities that one has come to love in white Burgundy—a lush, creamy texture, a haunting suggestion of the skin of pear (or is it quince?), as well as absolutely formidable length on the palate. The Beeswax Vineyard is well-named as this wine reliably suggests the fragrance of beeswax as a dominant scent; a subtle fragrance of sage or fennel is also quite reliably found in this wine from vintage to vintage. This wine might be thought of as a “meditation wine,” i.e. most suitable with the simplest fare, especially cheese, but will also pair very nicely with rich dishes—lobster (and fennel) risotto, scallops, and of course, sea urchin (the *uni*-versal solvent).

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. 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.

INGREDIENTS

Grapes and sulfur dioxide.

In the winemaking process, the following were utilized:
Indigenous yeast, yeast nutrients, and bentonite.



VITAL STATISTICS

Varietal Blend:

66% Grenache Blanc,

34% Roussanne

Vineyard: Beeswax

Appellation: Arroyo Seco

Alcohol by Volume: 14.3%

TA: 4.5 g/L

pH: 3.55

Production: 285 cases

Optimal Drinkability: Drinkable
upon release (June 2017),

7-10 years ageability

REGION



BEESWAX VINEYARD



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