

2005 CABERNET SAUVIGNON “NEW EPOCH RESERVE”

Santa Ynez Valley

Note: these winemaker's notes are essentially the same as last year's notes for this wine. The story is still strong and I think deserves to be told one more time. Next year I should have a better understanding of how the two sensational blocks at Estelle (THE LOIN and NUCLEUS) are impacting this wine. At that point, I'll have something new to say. While it probably won't be as interesting as the story below, it will be the step taken in the new epoch of fine Cabernet Sauvignon now being produced in Santa Barbara County.

Winemaker's Notes:

Perhaps the best way to explain my New Epoch Cabernet Sauvignon is to look at a historical overview of the development of Bordeaux varieties in Santa Barbara County. To preface this I would note that of the five Bordeaux varieties, Cabernet Sauvignon is by far the most successful and important grape world wide, followed by Merlot, and then probably Cabernet Franc. Petit Verdot and Malbec are barely on the radar screen. Based on this, I think it is fair to say that if you are in a region that does not do really well with Cabernet Sauvignon, then Bordeaux Varieties as a group will never be taken seriously from your area.

The Dark Ages (1975 to 1990)

The quality of local Cabernet Sauvignon is deplorable. From 1982 to 1984, Bryan Babcock is teased by his colleagues in the wine shop where he is employed after they find out that he is from Santa Barbara County and has intentions of making wine there after he gets out of school. Constantly he hears their never ending taunt, “You better stick to Riesling.”

The Renaissance (1990 to 1995)

It is discovered in a number of Santa Barbara County vineyards that the primordial ancestor to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, can make very nice wine. A few encouraging Merlots also pop up during this era. Babcock develops a program called FATHOM, studying the viability of making Bordeaux styled blends with Cabernet Franc leading the charge. Some extremely good wines are produced. Babcock is on the verge of telling his former colleagues to eat crow.

The Age of Vertigo (1995 to 2000)

It is discovered that Cabernet Franc vines don't handle stress too well. Under the pressures of summer heat, shallow rocky soils that don't hold much water, and grapevine viruses for which Cabernet Franc has no tolerance, one vineyard after the next starts to croak. Despondent, Babcock makes the variety Merlot the lead grape in his FATHOM program. Little does he know, the movie Sideways will disregard Merlot big time in a couple of years.

The Enlightenment (2000 to 2002)

Due to the enthusiasm created in the Renaissance, Cabernet Franc and Merlot are widely planted in the interior of the Santa Ynez Valley. The planting of these varieties continues well into the beginning of the Age of Vertigo. At one vineyard located in the far eastern edge of the Valley, however, a confused neophyte, Marybeth Vogelzang, plants Cabernet Sauvignon in the face of the stigma that is still lurking from the Dark Ages. Two wineries, dumb enough to do so, make the wines from those grapes. In a state of total shock, one of those wineries, Babcock, releases its first arguably great Cabernet Sauvignon; the 2001 Vogelzang. Babcock theorizes that the Cabernet Sauvignon of the Dark Ages was planted for the most part in Santa Ynez climates that were too cool, and on soils that were too rich. Because the vines were way too vigorous, and because the growers did not know what to do about it, the resulting wines were vegetal and poor.

Babcock continues to theorize that in the warmer Happy Canyon area of the Santa Ynez Valley, if the right clones of Cabernet Sauvignon are planted on the district's shallow, rocky hillsides, the sky is the limit. The Cabernet cat sneaks out of the bag. Vogelzang's status ascends to that of guru.

The Age of Reason (2002 to 2004)

An era also known as The Age of Pining Away for a Place That's Not So Damn Hot. Babcock continues to hold his theories near and dear, but he longs for a Sauvignon site that is slightly to the west of Happy Canyon; someplace closer to the ocean; a vineyard that's still plenty warm, but not over 100 degrees every time one goes there to take cluster samples.

Babcock

WINERY & VINEYARDS

(Babcock 05 Cab Sauvignon New Epoch pg. 2)

The New Epoch (2004 to Present)

Babcock discovers that vineyard. It's called Estelle. The rocks on the ground there are beautiful; a kaleidoscope of colors. It has multiple clones of Cabernet Sauvignon. There is a pinch of the less heralded, yet still fascinating Bordeaux variety, Petit Verdot. Even the Merlot looks good! Babcock surmises that with vineyards like Estelle, we are on the forefront of the production of great Cabernet Sauvignon in Santa Barbara County. Babcock goes to the dictionary; looks up the word Epic. The dictionary describes a book by some guy named Homer. Wrong word. Babcock looks up the word Epoch.

A period of time, an era, an age in which striking things happen; the starting point of such a period.

Babcock tastes his 2005 reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, the grapes for which were grown in the Estelle Vineyard. This well structured wine has a deep, opaque garnet color with loads of berry/cherry flavors accented by a touch of Oriental spice that will be enhanced with further aging.

Babcock confirms one of his theories. The door to the new epoch has been opened; *the sky really is the limit.*

Cheers,
Bryan

Technical Notes:

VINEYARD SOURCES:

100% Estelle Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

75% Cabernet Sauvignon

25% Merlot

FINISHED WINE: Residual Sugar: Dry TA: 6.9 g/L pH: 3.73 Alc. By Vol: 14.5%

ELEVAGE: 19 months, 25% new French Oak

BOTTLING DATE: March 2007 RELEASE DATE: November 2007

TOTAL PRODUCTION: 365 cases 12/750 ml