

Review Overview: Babcock Sauvignon Blanc “Estate Grown”

2005 Vintage

Wine Enthusiast Magazine 11/15/06

SCORE: 92/Editor’s Choice

Those who loved Babcock’s old Eleven Oaks bottling, don’t worry. This is similar to it, but better. To counter Santa Rita’s cool climate, Bryan Babcock put in some Los Alamos fruit, partially barrel fermented the wine, and added a dollop of Chardonnay to tame the beast. The wine is rich, zesty and balanced, and heads straight to the front of the pack.— S.H.

Appellationamerica.com - Dennis Schaefer

Aug. 18, 2006

Score: Excellent

The newest Santa Barbara County AVA, Sta. Rita Hills, is gaining a burgeoning reputation for Pinot Noir and Chardonnay, as well as cool climate Syrah. So why the heck am I recommending a Sauvignon Blanc? Because this one from Babcock smacked me right between the eyes and made my palate sit up and take notice. At fifteen percent alcohol, I might have expected that, but its attractiveness is in the concentration of flavors and balance. The weighty alcohol wasn’t even on my radar tasting screen.

But to digress: winemaker Bryan Babcock has always had a passion for Bordeaux varietals, even though the winery and estate vineyards are located in one of the coolest growing areas of California. Babcock has made some tasty Sauvignon Blancs under his “Eleven Oak” label, but they were always blends of estate fruit and warmer Santa Ynez Valley fruit. What has changed the Sauvignon Blanc paradigm for Babcock was the knowledge that twenty years of grape growing brings. He found that to really get his estate fruit ripe requires plenty of leaf pulling and getting the grapes in the path of direct sunlight, boosting the hydrometer up to 26-27 degrees brix before picking.

The flavors of the 2005 version, as you might imagine, are aggressive but then I’ve always liked a wine that “makes a statement.” While Babcock’s previous Sauvignon Blancs might be described as grassy (and that’s a legitimate style), some had tinges of jalapeno and artichoke heart. This has none of that. Instead, it’s rich and assertive in the mouth with flavors of mango, juniper berry and cherimoya (yes!) along with a great sense of minerality that runs the entire length of the palate. The pungency of the flavor profile, as well as tightrope balancing act, make this an attractive foil for rosemary and garlic roasted chicken or something equally aggressive like a goat cheese and golden beet salad dotted with chives and a drizzling of balsamic.

2004 Vintage

Wine Spectator Dec 15, 2005

SCORE: 90

Fragrant and complex, with a lively medley of grapefruit, lemon-lime, passion fruit and spicy nuances that keep the flavors fresh and lively through a long, persistent finish. Shows a trace of heat on the finish, but keeps returning to the core fruit flavors. Drink now.

Babcock Sauvignon Blanc “Eleven Oaks”

2003 Vintage

Wine Enthusiast Magazine 12/04

SCORE: 90

Always complex and interesting, and this year shows plenty of upfront spearmint, fig and melon flavors wrapped in a rich, creamy texture. There are oak and lees shadings that show up in the finish.— S.H.

2001 Vintage

Connoisseurs' Guide to California Wine 8/02

SCORE: 87 - 1 Puffs (out of 3)

Often one of our highest ranked Sauvignon Blancs, Eleven Oaks shows all of its vaunted complexity in this vintage but with less of its typically stunning fruitiness. Its far-ranging aromas of oak, roasted lemons, dried weeds and honey are paralleled in flavors that are high in toast and wood spices if somewhat dry at their heart. The wine's character and brisk acidity suggest that it be served with savory seafoods.

2000 Vintage

Wine Enthusiast Magazine

SCORE: 90/ Editor's Choice 8/01

Always loaded with character, once again this wine doesn't disappoint. The aromas are racy, stylish and clean, filled with lime and hay, green grass and honey, fig and melon. And what great flavors, big ripe, and juicy. It seems a little bit sweet, but the acidity is high, creating a crisp, rich wine that's full-bodied and flavorful.

Connoisseurs' Guide to California Wine 8/01

SCORE: 88 - 1 Puffs (out of 3)

Often a standout in our Sauvignon Blanc tastings, this edition of Eleven Oaks is both narrow in stature relative to past riches and higher in acidity. Yet, unlike many of its brethren in this review, the Eleven Oaks retains its central fruitiness from front to back and ends with a brisk, firm stance that requires service alongside tangy seafood preparations.

California Grapevine June/July 2001

SCORE: HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Medium-light yellow; attractive, spicy, herbal, moderately grassy, distinct varietal aroma with hints of ripe peach and tropical fruit; medium-full body; crisp, citrusy flavors with a slightly plush feel on the mid-palate followed by a crisp, tart finish; slightly lingering aftertaste. Highly recommended.

1999 Vintage

Wine Spectator 12/31/00- 1/15/01

SCORE: 90 Exuberantly fresh and fruity, with lively pear, citrus, passion fruit and lemony notes of richness and depth. Drink now through 2004.— JL

Connoisseurs' Guide to California Wine 2/99

SCORE: 2 Puff (out of 3)

Like its slightly older partner below (98 SBEO) this intense, boldly rendered effort comes up big on weeds and grass, yet balances its varietal herbaceousness with lots of rich oak and plenty of dense, melon-like fruit. It is full and fleshy on the palate and finished with a buoyant bit of fruity acidity, and, despite its present generosity, it will only get better with two or three years of additional age.

Wine Enthusiast Magazine

SCORE: 90 Feb 2001

1999 Vintage

The Wine News

SCORE: California's Best Wine of 2000 Year

Very grassy-almost extreme- aromas suggesting green apple, honeydew melon, pink grapefruit, gooseberry and jalapeño pepper. Much like an intense Sancerre, exhibiting minerals on entry, a rich middle of melon and citrus with grassy tones, a touch of oak and excellent acidity.

1998 Vintage

Connoisseurs' Guide to California Wine 8/00

SCORE: 2 Puff (out of 3)

Simply loaded with rich oak, this rendition of the Eleven Oaks Sauvignon Blanc is nonetheless brimming with deep, properly herbal varietal fruit and finds a good dose of citrusy acidity to ward off any sense of heaviness. Slightly fleshy in feel and long on body, it is still a little ragged near the end and could do with another year in the bottle.

San Jose Mercury News 8/25/99

SCORE: 91 Anthony Dias Blue: Forward and lush with gooseberry and spice and a smooth finish.

Bon Appetit Magazine Feb 2000

SCORE: One of "The Top Ten Wines of 1999 Year"

Robert M. Parker's The Wine Advocate 2/28/00

SCORE: 87

The 1998 Sauvignon Blanc Eleven Oaks' honeyed grapefruit characteristics are immediately appealing. This well-made, crisp, firmly-structured, medium-bodied, concentrated, stylish Sauvignon should be consumed over the next 12-18 months.

1996 Vintage

Wine Spectator 3/31/98

SCORE: 89

A little earthy on the nose, but on the palate it comes around nicely in the Old World Style. It's brightly textured, with a strong herbal, grassy edge backed by plenty of grapefruit, lime and fig flavors. A forceful wine, maybe one for the cellar.

1995 Vintage

Wine Spectator 6/15/97

SCORE: 91

A zingy blend of ripe melon, passion fruit, lemon, orange and delicate grass like tone, lightly framed by sweet oak. Complex and delicious.