

BIRICHINO

June 2020 Six Pack Detailed Notes

Hello Friends,

Many of us have been recalling with affection the “Good Old Days,” whatever and whenever those days may have been. There is no doubt, however, we are firmly entrenched in, and adapting to, the very real present. Why not investigate which is more compelling - indulging our sense of nostalgia, or the admonishment to Be Here Now.

For our June sampler, we have assembled three pairs of wines, each comprising a back and current vintage. The current vintage of each is the cool, late 2018, a year which produced classically lithe, perfumed, and especially elegant wines. The back vintages of 2015 and 2017 yielded larger scaled wines - sometimes more savory and tannic, other times more lush and rich.

2015 Malvasia Bianca, Monterey

2018 Malvasia Bianca, Monterey

Occasionally, existing vocabulary is insufficient to describe a particular wine and a Birichino in-house neologism is in order. We have commented that Malvasia not only evolves particularly well, it *Alsatianates* as it does so, undergoing an organoleptic conversion recalling some blend of noble Alsatian varieties. 2015 is a fine example. It has always been, like all wines from this vintage, aggressively flavored of botanical extracts and spices. The passage of time has only reinforced this quality. The perfume still recalls the flowers, citrus and stone fruits of a young Malvasia, however the stronger sense of citrus oils and spice more fully emerge and one can be forgiven for picking up a whiff of Gewürztraminer here and Muscat or Riesling there and maybe a textural suggestion of Pinot Gris enveloping the whole kaboodle. The 2018 is classic Malvasia Bianca, straight no chaser right down Broadway, five by five - tropical and citrusy with a bit of mint, the image of how this selection of the variety might appear in a dictionary. This should age elegantly well into the Colbert administration.

2017 Jurassic Park Chenin Blanc, Santa Ynez Valley

2018 Jurassic Park Chenin Blanc, Santa Ynez Valley

This is one of the best pairs of wines from back to back vintages we have ever produced and their stark contrast exhibits the wonder of Chenin Blanc and the quality of Jurassic Park as a site. The sandy slopes of Jurassic Park retained a surprising amount of moisture from the rainy 2016/2017 winter, encouraging the early formation of botrytis. In these conditions, we are inclined to leave a small amount of residual sugar in the finished wine which amplifies the exoticism of noble rot and makes for that old-fashioned style of wine the French evocatively refer to as *sec tendre* - dry, but tender. The 2018 is so bone dry, stylish and well mannered as to be positively Tim Gunnian, and like the 2018 Malvasia, approaching a template for the ideal form, showcasing the nexus of honey, ocean air, granny smith apple, lanolin and flowers achievable by no other variety.

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2015 Saint Georges Old Vine Zinfandel, Central Coast

2018 Saint Georges Old Vine Zinfandel, Central Coast

Who would believe the baby-faced Alex Krause would earn the nickname “El Carnicero” among Central Coast vineyard crews? This *nom de sécteur* derives not from a second job of late night wet work nor his love of jamón ibérico, but rather, a single-minded obsession with harvesting only the cleanest of bunches from the Besson’s old Zinfandel. Even from this very good site, hard up against the Santa Cruz Mountains, bringing in sound fruit is no easy task.. In withering drought conditions such as appeared in 2015, raisined clusters appeared widely, and El Carnicero thinned over 50% of the desiccated crop leading up to harvest. With that, another 1.5 tons of raisins were ejected on a special sorting table commandeered specifically for this pick, leaving less than 5 tons from 4.5 acres. What remained was a very unBirichino-like, inky monster, civilized with a small amount of old vine Mourvèdre from the sandscape of Contra Costa County. The Mourvèdre, somewhat counterintuitively adds a degree of freshness and gentleness to Zinfandel. 2018 allowed the gentler side of Zinfandel [and *El Carnicero*] to emerge. This vintage is 100% old vine Zinfandel, rendered in a streamlined and aromatic style now extremely rare in California; the abv is modest and the acidity, mouthwatering. Yet the telltale stone fruit spectrum of flavors announce this as Zinfandel and nothing but, and that to deprive oneself of chicken tagine with apricots, or couscous with nectarines and toasted almonds - *as one’s dietary inclinations inform* - is to ignore the furtive hope that the summer will bring with it an overflowing bowl of cherries, literally and/or figuratively.