



VIN ROUGE - RED WINE - PRODUCT DES ETATS - UNIS - PRODUCT OF USA

BIRICHINO
GRENACHE · VIEILLES VIGNES
Besson Vineyard Central Coast 2010 13.5% alc./vol. 750 ml

BIRICHINO GRENACHE VV 2010

You can't be too rich, too beautiful, too *birichino*. For the Italians, it connotes mischievous, impish, or nymphean- a mark of élan and embrace of *la dolce vita*. Even at the age of 100, George Besson's ungrafted vines are positively pulsing with vitality, producing wines evocative of lavender, black pepper, and sappy, Morello cherry fruit. « Sappy » is often and appropriately used to describe old vine *grenache*, for the inner core of this wine seems extracted from deep within the earth.

VINIFICATION : John Locke and Alex Krause – Winemakers/Birichini

To the degree that a wine can make itself, our *grenache* is effectively self-actualized, intent on reaching its full potential with minimal intervention. We chose a particularly simple protocol- a Burgundian minimalist approach which favors rigorous selection in the vineyard, gentle handling of the grapes and must, minimal racking and use of neutral cooperage to retain the most delicate aromatics while encouraging the development of inherent richness and structure from the fruit of this vineyard planted back in 1910. We handpicked October 20th, selecting in the vineyard the most fully developed, yet not overripe clusters. At the winery, we sorted the fruit again, leaving $\frac{1}{4}$ as whole cluster at the bottom of the temperature-controlled stainless fermenter, and the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ of the lot was destemmed and lightly crushed over the top. After crush, we waited several hours for the juice to begin to color, then bled off 10% to serve as a component of our dry rosé, the Vin Gris. After a couple days cold soak, we allowed the temperature to rise and ambient yeasts started primary fermentation, which lasted a little less than 3 weeks. We racked the wine into neutral barrels, performed the occasional *bâtonnage*, and it finished malolactic during the winter. In late spring, we gently racked again before bottling it unfinned and unfiltered.

HARVEST NOTES

With each vintage, as the days grow shorter and the fruit enters the home stretch, we are nervous parents shuttling back and forth checking on our precious fruit, making sure no-one's getting sunburned, or not wearing enough chlorophyll, and we keep one hairy eyeball on the weather forecast until the last cluster is in the barn. 2010 made us [and most California vintners] more nervous than we care to remember, with an atypically long, cold, summer familiar to Mark Twain, a brief but infernal blast of heat in August [which put vineyards that didn't have 101 year-old root systems to the test] followed by an unseasonably early start to the winter rainy season. Fortunately, with extremely small fruit loads and a physiological memory dating back dating back to the Wilson administration, our vineyards know what to do when the mercury rises, and they didn't show any signs of water stress. When temperatures fell back to more moderate levels, ripening continued on trajectory to end up with fruit with more of everything; aromatic intensity, power, and natural acidity to sustain it. We threaded the needle of ripeness and acidity, bringing in the last *grenache* before the curtain of rain came down in late October.

PAIRINGS

Our Grenache VV is that *rara avis* that plays well with fish or fowl, and travels with ease from the Country Estate to the tailgate. In its exuberant youth, it can charm the lush hedonist with satisfying broadly appealing fruit, yet surprisingly for a wine as outgoing as this, underneath the primary appeal lies a deeper, darker reserve of stony structure, and backbone that telegraph the potential for longer term aging. Blessed with fine, integrated tannins, a lithe body, and a powerful reserve of fruit, our *grenache* can hold its own against the spiciest sauces invented, soothing the heat and providing peppery counterpoint to **hot-tempered BBQ preparations** and **cold smoked chorizo** alike. With a year in bottle, the rambunctious red fruits settle down a shade, and while still remaining supple, more evolved notes of kirsch liqueur and a touch of aromatic cedar surface. Savor over a smokin' hot girl with **spring lamb with rosemary, elk [or any other large horned animal]**, or seared tuna steaks.

THE LABEL

Annabelle Verhoye, a New York illustrator born in Germany and raised in France, has contributed extensively to American, European and Asian magazines and journals, among them *The New Yorker*, *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Condé Nast Traveler*, *The (Asian) Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*. Her clients have included *Walt Disney*, *Playboy*, *Taschen*, *Chronicle Books*, and *Bonny Doon Vineyard*. www.annabelleverhoye.com

VITAL STATISTICS: Harvest: Oct. 20, 2010 @ 24.9°Brix TA: 5.7g/l pH: 3.52 Alc.: 13.5% RS: 0.4g/l (dry)
VARIETIES: 100% Grenache Noir COLOR: Red SERVICE: 15° C/ 59° F

www.birichino.com