

styne on wine

also known as...

Woman on the Verge of a Glass of Wine

MONDAY, MARCH 29, 2010

More From Up North



I can't go to Napa and just write about one winery. It's impossible to go there, taste so much wine, and come away with only one wine to talk about. I can say that there is not enough time in the world for me up there. I want to visit so many wineries that I think I need two weeks to visit, not just two days. I didn't even scratch the surface of what is available to me there, and even missed out on visiting some people that I had planned to see. I did manage on this trip however to visit the winery that I consider to make the best Cabernet in Napa, Araujo Estate. I know that this is a tall order, and quite a statement considering the vast number of people making Cabernet there. And it's not that I don't absolutely love other Napa Cabs, but I really believe that their wine stands out from the rest.

As I was driving to Araujo, I had forgotten just how far North on the Silverado Trail it is. I had my sister Beth in the car with me and my sister Julie and her husband Rob following behind. After many many miles I started to think that I had passed it and had (yet again) gotten lost. Beads of sweat started to form on my forehead, and just as I got desperate and called the winery for directional help, I came upon the sign for their street. Thank God.

The Araujo compound is one that I would happily abandon all of my belongings and move to Napa for. It is just utter heaven there. Acres of gorgeous vineyards run side by side with deep olive groves and a rock walled creek. There is a gorgeous vegetable garden, chickens, a beautiful home, sturdy and handsome winery and of course a hauntingly lit cave that houses their aging barrels of wine and library. It is impressive without being lavish or gaudy. It feels very much a part of the surrounding landscape, rustic and charming, yet serious.

Bart and Daphne Araujo, one of the most elegant couples I have ever met, grow Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as the other red Bordeaux varieties, Sauvignon Blanc and a small amount of both Syrah and Viognier on the property. They farm the vineyards biodynamically and really look at the property as a whole, making in addition to their wine, olive oil, honey and grappa. Because my sister and her husband make olive oil in France, Burges Smith of the Araujo Estate, took us on a walk directly to their olive groves, where we sat for some time taking in the scenic beauty and hearing about the history of the winery. He spoke at length about their farming techniques, biodynamics and the Araujo's meticulous attention to detail. We then walked back through the vineyards and gardens and past the most majestic crab apple tree I've seen, finally arriving at the winery building itself. And though the visual beauty both inside and out of the place was quite evident, I could tell that my relatives were totally unprepared for what they were about to taste.

Burges poured each of us a taste of the 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon. My brother-in-law's eyes nearly jumped out of their sockets. This wine is so bright, so fresh, so balanced and basically so striking that it can take you by surprise. Fruit notes of Bing cherry and ripe fig burst forth followed by aromatic flavors of cardamom, allspice and just a hint of chocolate. There are also delicate floral notes of lavender and roses that intermingle with intense mineral tones of pencil lead and tar. This is a luscious yet serious wine that has a mile long finish, defining acidity and silky texture. I've tasted this wine before, but I just can't get enough of it. The Syrah that we tasted was equally as astounding, and even harder to get one's hands on.

My brother immediately asked to be on their mailing list, and if he's lucky he'll get a bottle or two. As for me, any time I have the opportunity to just taste this wine, I'm there. You can keep your Screaming Eagle, your Colgin and your Bryant Family, just as long as I get to have my Araujo.