



2003 CABERNET SAUVIGNON

THE LOIN Estelle Vineyard

Santa Ynez Valley

Winemaker's Notes:

It has taken me a while to put the notes for this wine together. Partially it's because The Loin is new, and this is the first time I have had to officially describe it. The wine is quite complex and I do want to get it right. But it's also due to the fact that great Cabernet Sauvignon in Santa Barbara County is a new phenomenon. This wine is at the forefront of a new epoch of great Cabernet Sauvignon in the Santa Ynez Valley, and, as such, is totally fascinating to me. Spending time with it has not been a burden.

Its fruit elements are quite strong. I think they can be described as boysenberry and ripe plum, without being raisiny. Accompanying the fruit in the nose are a couple of exotic, mysteriously juxtaposed qualities, namely flowers and blood. Mind you, these aromas are not perfectly delineated. That is, I can't really say which flower it is in particular. It's just flowery in a way that Cabernet can be flowery. Part of it is the barrels. When you mix the sweetness of new cooperage with the herb, spice, and fruit from the grapes, you get a floweriness. As far as the blood goes, that's all in the fruit. Again, it's not perfectly delineated. I have smelled Cabernets that have actually smelled more like blood, or as I have sometimes heard it described, "Iodine". This wine hints at it. There is meatiness to this wine. To put it into perspective, my Frying Pan Syrah also has a kind of elusive meatiness. But its character is more smoky or singed. The Loin is more fresh and raw. Consider this; in older Bordeaux, this was looked upon as a desired quality. I have a friend who knows his way around Bordeaux and he tells me that this is a quality that used to be associated with the finest wines, especially those from St. Estephe. It was admired, in effect, as part of their minerality. It's a quality that has not vanished in those wines, but it has perhaps had a veil put over it by likes of modern winemaking; super ripeness, with lots of new oak. Personally, I think it is very cool, sort of translates like the smell of mushrooms in Pinot Noir.

Even though the grapes were picked pretty ripe, the wine is very restrained in the mouth, which, again, gives it more of a classic line. I toyed with the idea of 100% new French Oak for this wine, but decided that until I really understood the fruit, 50 % was a better starting point. As long as this wine expresses itself this way, I think 50% is about where we should be.

You might wonder, did I name this wine The Loin after smelling it? No, I named this section of the Estelle Vineyard "The Loin" the moment I first laid eyes on it. It was all one variety, Cabernet Sauvignon, and it stood there struggling as a great vineyard should on a beautiful, rock showered hillside. It was somehow lean with no fat. It was because of its purity. The fact that the wine's demeanor is now starting to match its name is a coincidence that I could not be happier with. Will the wine be this way forever? Is this what we can expect from The Loin? I don't know for sure. The vines are young. But one thing is for sure; when I look into the core of this wine, I just don't see how it could be anything but great as time goes on.

A final note: these notes were derived while smelling the wine in very large bowled wineglass. With a wine like this, little glasses don't get the job done.

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Babcock

WINERY & VINEYARDS

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Cheers,

Bryan

Technical Notes:

VARIETAL COMPOSITION:

100% Cabernet Sauvignon

100% Estelle Vineyard, Santa Ynez Valley

VINIFICATION:

20 months in French oak barrels

50% new barrels

FINISHED WINE:

pH: 3.72

TA: 7.4g/L

Residual Sugar: Dry

Alcohol: 13.0%

BOTTLING DATE: June 2005

RELEASE DATE: May 2006

PRODUCTION: 127 Cases

SUGGESTED RETAIL PRICE: \$50.00