



The Wine Advocate #209- David Schildknecht 10/31/13:

Tasting Eric Eide's latest offerings was exciting not just because they outdo even his previous efforts that I praised in Issue 202 (where you can also read extensively about his background and winemaking approach) but because the number of bottlings has doubled, and in 2012 (from which Eide's material in barrel is sensational) will reach five. Moreover, prices for these wines aren't really reasonable given their quality; no, they're unreasonably low! "I am a huge fan of the 2011 vintage," says Eide, with very good reason given his results, "It's like 2010 on paper, but very different in character. It absolutely demanded that you make as much of the wine as possible in the vineyard. I threw out 50% of my production because I had to. Between the end of July and harvest I made six passes on my vineyards, and after Labor Day it was nearly every week." Eide also credits the Eola-Amity Hills Vineyards on which he significantly leans (the more so in this vintage when there is a new bottling dedicated to that A.V.A.) with being the vintage's "rock stars" thanks to the benefits of rot-inhibiting air-flow through the Van Duzer Gap. "I didn't chaptalize at all," he notes, adding, "I was hell bent not to." Yet he reached natural alcohol levels as high as 13.2%, in part, without doubt, also due to the effects of wind. I have the feeling, too – and Eide clearly believes this – that his willingness to utilize whole berries and stems as well as the diverse character of the Pinot variants featured in the parcels he taps (notably Pommard, Wadenswil, and Dijon Clones 828, 115, and 667) were important to bringing out perfumed complexity as well as the sense of energy inherent in this vintage.

Vintage/Wine:

2011 Aberrant Cellars "Carpe Noctem"

Rating:

94

The ten barrels of Aberrant Cellars 2011 Pinot Noir Carpe Noctem received half new wood (though that's in no way obvious) and was bottled at 16 months. Nearly half of it comes from Eide's favored block of Dijon Clone 828 in the nosebleed bleachers of Zena Crown (adjacent to Temperance Hill), with the rest hailing from Willakia and Hawks View. Deeply ripe but ultimately infectiously juicy cherry and plum are garlanded with diverse flowers and underlain with mouthwatering roasted red meat juiciness and marrowy richness. The piquancy of fruit pits and invigorating crunch of berry seeds are surpassed in efficacy by a saliva-liberating streak of salinity allied to alkalinity and stoniness, as well as a lentil sprout-like burst of nutty and positively vegetal flavor, all of which combine for a finish of dazzling interactive complexity and exhilarating energy that compels you to take the next sip. "I want this wine to be like a wild mustang that you can never tame," exclaims Eide. I'd plan on trying to mount it for at least the next decade.

2011 Aberrant Cellars "Virtus ex"

93

Sourced from Zena Crown and Willakia, the 2011 Pinot Noir Virtus Ex represents Eide's first such bottling and first wine to showcase a specific A.V.A. (From 2012 there will be a Yamhill-Carlton-dedicated counterpart.) "I adore the Eola-Amity Hills," he enthuses, "so it was just a matter of time before I was going to do something of this sort." Ripe but invigoratingly tart-edged blackberry and purple plum are garlanded in bittersweet perfumed iris and gentian, while mingled with peat, humus, and roasted red meat juices. There is a striking combination of textural richness with infectious juiciness as well as vintage-typical brightness and energy, culminating in a lingering finish at once soothing and invigorating, not to mention (in what counts as typical Aberrant Cellars fashion) persistently downright intriguing. The use of oak here, by the way, is exactly as I would claim it should be: 40% new yet in no obvious way noticeable; and the wine was bottled after 15 months. Plan to follow this at least through 2020 and probably beyond.

2011 Aberrant Cellars "Confero"

92

Bottled at under 11 months after maturation in one-quarter new barrels, the Aberrant Cellars 2011 Pinot Noir Confero relies predominantly on fruit from Hawks View and Zena Crown (with smaller contributions from Gran Moraine and Willakia). Sweetly ripe cherry is tinged with sandalwood and nutmeg in a fetching nose and ultra-juicy, palpably extract-rich, polished but firm palate. A strong aura of shrimp shell reduction – saline, alkaline, subtly smoky and iodine-tinged – serves for saliva inducement as well as intrigue, reinforced by suggestions of veal or beef marrow en route to a long, mouthwatering finish. I suspect that this outstanding value will perform admirably through at least 2018, and quite possibly well beyond.

2012 Aberrant Cellars "Philtrum"

92

Eide's 2012 Pinot Noir Blanc Philtrum ("love potion") may or may not live up to its name – I'll leave it for others to test that – but this first ever attempt by him to vinify Pinot Noir white demonstrates that profoundly as well as distinctively delicious wine can result. Rows at Hawks View and Willakia were singled out for grooming toward this end; then picked October 10, five days ahead of the fruit that was taken from these sites for reds. After very gentle pressing (the finished wine is classic "partridge eye"-colored) the juice was fermented and aged partly in stainless tanks and partly in half-new 400-liter barrels, with around half of the total volume undergoing malo-lactic conversion. Sweet corn, Ranier cherry and fresh lime are mingled with freshly milled and lightly toasted grains and garlanded in honeysuckle and wisteria on a striking nose and polished, subtly creamy, yet infectiously juicy and refreshingly animated palate. A blue crab-like sweet, saline, iodine-tinged savor lends intense saliva inducement to the long finish of a wine that is going to intrigue and delight while performing amazing feats at table. For how long – who can say? Why don't you rush to buy some of this terrific value and make answering that question part of the delicious discovery that awaits you?