

A Nichols Worth of Wine

December 2010

“Remembering Rutherford Dust”

I find a great deal of comfort in consistency. Especially when it comes to wine. Not that I don't still get excited learning about a new wine from a new part of the world as I did recently when I tasted the wines of *Korta Katarina* from Croatia. But I'll save that for another story.

I've been anything but quiet about my disappointment with many of the wines out of California in the last decade, cabernet in particular. From obscene alcohol levels (15% and above), to ever

evolving, or perhaps it's “de-evolving,” flavor profiles. Not all, but far too many California cabs are over-ripe, high-octane wines and often virtually indistinguishable, not only from each other, but sometimes from other varietals, syrah, in particular.



So when I first came across an ultra-small production cab - as in a little over 300 cases, from a trio of Napa wine vets a few years ago, I felt transported back in time. A time when Napa cabernets were terror driven, long before “*terroir*” was a term that today is bandied about as indiscriminately as minerality and sustainable.

Nostalgia aside, then you could differentiate not only between varietals, appellations, and sometimes even the vintage, you could actually taste “*Rutherford dust*.” The cabs from BV and Cakebread from Napa's Rutherford district were easily discernible from Mondavi and Silver Oak in neighboring Oakville. Somewhere along the way, all that got lost.

Fast forward a few decades to the stellar 2005 vintage when *Trivium* debuted its inaugural release. The project is a collaboration of longtime Silverado winemaker and now “semi-retired” Jack Stewart; Stu Harrison, who first marketed Opus One and others, whose day-job now is with Tim Mondavi's Continuum; and Doug Wight, fifth-generation grape grower on St. Helena benchland.





I got a note last week from Stu letting me know the 2007 Trivium was about to be released and he asked me if I had visited their website lately? Embarrassed, I fessed up. I hadn't. Stu, Jack and I have been kindred souls of sort, often bemoaning to one another, and anyone who would listen, the direction many California wineries have taken over the years. Thankfully they, along with partner Doug Wight, did something about it. They made a wine I like to describe to clients and friends as "*cabernet the way it used to taste.*"

I asked Stu for permission to reprint Trivium's latest blog, "*The Cabernet Manifesto,*" as I could hardly do it justice. I think you'll enjoy reading about a couple of guys unwaveringly committed to making a wine true to it's place and character, Better yet, buy the wine and see if you don't agree.

There are less than 400 cases of this classic wine from the highly regarded 2007 vintage. If it's anything like the 2005, it's ready to drink today, but will drink well into the next decade, or longer. While it may not be available from your local wine merchant, it is available through the *Trivium* website <http://www.triviumwine.com> .

For more on *Trivium*, I first wrote about them in a piece titled, *Under the Radar*; in October of 2008. Click here for that story. http://www.napleswinenews.com/pdfs/10_08.pdf .

Below is Trivium's latest blog, unedited.

Eat, drink and be merry!

Bruce

www.anicholsworthofwine.com

The Cabernet Manifesto

By [thisisyourfatherscabernet](#)

Wine in the Napa Valley has come a long way in the last forty years. Many, however, feel that the accompanying stylistic evolution has gone too far. Some long for the way it was, when wines were less ripe, extracted and laden with alcohol.

When we got into the wine business, winemaking dictated style. We had no idea then how much wines could be 'elevated' by technical means. But today, the winemaking pendulum has swung. Stylistic considerations are now dictating winemaking, regardless of where the grapes are grown, and the toolbox is bigger. The results in many instances are spectacular. But have we given up something in the process?

We set out to make a cabernet in the spirit of the years when we first got into the wine business in the 1970's. Our label, TRIVIUM, reflects this focus and philosophy. Our stylistic choice is based on our desire to make a wine that we ourselves want to drink, and that presents an interesting alternative for today's consumer. **This is your father's cabernet.**

We believe...

...A wine should show as well 'at table' as it does at a tasting.

...A wine can have substance, without manipulation.

...Balance and structure are as important as mouth-filling fruit.

...Moderation is as important in the making of a wine...as it is in its consumption!

...In wine, like music, there's room for both 'classical' and 'rock'.

The Napa cabernet has surely evolved, yet many are speaking out. They are finding that structured and balanced wines (reminiscent of a bygone era) have the ability to pair well with food without overwhelming the meal, or the consumer! Let us know where you stand. Join the conversation.