

Swirl on Castro Tasting Notes

Art of the Label September 27, 2007

1) Eric Kent, Chardonnay, Russian River '05 \$36.50 btl

100% Chardonnay. Artist Mary Black's art work is amazing, hypnotic. "Although I work intuitively, I have certain criteria I consider in the work. My paintings reflect my interest in Jungian psychology, duality and the unconscious mind. I seek difference — opposites, whether through color, texture or darks and lights. As I work on many pieces at once, I watch as the paintings begin to attract one another like magnets. The division of space and use of the grid is a metaphor for my belief that our psyches are divided into many parts seeking wholeness. It's also a means of organizing chaos." Eric Kent uses prime Russian River grapes for his show-stopper Chardonnay, with exudes exotic spice and floral notes. 250 cases produced. 14.9% alcohol.

2) Eno, Pinot Noir, "P 05" Fairview Rd. Ranch, Santa Lucia '05 \$38.00 btl

100% Pinot Noir. From our favorite local artisan winemaker Sasha Verhage - this succulent, elegant Pinot is from the Santa Lucia Highlands. His award-winning labels capture the spirit and unique qualities of each wine. Sasha, who works for Yahoo by day, has a huge passion for making wine from single-vineyard lots and has just released his third vintage. Sasha produces small batches of Pinot Noir, old vine Zinfandel, Grenache, and Syrah from undiscovered vineyards. The 2005 labels were designed by Patrick Castro from Milwaukee. Each of the labels is a stylized detail of objects such as ice, cells and atoms. Together with the primary image is a corresponding diagram - wind pattern with ice, the overall look is to communicate the wines clear union of science and art. (The Pinot label is atomic.) 138 cases produced. 14.6% alcohol.

3) Livon, Refosco, Colli Orientali del Friuli Italy '03 \$25.50 btl

100% Refosco. He designed his first dress when he was 5, and had a retrospective of his work when he was 95 – Erte is an icon in the art world. His work is generally labeled art deco, but his wit, imagination and irrepressible flamboyance suggest a more fitting appellation: art Erte. In 1986 BATF blocked this label as "obscene and indecent" because the "breasts on the label were upthrust and very evident." Following the judgment, the importer (and his kids) used gold pens to cover up the big boobies. The label won BATF approval when they featured a slightly flat-chested version of Erte's nude woman. The grape Refosco has wonderful qualities of current, wild berry and plum, with floral notes on the nose. The best examples of Refosco come from the Colli Orientali region of Friuli - the grape is also called *terlan* or *terlano*. You can also find the Refosco grape under the name Mondeuse, grown in Eastern France in the Jura. 14% alcohol.

4) Some Young Punks, "Quickie" Nebbiolo (Barossa) / Shiraz (Clare), Australia '06 \$24.50

50% Nebbiolo, 50% Shiraz. A Swirl staff favorite. The label is a reproduction of an actual paperback cover of a 1930's pulp fiction novel called *Quickie*. Some of the best wines of Australia never leave Down Under because the demand and following is so intense they have no additional cases to send to the US. Jen Gardner, along with Colin McBride and Nic Bourke produce the highly acclaimed Adelina wines in Clare Valley, and produce a limited line under their label *Some Young Punks* from various appellations. They are incredibly nice people, super smart (two of the three have PhDs) and possess a wonderfully irreverent view of life, evidenced by the writings on their website. (someyoungpunks.com.au) We love this limited release wine, and these creative young innovators. 250 cases produced, 40 cases imported. 15% alcohol.

5) Eric Kent Syrah, Dry Stack Vineyard Sonoma '04 \$36.75 btl

100% Syrah. Colleen Teitgen is Eric Kent's "other half" and the art curator for Eric Kent Wine Cellars. "Kent and I have a knack for coming up with our best ideas over dinner and a bottle. We designed my engagement ring using a blue crayon and a place mat at a local pizza place, and we decided to showcase artists on our labels over burgers and Zinfandel in paper cups. I was in art school at the time and our dinner conversation focused on new artists and their work. We had so many talented friends but they all faced a common dilemma: How does a relatively unknown artist create an audience for their art? And then, BAM! The idea for our label was born. We could hardly wait to get started." The Swirl staff fell in love with Vanessa Marsh's airy piece that graces the 04 Dry Stack Syrah. Vanessa carefully crafts scenes using photography, film and miniature figures to represent a combination of real and imagined events. Dry Stack vineyard produces a very Rhone like-Syrah, on the nose (earth, roast beef, violet) with California plushness on the palate. 200 cases produced. 15.1% alcohol.

6) Greenwood Ridge Zinfandel, 'Sherrer Vineyard' Sonoma '04 \$26.50 btl

100% Zinfandel. This bold, ripe zin comes from 95 year old vines from the famed Sherrer Vineyards, and is most often found on Wine Spectator's Top 100 wines of the world. Owner and winemaker Allan Green brings a creative imagination to all his endeavors. A graphic artist by trade, the art of grape growing and wine making captivated him in 1973. Thirty years later, the Mendocino Winegrowers Alliance presented Allan with the George Zeni Memorial Award for "outstanding stewardship of the land, community service and producing the highest quality wine grapes in Mendocino County." My father gave the original dragon sculpture to the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in 1959. It is still on prominent display at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona. The dragon was originally intended to be a fountain, but Mrs. Wright had the dragon fitted with a propane tank so it could breathe fire. I created our new package, featuring a stylized dragon, as a tribute to my father, Aaron G. Green. I think he would have loved it." We think this is a beautiful, unusual bottle. 210 cases produced. 14.3% alcohol.