



TASTING NOTES

Wine Garage Newsletter

May 2010

Batman, Robins, and looking South

Back when I was a boy in Pennsylvania, springtime was announced by the arrival of the robins. Now, here in Napa Valley, spring has sprung when the robins leave. Well, not quite all of the robins leave, just the 100,000 of them that live in the oak trees up behind my house. It appears that the robins migrate south to Napa Valley during the winter from parts unknown well north of here. I first discovered their winter quarters when I was disposing of several empty wine bottles late one night after a wine tasting in my recycling bin that resides at the back of my house underneath a bunch of oak trees. When I let the bottles crash into the bin, it apparently woke several hundred robins sleeping in the trees above, and the sound of all those birds taking flight at once practically gave me a heart attack. I almost fell off my back porch. It was after that event that I started noticing the robins. At daybreak the birds would awake and descend down from the oak trees into the valley to feed on leftover grapes in the vineyards. Early one morning I witnessed this event standing in my backyard looking up the hill. The birds would swoop down in ones and twos flying just inches above the top of the roof of the house to the valley below. I stood there motionless, pretending to be a tree as the birds swooped above my head, I could feel the wind from their wings. Hundreds and hundreds of robins littered the sky as they embarked to feed on leftover grapes and worms. At dusk, they return to their roosts in the oak trees on the hillside south of my house. They return in a similar fashion flying in ones and twos, briefly stopping on a branch in the pine trees at first as they figure out their sleeping arrangements, I am assuming this, of course. I believe they fly back in groups of ones and twos as a stealthy move avoiding predators. This assumption is backed up by fact however. One evening as I was witnessing the return of the robins to their oak trees, I heard behind me the flap of

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heavier wings and then a thwack. I turned around and all I saw was an explosion of feathers floating in the air. One red breasted robin would not be returning to the vineyards the next morning, him being dinner for a faster raptor. I looked in the sky everywhere searching for a falcon or a hawk with a robin in its talons but saw nothing, just floating feathers in the air, softly landing on fallen oak leaves on the ground.

The robins have all headed north on their seasonal migration except for a few stragglers, guessing that they probably have migrated north to Napa Valley from parts south. Last night, as I was once again emptying wine bottles into the recycling bin, a bat came whizzing by down the alleyway behind my house. I looked left, and saw bat after bat soaring down the same pathway. I ran and got Emma to come see this crazy site. It looked like they were either coming out of my attic or the neighbors attic, hopefully the latter. We walked to the front of the house and looked towards the sky and counted perhaps 20 bats flitting around gorging on insects, hopefully the tree-hole mosquitoes that hatch from the indentations in the trees created by broken branches that collect water. This year should be a bumper crop of these mosquitoes since we've had such an amazingly rainy spring. In fact an eight years that we've lived in Napa Valley I have never seen it rain this late in the season. Normally, it stops raining around mid April and we don't see another drop until October. It better stop pretty soon because if we get some rain storms when the infant grape bunches flower, the raindrops will knock the flowers off and there will be no grapes.

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It's been raining on the wine industry's parade all year, still. I have some tasty and special treats included in all three clubs this shipment. The deals are still abounding.

There is a wine selection from Cali 351 Winery in every club this shipment that was originally priced out of our range. Made by winemaker Nyle Zackerly who became famous when he was making wine for Barnett Vineyards, Cali 351 was to be the winery associated with the Torrano Resort in Calistoga which unfortunately lost their financing and was never built. But the wine was made and I got a crazy deal on it for you to enjoy.

Also in this shipment the Wine Garage is debuting our first Grenache/Syrah/Mourvedre blend in the All Red Club. This is the last shipment until October. By then I am sure I will be sourcing even crazier deals due to all of the economic turmoil happening in the wine industry.

Please cross your fingers that there will be wine tourists this summer in our beautiful Napa Valley. If you come to visit you won't see too many red breasted robins, but at dusk looked towards the sky and I'm sure you'll see some pretty fat bats flying haphazardly amongst the oak trees.

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NOTE: in the April tasting notes I mentioned, that Linda had stepped down as our wine club manager, unfortunately. The good news is that Karen Pinomaki, has been promoted and is the new club manager. It is not a fun job let me tell you, managing all of you fine club member's orders. The attention to detail needed is mind blowing. Karen has stepped in and is doing an amazing job without so much as a single bump in the road. Joy and I cannot believe our good fortune that Karen was there to handle the reins.

Once again, a big shout of "Thank You" goes out to you for your loyalty, continued support, and kind words. Have a great summer!

The Wine Garage