



ACORN Winery: A Russian River Valley Treasure

On their 32 acres in Russian River Valley, Acorn Winery grows 60 grape varieties
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TODAY ON THE DAILY MEAL

ACORN Winery is a labor of love for owners Betsy and Bill Nachbaur. They've been farming their property, Alegría Vineyards, sustainably since 1990. On their 32 acres in Russian River Valley, they grow 60 grape varieties. From that they bottle approximately 3,000 cases of wine each year; every one of them field blends. Their commitment to environmentally sound practices even includes doing away with foil capsules on the

bottle. I've been a fan of what they do for years now and try to visit them whenever I can. I was out in Sonoma County recently and I spent some time with them, chatting and of course tasting through their latest releases. Here are my thoughts on the current batch.

ACORN Cabernet Franc 2012 (\$34)

This wine is a field blend of cabernet franc (88 percent), merlot (7 percent), petit verdot (4 percent) and small dollops of cabernet sauvignon, tannat, and malbec. Barrel aging occurred over 15 months in new and seasoned French (45 percent), American (45 percent), and Hungarian (10 percent) oak. 271 cases were produced. A big, expressive nose laced with cherry and leather notes leads this franc. Dark fruit dominates the palate along with copious spices including vanilla bean. Sour cherry, cardamom and nutmeg are all in evidence on the long, pleasing finish.

ACORN Sangiovese 2012 (\$30)

In addition to sangiovese (98 percent), a bit of canaiolo (1 percent) and mammolo (1 percent) are planted alongside and included here. The cuttings for those vines came right from their property, with some dating back to 1950, among the oldest sangiovese plantings in Sonoma County. Barrel aging took place over 16 months in new and previously used Hungarian (46 percent), French (39 percent), and American oak (15 percent). 690 cases of this vintage were produced. The beautiful, light cherry red color of this sangiovese is spot on in its typicity. Strawberry and cherry aromas fill the nose along with bits of spice. The palate is even keeled and mouth-watering with red fruits leading, tinged by hints of black. Cherry and plum are dominant and the cornucopia of spices lead to the finish where rhubarb, sour cherry, earth and black pepper all contribute to an impressive and lengthy close. There is a truly beautiful acidity to this wine.

ACORN Dolcetto 2011 (\$33)

It's a field blend of dolcetto (96 percent), barbera (2 percent), and freisa (2 percent). Barrel aging occurred over 15 months in new and previously used French (45 percent), Hungarian (33 percent), and American (22 percent) oak. 234 cases of the 2011 vintage

were produced. Black and somewhat brooding fruit aromas fill the dense nose. The palate is loaded with sour black and red fruits. Cherry and Rhubarb dominate and are accompanied by bits of bitter chocolate and spice. Blackberry characteristics emerge on the above average finish. All of the ACORN wines are meant to be enjoyed with food; this dolcetto in particular screams for a culinary partner, enhances it, and is in turn lifted by a good pairing.

ACORN 2011 Axiom Syrah (\$34) syrah (98 percent) and viognier (2 percent) are grown, fermented and aged together. Barrel aging took place over 15 months in used and new French (62 percent), Hungarian (27 percent), and American (11 percent) oak. 298 cases were produced. The small amount of viognier that is grown alongside and co-fermented with this Syrah really lifts the nose and gives it a lovely, floral edge. The palate is loaded with black cherry, smoked meats and blackberry. Earth, black tea, and a bevy of spices emerge on the lengthy finish. This may be a California wine, but stylistically and structurally it is more informed by Old World syrah than its New World counterparts. ACORN's syrah is a beautiful (and correct) expression of a grape that is criminally underutilized in California.

ACORN Heritage Vines Zinfandel 2012 (\$45)

A true Field Blend, this zinfandel (78 percent) also contains alicante bouschet (13 percent), and petite sirah (7 percent). The remaining 2 percent is made up of carignane, trousseau, sangiovese, petit bouschet, negrette, syrah, plavac mali, tannat, muscat noir, pelpursin, béclan, grenache and cinsault. Barrel aging took place over 1 year in new and previously used French (78 percent) and American oak. 587 cases were produced. Their oldest zinfandel vines date back to 1890. A nice briary nose leads the way on this zinfandel. The palate is loaded with juicy, berry fruit flavors that lean towards blackberry and raspberry along with a bit of plum and blueberry. Pepper, wisps of chocolate sauce and earth are each part of the persistent and complex finish. This is an old-school zinfandel in the best sense of that term. It's loaded with genuine, zinfandel character, dying to be paired with delicious food but perfectly balanced and quite delicious all by itself. Oh, and it'll age beautifully for at least a decade, likely longer.

ACORN Medley 2011 (\$45)

This field blend features syrah (29 percent), zinfandel (23 percent), alicante bouschet (13 percent), cinsault 10 percent), muscats (8 percent), dolcetto (5 percent), petite sirah (5 percent), and a host of other varieties (7 percent). Barrel aging took place over 12 months in new and used American (38 percent), French (38 percent), and Hungarian (24 percent) oak. 317 cases were produced. Wild strawberry aromas lead the inviting nose of ACORN's signature Field Blend. Red fruits galore dot the palate which is juicy, welcoming and lush. Bits of plum creep in on the finish along with a touch of cocoa and spice. Medley is a complex, layered and downright awesome wine. All of the ACORN wines are well-made, delicious, and truly terrific expressions of what is grown at Alegría Vineyards; Medley, however, stands as the crowning achievement.

If you're a fan of genuine, proportionate, vineyard-driven wines from a family producer that walks the walk when it comes to sustainable practices, The ACORN wines are for you. Betsy and Bill are truly Sheppard's of Alegría Vineyards and love to show it and their wines off. Visits are by appointment, but easy to come by. Just give them a call and schedule a time to stop by. One or both of them will show you around and help you taste through the wines personally. So if you're going to be in Sonoma County, **do give them a call**. I can't say enough about how delicious, well-made, and true to their place in the world the artisanal wines of ACORN are. They also tend to age exquisitely, if you can resist drinking them in their youth. In addition to all of that, the owners are sincerely sweet people; who better to buy your wine from?