

Rokurokubi & Inugami, Birichino

California, United states



Product code	ABo8ZZRC
Grapes	Mourvèdre
Country	UNITED STATES
ABV%	13.5
Case Size	12
Closure Style	Cork
Producer	Arpent Birichino
Vintage	2022



Vegan



Vegetarian

BIRICHINO

Producer

Alex Krause and John Locke founded Birichino in Santa Cruz in 2008. Drawing on a combined four decades making wine in California, France, Italy, and beyond, they are focused on attaining the perfect balance of perfume, poise, and puckishness. Sourcing from a number of carefully farmed, family-owned, own-rooted 19th and early 20th century vineyards (and a few from the late disco era) planted by and large in more moderate, marine-influenced climates, their preoccupation is to safeguard the quality and vibrance of their raw materials. Their preference is for minimal intervention, most often favouring native fermentations, employing stainless or neutral barrels, minimal racking and fining, and avoiding filtration altogether when possible. But most critically, their aim is to make delicious wines that give pleasure, revitalize, and revive.

Tasting Notes

One of the few California Chardonnays that behaves like a Grand Cru Chablis. Exhibits a nervous edge as well as loads of lemon butter, green apple and whitecurrant-like characteristics, laser-like precision, superb acidity and surprising intensity as well as richness. We have tried for many years to conjure a fancy, congruent, ageworthy old vine blend of Besson Grenache, Bechthold Cinsault and Contra Costa Mourvèdre which eclipses the sum of its parts, and until 2019, we had done so with an unbroken record of abject failure. Whether it is the individual wines or the individual winemakers who should engage in sober self-reflection is not obvious, though we are taking complete credit for Rokurokubi & Inugami. We can again thank three principal factors for the success of the 2021 iteration: First, an even crop of medium-sized berries of the world's oldest Cinsaults harvested in early Fall. Second, the exoticism of the Mourvèdre from our new source in Contra Costa County. Third, a small addition of Grenache planted in 1910 at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains. Rather than each playing a

distinct and separate character in the blend, they each contribute particularly aromatic and yet firmly grounded aspects to the 2021 vintage, both the untethered mountain herbs and spices of Rokurokubi from the ever-amaro and winter-spiced aroma of Bechthold Cinsault, to the basso profondo of Contra Costa Mourvedre and Besson's tannic structure - the essence of the Wolf/Dog Spirit rooted in the earth, or Inugami spirit. We anticipate this will evolve and improve over several years. Arigato, Bakemono Zukushi.

Viticulture

This historic 100 hectare property lies 3.5 kilometres north of Calistoga, at the base of Mount St. Helena. The region lies on a complex terroir with a mixture of alluvial and volcanic soils, some on the flat, some on steeply sided hillsides. Extending out from the Napa River is the alluvial soil, the most prevalent type on the property. In the back and outside areas of the vineyard are volcanic soils, formed by ancient lava flows caused by tectonic uplifting. Sustainable farming is practised avoiding the use of any chemical fertilisers. Instead organic chicken manure and compost made with the previous season's pomace - seeds, stems and grape skins left after crushing is used. Ladybirds are used to combat unwanted pests, and light ploughing is done to keep the vineyard clean and free from weeds. Harvesting is carried out at night to preserve the fruit.

Winemaking

The Bechthold Cinsault and Besson grenache and Little Big Block Mourvedre all hail from late 19th century or early 20th century vineyards. Bechthold and Little Big Block from 1886 and 1895, Besson from 1910. All are bush vines, farmed without irrigation, and Bechthold and Besson also farmed organically, though without certification. All 3 are also farmed without irrigation. Rokurokubi & Inugami Same approach here- night picks with lights for the Mourvedre and Cinsault from vineyards planted in 1895 and 1886, and early morning pick for that Grenache. Mourvedre stem inclusion of about 15%, Grenache about 20%, and Cinsault almost entirely destemmed for an average of about 18%. Fermentation again

native in stainless, pressed off fairly early, and down to old barriques for mourvedre and puncheon for grenache and cinsault for some 10 months before racking /assembling in the bottling tank. Unfiltered, unfining which is true for every wine we can get away with that on- with careful clean racking and as long as a wine has gone through ML and finished primary fermentation (no residual sugar, which is everything, really) we don't need to risk stripping the wine by filtering or fining, so we don't.

Ratings

91/100

The Richard Jublin Champagne Club – 2021

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91/100

Wine Spectator – 2021

Gold Medal

International Wine Challenge 2022