



B. Kosuge Wines

2006 HUDSON VINEYARD
CARNEROS SYRAH

Every fall, Lee Hudson, proprietor of Hudson Vineyards, throws a harvest fiesta for all of his field workers, clients and friends. It's quite the shindig, made even more enjoyable by the broad cross section of wine industry types that attend. Not just the rich guys, in other words. A Mexican band plays and everyone chows down on Carnitas, Chorizo and sometimes Birria before lurching to the dance floor (which is actually the gravel area out in front of the equipment sheds). The one concession we make to the fact that it's a wine country party is the makeshift bar set out with all sorts of interesting wines, most of which come from the vineyard. There's beer too, of course.

Lee and his vineyard manager Jason Kesner are inspired winegrowers. My block of Syrah is sandwiched in between blocks that go to two other clients, and each one is managed differently, down to the way the excess leaves are pulled off. There are dozens of blocks in the vineyard that receive this kind of attention; I don't know how they keep track of them all. During the course of the season, I have many pleasant strolls through the vineyard with one or the other of those gentlemen, discussing the finer points of Syrah viticulture, or sometimes the Boston Red Sox, in which Jason and I share an interest. At harvest time, I have occasionally resorted to bringing the pickers a box of donuts from the Butter Cream Bakery (their slogan is "being sweet to you is our business"), because I am always asking them to do extra stuff for me—and they never balk at anything that might make the wine better. Or maybe it's just the donuts.

Hudson Vineyard is well known for its Chardonnay, Merlot and Syrah, with several producers bottling Hudson Vineyard designates. Despite my long history with Pinot Noir in Carneros, I think Syrah may be the most exciting red variety in the region. 2006 was a long cool vintage, with a very cold spring and a substantial amount of rain early in the year. The Hudson Syrah, for whatever reason, came in at considerably lower yields than in 2005—about 2.75 tons/acre. I continue to believe in leaving a substantial percentage of whole clusters in the fermentor—this year, it was about half. I like the flesh they add to the palate and the lift they add to the aromas. Only about a quarter of the barrels were new, and some of the wine was aged in 350 liter casks. The 2006 is darker and more brooding than the 2005, which was lively and perfumed, almost Pinot-like. It can be a little tight right after uncorking, but give it a little air, and it opens up nicely. I made 209 cases this year.