2009 Force Majeure Collaboration Series IV

Force Majeure's 2009 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Collaboration Series IV is dominated by Merlot (supported by 23% Cabernet Sauvignon plus smaller amounts of other Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot) and vinified by Carolyn Lakewold of Donedei Wines, whose background and inspiration – accordingly to McBride and Johnson – is with Northern Italian wine (though I can't say I would have detected this). At 13.8% alcohol this is intentionally significantly lighter than its Collaboration Series siblings, and the absence of press wine was evidently intended to enhance textural refinement and relative levity. The nose here, though, is exceedingly spirituous as well as torreeled, for an impression that resembles dried cherries macerated in cognac, kirsch, and chocolate syrup, characteristics that combine for an almost liqueur-like though texturally not notably alluring palate impression. Toasted praline, cocoa powder, and caramelized wood...

- David Schildknecht (December, 2012)

2009 Force Majeure Collaboration Series II

For Force Majeure's 2009 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Collaboration Series II the inspiration is Northern Rhone and vinificateur Ross Mickel (formerly of Betz) co-ferments with dollops of both Viognier and Roussanne. (Johnson says he goes through all of the available fruit to pick, based on flavor-interest, bunches of Viognier and Roussanne specifically for purposes of co-fermentation, though I can't say he convinced me that this could be anything but overkill given precisely that purpose, and the mere 1% of each employed.) Perhaps not surprisingly given the choice of Rhone clones of Syrah and the Rhone inspiration, this is initially a bit reduced, and as it opens is more meaty and savory in a saline, bloody way than the corresponding Collaboration III. Scents of mint, violet, gentian, black pepper, and cherry in confitured and distilled formats make for both a striking nose and persistent, polished, sappy, and energetic...

- David Schildknecht (December, 2012)

2009 Force Majeure Collaboration Series Reserve Syrah

The 2009 Collaboration Series Reserve Syrah is similar to the 2005 and 2006 Reserve Syrahs with its up-front, sexy and almost slutty kirsch and blackberry liqueur-styled fruit, graphite, roasted meats, dried flowers and underbrush-like aromas and flavors. Despite the extended time in barrel, it remains supremely pure and fresh, which, let me tell you, is not always the case with wines that have spent over three years in barrel! Full-bodied, supple and hard to resist, with a core of sweet fruit, a layered, rich texture and a big finish, it is ready to go now and I see no reason to delay gratification. A decade or more of longevity is most likely on the conservative side. Drink now 2022. Focusing on site specific fruit (Red Mountain) and utilizing a variety of top winemakers who each make a specific style of wine, Force Majeure (formerly Grand Reve) is the brain child of entrepreneur Paul McBride and vineyard manager Ryan Johnson...

- Jeb Dunnuck (June, 2013)

2009 Force Majeure Collaboration Series III

The Force Majeure 2009 Ciel du Cheval Vineyard Collaboration Series III employs four clones of Syrah and was vinified by Mark McNeilly (with his assistant Mike Macmorran) of the Mark Ryan winery, who chose to utilize just one-third new barriques, in which the wine finished its primary fermentation. Vanilla and marzipan lend a surprisingly confectionary cast on a glycerol-rich palate to an amalgam of cherry preserves and creme de cassis, happily underlain by suggestions of roasted red meats that lend saliva inducement and savory counterpoint in a lingering, luscious finish. I was surprised at the extent to which this reflected its oak component given the stated percentage of new wood; but it was on this occasion that I made the following important discovery: in Washington, when vintners speak of “neutral” barrels, they may well – as in this instance – be referring to barrels that have been used only once previously! My intuition...

- David Schildknecht (December, 2012)