

## **Arnot-Roberts**

By Josh Raynolds

Duncan Meyers and Nathan Roberts took full advantage of the moderate 2009 growing season, which allowed the grapes from the cool to cold sites they favor "to get ripe while retaining acidity," which is the key to their house style. "We like wines that are expressive without losing freshness and focus, which can happen pretty easily even when you're working in a relatively cool region." I asked them what sort of progress they felt they'd made in recent years and both quickly said "vineyard work." According to Duncan, "our winemaking is pretty well dialed in by now, which doesn't mean that it's perfect or can't be fine-tuned, but the biggest leap has been with figuring out how to tweak the vines in each site." Added Nathan, "working with canopies and, especially, choosing the right time to pick--so really being on top of the vines and being in them all the time, that's where our focus is now." Except for the cabernets, which Roberts says "can handle and even crave some or a lot of new oak," almost every wine here is made in neutral or near-neutral casks and stainless steel.

### **2010 Arnot-Roberts Old Vine White Compagni-Portis Vineyard Sonoma Valley**

Pale gold. Refined aromas of lime pith, lemongrass, mint and flowers, with a hint of bee pollen; reminds me a bit of a Loire Valley chenin blanc. At once deep and brisk, with intense lime and mineral flavors and a touch of white pepper giving energy to the mid-palate. Slowly gains weight with air and finishes with refreshing cut and spicy bite. This is a blend of all sorts of varieties, most of them obscure, but the dominant grape is gewurztraminer. The wine comes in at 12.7% alcohol. 91

### **2010 Arnot-Roberts Ribolla Gialla Vare Vineyard Napa Valley**

Light yellow. Ripe pit fruits, yellow plum and orange marmalade on the perfumed nose. Broad, rich and honeyed on entry, then smooth and silky in the middle, offering plump nectarine and pear flavors and a touch of bitter citrus pith. Quite lively on the finish, with the orange note echoing. 90

### **2010 Arnot-Roberts Chardonnay Matthiasson Vineyard Sonoma Coast**

Pale, green-tinged gold. Lively, high-pitched aromas of lime, lemongrass and green apple. Pure and incisive on the palate, offering deep citrus fruit flavors and a note of anise. Dry, nervy and fat-free, with excellent finishing clarity and lingering stoniness. This was raised completely in stainless steel, followed by a short sojourn in neutral oak before bottling. 91

### **2009 Arnot-Roberts Chardonnay Watson Ranch Vineyard Napa Valley**

Light gold. Wild, complex nose evokes nectarine, lemongrass, anise and musky herbs. Supple, broad and impressively concentrated, with spicy pit and orchard fruit flavors braced by a bitter citrus zest quality. Shows silky texture but zero fat, finishing with very good persistence and clarity. This vineyard is very high in limestone content. 92

### **2010 Arnot-Roberts Trousseau Luchsinger Vineyard Clear Lake**

Pale red. Expressive aromas of redcurrant, blood orange, minerals, cinnamon and allspice. Supple and juicy in the mouth, with very good cut to its red fruit, blood orange and floral flavors. Penetrating acidity extends a long, peppery, floral-dominated finish. This graceful wine's finesse and focus are impressive; it's carrying only 12.5% alcohol. 91

### **2008 Arnot-Roberts Cabernet Sauvignon Bugay Vineyard Sonoma County**

Saturated ruby. Pungent aromas of blackberry, rhubarb, licorice, wild herbs and menthol. Juicy, brisk and focused, with intense flavors of cassis, candied licorice and herbs. Offers a lot of flavor and complexity with no excess weight. Finishes youthfully tannic and very long, with a hint of bitter chocolate and firm mineral bite. With air this puts on weight and gains sweetness, which bodes well for cellaring. 92(+?)

### **2008 Arnot-Roberts Cabernet Sauvignon Clajoux Vineyard Chalk Hill**

Vivid ruby. Flamboyant aromas of cassis, botanical herbs, licorice, lavender and cracked pepper. Dense, fleshy and sweet, with a slight medicinal reserve to the intense flavors of dark berries, bitter cherry, floral pastilles and spices. The impressively sappy, long finish features fine-grained tannins and lingering floral notes. 93

### **2008 Arnot-Roberts Cabernet Sauvignon Fellom Ranch Santa Cruz Mountains**

Bright violet. Extremely primary nose displays black and blue fruit preserves, vanilla and flowers, along with notes of fresh bay and pipe tobacco. Juicy and strikingly pure, with sweet blackcurrant, cherry and boysenberry flavors firmed by a spine of zesty acidity. Shows impressive intensity on the finish, which leaves notes of juicy dark fruit and minerals behind. 92

### **2009 Arnot-Roberts Syrah North Coast**

Deep ruby. Exotic perfume of spicy redcurrant and cherry aromas, with notes of dried flowers and Asian spices adding

complexity. Firm and precise in the mouth, offering lively red and dark berry and violet flavors and a hint of white pepper.

Gains sweetness with air, finishing with very good clarity and spicy persistence. This was fermented with 100% whole clusters and raised in neutral oak. 91

**2009 Arnot-Roberts Syrah Alder Springs Vineyard Mendocino County**

Deep ruby. A kaleidoscopic bouquet offers black raspberry, dried flowers, minerals, mocha and smoky minerals. Fat and silky on entry, then more taut in the middle, with superb energy to its deep, almost decadently rich red and dark berry flavors. Completely stains the palate without giving any impression of weight. An element of pungent floral oils lingers on the long, sappy finish. Walks a fine line of richness and finesse; Duncan says that "if New World syrah goes too far then it's just clown shoes." There's only 11.8% alcohol here! 94

**2009 Arnot-Roberts Syrah Griffin's Lair Vineyard Sonoma Coast**

Bright ruby. Impressively lively scents of wild red berries, star anise, potpourri and olive, plus a hint of white pepper. Juicy, pure and energetic in the mouth, with assertive raspberry and cherry compote flavors that gain sweetness and heft with air. The most powerful of this set of 2009 syrahs but also the most electric. The finish is racy, gently smoky and extremely long. This was fermented with all whole clusters and comes in at 13.2% alcohol. 94

**2009 Arnot-Roberts Syrah Hudson Vineyard Los Carneros**

Bright purple. Sexy, highly perfumed nose combines boysenberry, violet, bacon fat, spices and herbs. Wild, expansive and deep, with a shockingly light touch to its creamy dark fruit and floral flavors. Fine-grained tannins build with air and add focus to the very long, juicy, spice-accented finish. This wine comes in at only 12.7% alcohol but gives up nothing in the way of flavor intensity. 93