



Inspiration Vineyards & Winery  
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Here's what Andrea Immer-Robinson thinks about our wines...  
(<https://www.andreamimmer.com>)

### **Inspiration Vineyards, Chardonnay – Russian River Valley - 2006**

I was so thrilled to get a little bit of this wine for the club. Over a year ago we included the previous release of this wine in the club, after I discovered it at Copia's annual Artisan Wines festival, which celebrates small producers (less than 5,000 cases total). It was there that I met winemaker Jon Phillips, and became so impressed after tasting his entire lineup. I requested a sample to put in our blind tasting which included top California Chardonnays, plus two Chardonnays from Burgundy, a Meursault and Premier Cru Chassagne-Montrachet. Although it was the least expensive wine in the lineup, whose prices ranged up to \$80 per bottle, the Inspiration won.

Jon, who was working for the county of Sonoma at the time we met, is now making wine full time. I am thrilled for him and for us, because his wines are fantastic. Once again, when tasting this Chardonnay release we compared it blind to much more expensive California Chardonnays and French Burgundies, and once again it impressed us.

You will notice a toastiness and a stony mineral quality on the nose that is quite Meursault-like. The California character comes through in the beautifully-integrated acidity that frames tender baked apple fruit with a hint of cinnamon. The finish is long, with a subtle nutty quality. I believe the wine, while beautiful now, will age wonderfully for five years or so. (We can look forward to Jon's Pinot Noir in a few months!)

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### **Inspiration Vineyards, Syrah – Dry Creek Valley – 2006**

Each year the arrival of Jon Phillips' new wine releases is an "event" at our house. We organize a blind tasting of the Inspiration bottling versus some of our other favorite versions of the selected varietal - either Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Zinfandel or Syrah. We prepare a meal, suited to the grape, to enjoy after the tasting and unveiling of the wines. For this blind tasting we included great Syrah from California and Washington, including some past club selections, which showed beautifully.

What thrilled us about this wine was the French Rhone-esque hint of black pepper on the nose. Very few New World Syrahs seem to have that characteristic, which is to me one of the notes that define great Syrah. It also showed complex notes of charcoal and black olive along with the sweet dark berry fruit, coffee and vanilla flavors and scents. It was co-fermented with 3% Viognier – a common practice in the Rhone region of Cote-Rotie to soften the wine and brighten the aroma. As is typical of Jon's other wines, this one is the perfect balance of Old World complexity and character with New World depth of fruit. It is delicious to drink now, but I believe it will also reward aging of 5-7 years. Taste the bottle now and, if you like it, consider putting some down to drink over the next several years.

\* Reprinted with permission – Andrea Immer-Robinson – August 2008



## Inspiration Vineyards, Pinot Noir – Los Carneros - 2006

Once again, I proudly share with you the handiwork of one of my favorite California winemakers, Jon Phillips. In notes past I told you the story of how Jon was, like many people here in California wine country, making small amounts of wine in his spare time while working for the county of Sonoma. The day finally came when his venture had enough traction for him to commit full-time to winemaking, and I look forward to the first vintages of his undistracted efforts in a few years. If this and past bottlings are any indication, we are in for some major excitement.

He only made a couple hundred cases of this wine, and with it introduced a new approach to winemaking – an extended fermentation lasting almost five weeks. The result, while more dense and concentrated than past vintages, still shows amazing elegance, restraint, and detail. Clearly the fruit source is amazing, and Jon knows just when to pick and how to handle it to showcase the smoke, strawberry, tobacco, tea leaf and wet rocks character. It is like subtle, great Burgundy with more fruit ripeness. He uses 2- and 3-year-old barrels for aging the wine, so the oak is just a grace note, as it should be. I am going to put away a case of this wine (if there is enough). It is one of the best Pinot Noirs I have tasted from anywhere in the last two years. At this price, it is a gift.

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