

Trumpet Call

Rubissow Wines ringing out on Mt. Veeder

When George Rubissow and Tony Sargent founded their Rubissow-Sargent label a quarter century ago, the wine world was a very different place. Sargent had been brought up on Bordeaux, and he modeled his wines—sourced from Rubissow’s 45-acre farm on Mt. Veeder—after the ageworthy French bottles he knew and collected.

I admit I always found the Rubissow-Sargent wines, although well-made, to be overly tight and astringent, especially if they were to be consumed young. Now, things have changed. Tony Sargent has retired and George Rubissow has become Vintner Emeritus. Rubissow-Sargent has morphed into Rubissow Wines under the leadership of George’s children, Peter Rubissow and his sister, Ariel Rubissow-Okamoto.

New winemaker Timothy Milos’s impressive résumé includes stints at Opus One and Stag’s Leap Wine Cellars. He brings an entirely different interpretation of Mt. Veeder terroir to the current Rubissow lineup.

The wines have undergone a daring improvement in the past couple of vintages. I was impressed with the 2004 wines, but the generous 2005 releases, which I recently tasted with Peter, are yet another tick up in quality. I can’t think of a California winery that has undergone a more dramatic transformation.

Here are my notes on the current releases. All wines carry a Mount Veeder, Napa Valley appellation.



RUBISSOW

92 Rubissow Wines 2005 Estate Merlot (\$50) Juicy and bright with lovely racy plum and lush texture; rich and generous with superb fruit and a long, clean and pure finish.

90 Rubissow Wines 2005 Trompette, Estate (\$65) Silky and juicy with fresh, bright plum, blackberry and coffee; fruit forward, lively and balanced with nice length; 65% Cabernet Franc, 25% Merlot, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon.

92 Rubissow Wines 2005 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon (\$75) Smooth, velvety and rich with lush black plum, mocha, cedar and soft herbs; lovely, supple and long with bright acid structure and fine depth and balance; 6.5% Merlot, 1.5% Cabernet Franc.

94 Rubissow Wines 2005 Cabernet Sauvignon, Sargent Reserve, Estate (\$125) Dark, rich and smooth with lovely plum, mocha, chocolate and spice; velvety, dense and beautifully structured with complexity and finesse. ■■