

DAILY CHRONICLE

Uncorked: Reductive process shapes aromatic, intense wines

Interview and Tasting with James Nokes. Posted January 10, 2022.



Bibiana Gonzalez Rave has a diverse and impressive collection of wines.

The Colombian-born winemaker poured her Alma de Cattleya and Cattleya wines alongside Pisoni and Lucia, the wines of her husband, Jeff Pisoni, at a recent tasting.

She got things started with the **Alma de Cattleya Sauvignon Blanc 2020 (\$22)**, which had a refreshingly floral lift that conjured images of that first warm spring day when lingering snow starts to melt. Gonzalez Rave has maximized the wine's potential – the floral, green flavors hang on with a mouth-coating finish.

On the **Alma de Cattleya Chardonnay 2019 (\$26)**, there's a green note with melon. It's richer than the sauvignon blanc, but still sleek and streamlined.

Because she's embraced the green notes that can be found in white wines and rosé, Gonzalez Rave has wines with a broader spectrum of flavors. The wines have an herbal element that adds verve, nervous tension and energy. **Alma de Cattleya Rosé 2020 (\$20)** had thyme, rosemary and strawberry fruit flavors, but think about the white and green rim that's closer to the cap.

"I make wines in a more reductive way," Gonzalez Rave said. "We don't expose them to oxygen, we don't pump the wines, it's all about racking the wines from the barrel with inert gasses. We use argon for Cattleya and [carbon dioxide] and nitrogen for Alma de Cattleya. It's a very expensive way of racking wine out of the barrel, but I really believe it leads to the unbelievable aromatics and intensity the wines have."

The **Lucia Rosé 2020 (\$22)** was a stark contrast with its watermelon and warmer fresh red fruit and strawberry flavors.

When it comes to red wine, Gonzalez Rave made a cabernet for everyone, in terms of price and approachability.

Alma de Cattleya Cabernet Sauvignon 2018 (\$48) had a mint note that accentuated the currant and cherry flavors. It is classic Napa Valley in flavor and mouthfeel, with some richness in texture and spice flavor from the influence of oak.

She wants the vineyard to be the star when it comes to winemaking, so she runs a tight ship in the cellar.

"We are obsessed about cleanliness at the winery," Gonzalez Rave said. "Sometimes, wines have microbial mysteries, and we don't want that. We want a very clean space so the terroir can speak for themselves."

The boldest red wine was the **Cattleya Soberanes Syrah 2015 (\$70)**. It had muscular, well-structured tannins with black pepper, red meat, roasted plum and elegant blue fruit, which cleverly played off the vivid flavors and tannin.

There was a lot to love about the dark fruit and nature of **Pisoni Gary's Pinot Noir 2018 (\$75)**. There's a feral note on the wine that's loaded with acidity and a mysterious mingling of dark fruit, blood orange, truffle and spice that makes pinot special.

A sunnier version of pinot was Gonzalez Rave's **Alma de Cattleya Pinot Noir 2019 (\$28)**. It's another great value that is loaded with pure red fruit and a silky mouthfeel.

"I think it's all about the fruit and each terroir shining," Gonzalez Rave said. "With a very specific focus that depends on the terroir and single vineyard."
