

The World in a Glass

The World in a Glass: Toasting Biale's Black Chicken

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Robert Biale is hosting a “coming of age” party and virtual toast for Biale Vineyards’ Black Chicken Zinfandel, which, he points out, has now been “legally” produced for 21 years in the Oak Knoll District in Napa Valley.

In the 1940s, teen-aged Aldo Biale and his mother Christina ran a small farm and vineyard with hundreds of white leghorn chickens. The enterprising Aldo began making a homemade wine, which people could order by phone, along with chickens, eggs, fruit, and vegetables. They just had to know to ask for a “black chicken.” Phones in Napa County in those days ran on a party-line system.

“Although my dad, Aldo Biale began producing Black Chicken in the barn on El Centro Avenue in 1943, it wasn’t until our family obtained a permit (1991) and started making the wine in 1999, that Black Chicken Zinfandel was acknowledged outside of the ‘party line’ phone system,” Robert Biale said.

Aldo died in 2009, but his Black Chicken lives on, sourced primarily from the Biale estate vineyards, and his old punch down stick and a picker’s box are in the Food and Wine exhibition at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

“We thought it fitting to recognize Black Chicken on its 21st birthday with a virtual toast across time zones, with supporters of the wine and our brand on May 13, at 4:30 p.m. Pacific time,” Biale said.

Add your name to the mailing list at Biale.com/events to join the event.

New from the Araujo family

Creating a new wine is easy; what is difficult is finding a new name.

Last year, when Araujo family decided to add a third Bordeaux blend to their Accendo Cellars portfolio, they had a clear goal:

To use the wines that didn’t fit their flagship Accendo profile and create a “more approachable but still serious Cab-based blend.”



What to call this new wine, a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Petit Verdot sourced from some of the same vineyards used in the Accendo Cellars Cabernet Sauvignon?

They turned to Greek mythology, which inspired “Laura.”

According to Greek mythology, when Cupid became annoyed

with Apollo for mocking him, he shot the sun god with an arrow that caused Apollo to fall in love with the river nymph Daphne. Cupid also shot Daphne with an arrow that would cause her to loathe Apollo.

When Daphne saw the love-struck god pursuing her, she begged her father to rescue her, and just as Apollo reached her, Dad transformed Daphne into a laurel tree. Apollo, heartbroken, used his powers to make the laurel an evergreen and created a wreath from the branches to be worn by victors in literary pursuits and sports as well as battles. “Laura” signals honor and achievement, as in poet laureate or Nobel laureate.

While less intense than the flagship Accendo, (which retails for \$350 or so a bottle), Laura retains Accendo’s stylistic balance and elegance and costs \$125.

Now that’s an achievement.