

ONE BOTTLE:

The 2005 Castello Banfi Centine Rosé

by JOSHUA BAER

Edward Weston was an extraordinary photographer. He was born in 1886, he died in 1958, and he spent a lifetime taking the kind of photographs every photographer wishes he or she could take. If seeing is an art, then Edward Weston was one of a handful of twentieth-century artists who changed the art of seeing. Each time I see one of his photographs, my eyes celebrate.

Weston La Barre was an extraordinary anthropologist. He was born in 1911, he died in 1996, and he spent a lifetime writing books about the conflict between human nature and the human soul. His best book is *The Ghost Dance: Origins Of Religion* (Doubleday, New York, 1970). There must be ten thousand books that try to explain who God is and why people believe in Him. *The Ghost Dance* approaches God and religion as reoccurring by-products of the human experience. Instead of blaming God for all the trouble religions cause, *The Ghost Dance* reveals where the real trouble lies.

All of this is by way of saying that, until recently, whenever I heard the name Weston, I thought about Edward Weston's photographs and Weston La Barre's books and felt inspired. At 3:52 pm on Thursday, May 17, 2007, those thoughts and feelings changed.

What happened was that my daughter-in-law, Lauren, and my son, Gabriel, had a baby boy and named him Weston Jacob Baer. Those of you who are grandparents already know there is no feeling quite like the birth of your first grandchild. You didn't do anything, and yet you did. The mother, the father, and the child did all the work, but the celebration includes you. It takes you under its wing.

For reasons I do not understand, I never thought I'd be a grandfather. Strange things have happened to me during the course of my life. I guess I assumed life would catch up with me before I got the chance to see my son holding his son in his arms. Now that it's happened, I feel like I've been spared. I know death is out there waiting for me, but my son's heart, my grandson's heart, and my heart are beating at the same time. I'm thankful for that.

Which brings us to the 2005 Castello Banfi Centine Rosé.

For reasons I do understand, I never thought I'd drink wine from a bottle with a screwtop, much less write about one, but the time has come, and it comes as a relief. I find that I like the screwtop much more than the synthetic corks some wineries put in their bottles. The synthetic corks and I do not get along. I don't like how difficult they are to pull. They don't like my antique bartender's knives or my Ah-So. The screwtop, on the other hand, is a grandfather's dream. You grab the bottle with one hand and the screwtop with the other, smile, rotate your hands in opposite directions, and the next thing you know, you're drinking wine. None of this would matter if the Centine Rosé tasted like Ripple or Thunderbird, but it doesn't. It tastes good. In fact, it tastes a lot better than you expect it to taste. What's interesting is that this phenomenon occurs each time

you taste it. No matter how many bottles you drink, each bottle tastes better than the last one. This may have something to do with the presence of the screwtop, with the way it lowers your blood pressure and your expectations. Or maybe the wine is just that good. Either way, hats off to Castello Banfi for putting a screwtop on what may be the best twelve dollar rosé on earth.

Castello Banfi is in the Brunello region of southern Tuscany, an hour south of Siena and fifteen minutes west of Montalcino. It is owned by the Mariani family. The Marianis bought the estate and planted the vineyards in 1978. Castello Banfi's website—castellobanfi.com—explains the Marianis' philosophy of winemaking. It also explains how you can spend the night at Castello Banfi, eat at the Marianis' restaurants, and swim in their swimming pool. What it does not explain is how the Marianis managed to produce a rosé that tastes like its grapes ripened on one-hundred-year-old vines. It may be that such things are beyond explanation.

Centine (pronounced "Chen-TIN-Ay") is one of twelve wines produced at Castello Banfi. The Marianis also make a Centine Rosso. The *cepage* of the Centine Rosé is the same as the Rosso: sixty percent Sangiovese, twenty percent Cabernet Sauvignon, and twenty percent Merlot. Fermentation occurred in stainless steel tanks. The wine was aged for a year in French oak. In the glass, the color is a transparent scarlet with coral pink at its edges. The bouquet is shy at first but generous later. On the palate, the Centine Rosé is honest without being obvious, definitive without being limited. The promise of generosity made by the bouquet is kept by the rosé's unexpected length. The finish tastes like the finish of a good Champagne: it leaves you simultaneously satisfied and thirsty, especially toward the end of the bottle. Thanks to the low price and handy screwtop, opening another bottle requires no deliberation.

I know life has its ups and downs and that Weston Jacob Baer will have his share of both, but as his grandfather, I can't help but envy him. He was born into a world that can only become more fascinating. I will write his name on a bottle of the 2005 Centine Rosé and hide the bottle in my cellar. (People say rosés don't age. People have been known to make mistakes.) By the time he reaches drinking age, the bottle will be there, with his name on it. In the meantime, I wish him all the happiness that life allows, and a strong heart to deal with life's sorrows. Good luck, Weston. If I'm lucky, I'll drink your first bottle of wine with you. ♦

One Bottle is dedicated to the appreciation of good wine and good times, one bottle at a time. The name *One Bottle*, and the contents of this column, are © 2007 by onebottle.com. If you need help finding a wine or building a cellar, write to Joshua Baer at jb@onebottle.com.

