

# Robert Foley

## VINEYARDS

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### 2009 CHARBONO

Charbono is one of the lost grape varieties – almost. Recent reports indicate there are only about 40 acres of this variety in production, most in Napa county.

The original cuttings were imported to Calistoga in the Napa Valley from the Savoie region in the French Alps in about 1880. Its original name was Deuce Noir, or “soft black,” later called Charbonneau. Subsequently, Charbono was wiped out by the Phylloxera root louse infestation in Europe.

Some believed it to be the Italian grape variety Dolcetto but this was proven not to be the case through genetic testing. After repeal of Prohibition in the U.S., Charbono was used by Inglenook for blending with their new Cask Cabernet wines and small amounts were bottled as varietal wine. I tasted the 1968 Inglenook Charbono from cask in 1969 and was inspired to become a winemaker with that taste.

The 2009 vintage’s inky dark purple appearance is the first indication of thorough ripeness. Grape berry jam aromas and flavors spread evenly across the palate. Ripeness and brightness together, tannins silky soft, and a nicely balanced, tangy acidity resolve in a long flavorful finish.

