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The Grapevine

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FOR VINESSE WINE CLUB MEMBERS



MARTIN'S JOURNAL

I got a kick out of the results of a survey recently conducted by on behalf of one of the giant wine conglomerates.

The survey “revealed” that 16% of wine drinkers consider themselves “traditionalists,” and prefer wines made by long-established (which they equate with dependable) estates.

It also found that some 20% are “image seekers,” people who like to feel sophisticated and trendy. They’re the ones who buy a bottle strictly because of a high rating by a wine critic, take it to a BYO restaurant, and make sure the label is facing the most populated section of the dining room.

There were other categories as well, but you get the idea. Just as music critics seek to identify each performer or group by a specific genre, the giant wine conglomerate saw some sort of value in pigeon-holing wine drinkers.

Silly me. I’ve always thought people drink wine because it tastes good.

Martin Stewart Jr.

Stories of Sauvignon Blanc, Southern California & Soil

By Robert Johnson

We can’t know where we’re going without a thorough understanding of where we’ve been.

That thought came to mind as we were developing the story board for this issue of The Grapevine. It’s a theme that weaves its way in and out of several columns and stories, including “Cellar Notes by Kate” on page 2, “Wine Touring Tips” on page 3, and “Cellarmaster” on page 5.

Because Katie Montgomery is our resident wine steward, sommelier and chief wine buyer all rolled into one very knowledgeable ball of energy, I always look forward to reading her column. This month, it deals with a topic that is near and dear to her heart: Sauvignon Blanc.

This most engaging variety has

had a fascinating history here in California and around the world, and in her “Cellar Notes” column, Katie explains how the plethora of styles have combined to rob Sauvignon Blanc of its identity.

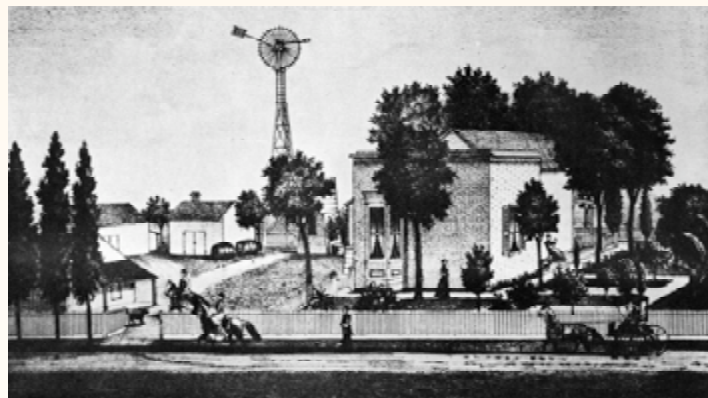
Our “Wine Touring Tips” feature takes you on a time-warp expedition to the wineries of Southern California. Did you know that for a short period of time, Orange County was a winegrowing hotbed? The picture below depicts the F.A. Korn Winery, which was situated not far from where Disneyland is today.

We’ll tell you what happened to California’s first “wine capital,” and what’s being done to preserve the few remaining acres of grapevines.

And in “Cellarmaster,” we’ll provide a primer on soil — that ancient mix of minerals and organic matter that plays a big role in the

ultimate flavor of a given wine.

Even if you hated history in school, we think you’ll enjoy this edition’s history-steeped stories.



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OUR MISSION:

To uncover and bring you wine gems from around the world, which you're not likely to discover on your own, and which enhance your wine enjoyment.

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A friend of mine was planning the annual holiday party for her office, and called me to help her make the wine selections.

The party was to be held at a highly-regarded Mexican restaurant owned by a famous chef (I can say no more), and my friend needed to select one white and one red that would serve as the pass-around table wines for the group.

Cost also was an issue, because most restaurants — including this one — mark up their wine prices to astronomical levels. Had it been an option, I could have supplied four or five bottles of comparable Vinesse wines for the price of a single bottle from the restaurant's wine list.

But since it wasn't an option, my first task was to eliminate all of the wines above a certain price point from consideration.

That done, we perused the list of remaining contenders in search of bottlings with one common characteristic: fruitfulness. That's the most desirable quality in a wine that is to be paired with potentially very spicy food.

For the red, the choice was relatively easy: a blend of Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre from France's Rhone

Valley. The flavors produced by that blend of grape varieties are wonderful with Mexican food, and better still, this particular bottling was made by a dependable estate.

Picking the white wine was more problematic, even though it should have been the easier of the two decisions. In a perfect world, you couldn't go wrong by pairing Mexican fare with Sauvignon Blanc.

Surprisingly, however, the only Sauvignon Blanc on this restaurant's wine list was a selection from New Zealand. I love many "Kiwi" renditions of Sauvignon Blanc, but this one I knew to be extremely "aggressive" in both aroma and flavor.

Would it have matched well with the cuisine? To my palate, without question. But would everyone attending the party — mostly inexperienced wine drinkers — like it? Probably not. It's an acquired taste, not something that should be sprung on an unsuspecting party-goer.

That whole experience underscored what I perceive to be a big problem for Sauvignon Blanc today. It should be everybody's first choice for pairing with food when a white wine is called for. Instead, one almost needs a Master's in oenology to be confident in selecting a Sauvignon Blanc from a restaurant wine list.

Say what you will about the "same-

ness" of so many California Chardonnay bottlings, but at least restaurant-goers have a pretty good idea of what they're going to get, even from a brand that's unfamiliar to them.

With Sauvignon Blanc, there are so many styles — from New Zealand's aggressively herbal wines, to the elegant blends of Bordeaux that include a healthy dose of Semillon, to Robert Mondavi's oak-infused "Fume Blanc" — that it's always wise to inquire about a bottle's specific characteristics before ordering it.



CHARTER MEMBER BENEFITS:

- 🍷 *The Grapevine* Newsletter
- 🍷 Premium wine selections at members-only prices
- 🍷 Wine tasting as a participant on VINESSE's Gold Medal Award Panel
- 🍷 Free subscription to VINESSE's Cyber Circle Community
- 🍷 Members-only savings, including *Food & Wine* subscriptions, dining out, gourmet food and tickets to the hottest events
- 🍷 Random giveaways of wine and accessories
- 🍷 Wine Finders Reward — identify a future wine selection and earn a reward
- 🍷 Perfectly matched recipes for featured wine selections



TOURING TIPS

Long before there was a Pasadena Freeway or a Four-Level Interchange or a Union Station or a Disneyland, Southern California was the wine capital of California.

While Agoston Haraszthy has been called the “father of California wine,” that title really should belong to Jean-Louis Vignes, whose last name, ironically enough, translates to “vines.”

Haraszthy played a key role in establishing California’s North Coast wine region, which has become world famous and today encompasses some of the most valuable property on the planet. But several years before he planted vines there, Vignes had done the same a few hundred miles to the south.

Vignes came to California from the town of Cadillac, near Bordeaux, in

1833. Within seven years, his El Aliso Ranch — shown on this page and situated on land that today is occupied by the Union Station train and bus center in downtown Los Angeles — had grown to nearly 100 acres. And according to historic accounts, he was making wine of higher quality, and more of it, than any other vintner in the state.

Vignes made most of his wine from the indigenous Mission grapes, supplemented by a few varieties he’d imported from France. Advertisements for his El Aliso wines listed the estate’s bottlings as “white, red, Port and Angelica.”

Many of the wines were aged in oak casks — crafted from trees grown on his property — for eight to 10 years before being released. And as word of his success spread, many of his countrymen were persuaded to join him in the New World, and established winegrowing estates of their own. Vignes helped by providing them with nursery stock.

Southern California’s thriving wine industry spread into today’s Orange County.

Vignes retired in 1855 and died seven years later, knowing that he had played an important role in

their resources, putting up \$2,000 apiece to buy and develop 1,165 acres of barren land some six miles south of the Santa Ana River in the colony of Anaheim. Their vision was to emulate the grape-growing and winemaking taking place in Los Angeles.

By 1872, the Germans had doubled their acreage, and were making about 600,000 gallons of wine per year. Life was good for the immigrants, even if the wine they made was only fair. But quality was not a big factor at the time because demand for their product regularly outstripped the supply.

But in 1888, all of the blood, sweat, tears and money that the Germans had invested in their vinous dream was wiped out almost overnight by a mysterious vine blight called Pierce’s Disease. Because little was known about the disease, it made no sense for the farmers to replant their vines, given the possibility that the new plantings also could be infected.

So the farmers turned to growing oranges and walnuts, and vineyard plantings in Southern California migrated to San Bernardino and Riverside Counties.

Today, there is just one commercial winery in Los Angeles, the venerable San Antonio Winery, not far from

Union Station. But it grows its grapes in California’s Central Coast region, and also sources fruit from farmers in other sectors of the state. The closest commercial vineyards are in Riverside County, but their acreage

decreases with each passing year as urban sprawl places more value on cookie-cutter housing tracts than artisan winemaking.



establishing one of the world’s great wine regions.

Shortly after his retirement, a group of 46 German immigrants pooled

APPELLATION SHOWCASE

***V*intners in Southern California's largest surviving conclave of wineries — the Temecula Valley in Riverside County — are working to preserve their unique slice of agricultural wonder.**

While the center of Southern California winemaking once encompassed Los Angeles and Orange Counties (see “Wine Touring Tips” in this issue), today that designation belongs to Temecula. And according to a story in the North County Times, the winery owners there want to keep it that way.”

County Supervisor Jeff Stone, a former Temecula City Councilman, suggests recent trends threaten the long-term economic health, and very existence, of the verdant vineyard district that is the regional symbol for the Temecula area and, in the supervisor's words, is “the jewel of Southwest Riverside County.”

That's why Stone's staff and planners are fashioning a county ordinance to provide a new layer of protection for the 7,000-acre district in the rolling hills along Rancho California Road that was given special zoning status in the mid-1980s.

The number of wineries there is misleading, Stone says: “We have more wineries — more bricks and mortar — but less acreage planted in vines.” A lot less, in fact.

After reaching a collective size of 3,200 to 3,500 acres of vines during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Pierce's Disease whittled away sharply at the vineyards. Today, just one-third of that amount — somewhere between 1,000 and 1,200 acres — remains.

An aggressive, federally-funded

program to fight the glassy-winged sharpshooter, the bug that spreads the vine-killing Pierce's Disease, has kept the affliction at bay as of late, and plans are being laid to replant lost acreage. Ben Drake, a longtime grower and harvester, said he expects the inventory of vines to rebound to 2,000 acres.

Yet, Stone suggests strong market forces are working against that rebound. Some vintners are counting the cost of replanting and taking the chance that Pierce's will come back against the cash they can make by selling out to developers.

“It's the formula for Southern California that agriculture gives way to houses,” says Peter Poole, owner of Mount Palomar Winery and a fixture in Temecula Wine Country since 1978. “You know, Orange County was called Orange County for a reason. I grew up over there, and we used to just drive through, like, miles of orange groves... and few are left.”

Now, newcomers from outside the Temecula area are proposing to set up shop along Rancho California Road and sell wine made in large part from grapes grown in Northern and Central California. Stone says some new winery proposals have triggered concerns that the disease-ravaged fruit-growing area will be replanted not with vines, but with rows of bottle shops.

Not only could those shops cut into efforts to replant, Stone says, but a flood of outside wine could undercut local vintners and drive some out of business. If enough vintners were to abandon vines and tasting rooms, the grape-growing area could suffer the fate of the Ontario area's vineyards, which were plowed under for commercial development near Interstates 10 and 15.

“Once we get below a certain threshold, it's over,” Stone says. “All we need is for a couple of the bigger ones to fold, and we would probably see the others follow suit.”

That's why new legislation is being proposed to protect the region for future generations of wine lovers to enjoy.

VINESSE STYLE

If you love olive oil, you'll love the Sonoma Valley Olive Festival, held in the heart of California's North Coast Wine Country.

Sonoma — with its agricultural heritage, family-owned wineries, artisan food producers and Mediterranean climate — is the perfect setting for a celebration of the olive. Many of the events this year, the festival's fifth, are being held in the historic Sonoma Plaza area, where both olive and grape harvests have been blessed and celebrated for more than a century.

In 2001, the Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau produced the first three-month-long seasonal festival in partnership with the community. The goals of the festival are to provide a source of celebration, enhance an appreciation of the community's beauty and richness, and to champion the Sonoma Valley as a premier destination.

The fifth Sonoma Valley Olive Festival, which began in December and continues through February, is a celebration of all things olive and includes more than 35 entertaining, edible and educational events. On any given day, one can select olive-related things to do from the menu of events: sample a trio of olive oils, enjoy a soothing olive oil scrub at a local spa, select a delicious dish from an olive-inspired menu paired with world-class wines...

To learn more about the festival, go online to SonomaValley.com.

Wine's Dirty Little Secret: Soil

It has become the catchphrase of vintners all over the world: "Wine begins in the vineyard."

Some express it another way: "You can't make good wine with bad grapes." And one important factor in the growing of good grapes is the soil in which the grapevines are planted.

All soil is a mixture of organic matter and minerals. From largest to smallest, the soil particles consist of stones, small gravel, fine sand, silt and clay. The higher the clay content, the richer the soil. Perhaps the most famous clay soil in the world is the terra rosa soil of Australia's

Coonawarra region, which is compressed to such a degree that it assumes a brick-red hue.



Among the soil factors that must be considered when planting

grapevines are the size of the particles, which determine the soil's texture; how water behaves in it (the smaller the particles, the more water it will retain), and the "climate" of the soil (the temperature of the vine's roots).

Why does soil matter? Because it's very important for certain grape varieties to be grown in certain types of soil in order to produce the best fruit possible.

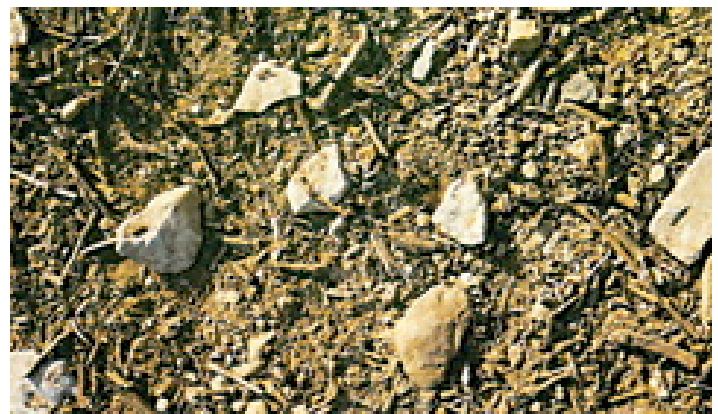
In general, cold, rich and heavy soils tend to be late-ripening sites, and should have late-ripening grape varieties planted in them. Conversely, warm, poor, gravelly soils make for early-ripening sites, and thus should be planted to early-ripening varieties. When a particular variety is planted in the wrong soil, growing wine-worthy grapes becomes much more challenging, and growing world-class grapes is nearly impossible.

Let's take two popular red grape varieties as examples in matching variety to soil. Cabernet Sauvignon prefers regions with ample sunshine but not too much heat, and poor, gravelly soil. That's why it struggles to ripen in France's Loire Valley, but thrives in Bordeaux, California's North Coast region and in many parts of Australia. Pinot Noir prefers slightly richer soils such as limestone that are cooler and retain more water. Burgundy, Oregon and New Zealand are among its favored locales.

Very rich soils seldom produce great wines because they



The terra rosa soil of Australia's Coonawarra region (top) is red-brick in color, and consists of extremely compressed clay. The principal soil of Burgundy (bottom) is a clay and limestone mix.



enable a vine to produce higher yields and fruit that is less concentrated in aroma and flavor. That's why experienced growers take a much different approach to growing wine-grapes than they would to growing a lush, green lawn. Grass likes rich soil; grapevines don't.

American Cellars Wine Club



Many of these wines are hand-crafted gems produced by little known or small wineries. Or they are very limited production wines that the major buyers wouldn't touch because there simply wasn't a large enough supply. But they all are compelling wines, and ones the average wine lover wouldn't find anywhere else... unless they happened upon the winery... or were a close personal friend of the winemaker.

Each shipment includes:

2 or 4 bottles of the best finds from around the world
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: Approximately monthly

Price: Only \$12 avg. per bottle + shipping

California Treasures Wine Club



This Club's featured wines all come from California. About half come from wineries in California's esteemed Napa and Sonoma counties. Others come from the award-winning boutique wineries of the Central Coast region — like those found in the Santa Ynez Valley or the Santa Maria Valley of Santa Barbara County.

We also seek out great wines from not so well known areas of California — like the Sacramento River Delta, the Arroyo Seco District of Northern Monterey County... even a small vineyard we found just west of Yosemite National Park.

Each shipment includes:

2 or 4 bottles of the best finds from California
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: Approximately every other month

Price: Only \$12 avg. per bottle + shipping

The World of Wine Club



You're invited on an incredible wine adventure! The World of Wine transports you to six of the finest wine-producing countries in the world every year. Taste the most exquisite boutique wines each country has to offer... sample each country's rich winemaking history... and collect some souvenirs.

Each shipment includes:

6 bottles of specially selected wines
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter
Complimentary Souvenir

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: 6 times per year

Price: \$99 per shipment + shipping



Elevant Society

The Elevant Society is a connoisseur's service that provides super-premium wines. These are wines that may be cellared, but they are mature upon arrival, ready for immediate enjoyment. Such quality wines, of course, carry a higher price, and membership in the Elevant Society is not for everyone.

Each shipment includes:

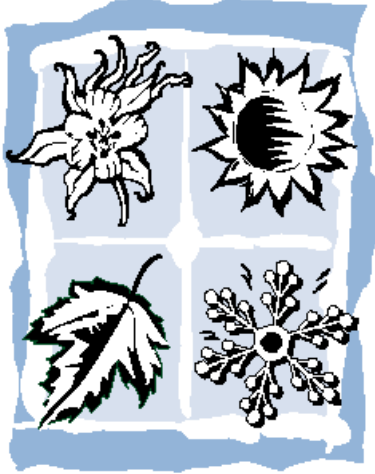
2 or 4 bottles at a time
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Big, Bold Reds Only

Frequency: Approximately monthly

Price: Only \$69.99 avg. per shipment + shipping

Four Seasons



Four Seasons Wine Club

Each Four Seasons sampler features wines paired for best enjoyment with the foods of that season — Spring, Summer, Fall, Holiday and Winter.

For example, our Summer Sampler includes four wines particularly suited for barbecues, picnics, or stand-alone summer sipping. Our Fall Sampler features specially-selected wines to complement hearty, harvest-time dishes. Wine “gems” from around the world, all specifically chosen by our tasting panel as the absolute best wines for the season. Each Four Seasons sampler also includes a complimentary surprise gift that is related to the season's wines.

Each shipment includes:

4 bottles at a time
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter
Surprise Gift

Wine Color Mix: Reds, Whites, or Mixed

Frequency: 4 times per year, plus a special holiday shipment

Price: Only \$89.95 avg. per shipment (shipping included)



Light & Sweet Club

Not every wine drinker likes their wines completely “dry.” Our newest club is just the thing for fans of “off-dry” (read: sweeter) wines. These delicate, delectable wines are a touch sweeter, a bit lighter — and for many people — more *fun* to drink. This delightful selection of white wines may occasionally sparkle, may occasionally blush with light pink and may tickle with a touch of effervescence. They will always be light, and kissed with sweetness. Your Light & Sweet Club wines will come from around the globe (virtually every wine producing region makes their own special rendition) and our Light & Sweet Club will bring them all right to your door!

Each shipment includes:

2 bottles of light & sweet wines
Wine facts plus detailed Wine Tasting Notes & Ratings
Vinesse Newsletter

Wine Color Mix: Mostly white — occasionally blush/pink

Frequency: Approximately every other month

Price: Only \$12 avg. per bottle + shipping

ZINFANDEL & PRIMITIVO AREN'T A 100% MATCH

Until recently, Zinfandel was California's "mystery grape" because its origins were unknown. In 1994, DNA fingerprinting confirmed that the Primitivo and Zinfandel grapes were genetically identical; however, it's not a 100 percent match. There are clonal differences between the Zinfandel grown in California and the Primitivo in Italy. On wine labels, U.S. regulations require that Zinfandel and Primitivo be identified separately. Historically, they have been separately labeled and sold, and the wines display different characters and styles.

DRY CREEK HAS BEST HARVEST SINCE 1997

One of Zinfandel's most esteemed growing areas is the Dry Creek Valley of Sonoma County. So how was the



harvest of 2005 in Dry Creek? "2005 is one of the best vintages in terms of quality," says Duff Bevill, owner of Bevill Vineyard Management. Affirms Doug Nalle of Nalle Winery: "It is the best fruit quality since 1994." Others compare the vintage to 1997, which was one of the biggest crops in California history and also acclaimed for its high quality. "Indian summer" weather throughout October gave the 2005 vintage the much-needed warmth for a successful harvest.

JOHN MADDEN: WINE LOVER, IF NOT A POET

It takes a lot of money to get into the wine business, so it's not surprising that a number of celebrities have taken the plunge over the years. More recently, there has been a trend of celebrity athletes adding "vintner" to their resumés. According to USA Today, the list of sports world-wine-makers now includes golfers Greg Norman and Ernie Els, NASCAR driver Jeff Gordon, NASCAR team owner Richard Childress, football star Joe Montana, figure skater Peggy Fleming, and broadcaster and former football coach John Madden. "Once you get started in this thing, it's like a growth," says Madden, who has not yet mastered the romantic language of winemaking. "It just takes off, and it creates a life of its own. I'm drawn to wine by the earthiness. I think we all have that in ourselves somewhere."

THE BEST WINES FOR SLURPING OYSTERS

Some of the best oysters on earth come from the Pacific Northwest, many of them named after the bays from which they're harvested: Penn Cove, Westcott and Shoalwater.

If you're a fan of this slurpy treat, you can enhance the culinary experience by pairing them with a nice dry Riesling, a varietal Semillon or a dry California Sauvignon Blanc.

FRENCH VINTNER PUSHES 'ORGANIC'

Patrick Lesec makes wine for Domaine Gerard Metz, a French estate featured in a recent "World of Wines" shipment. Lesec is a strong advocate of organic agriculture, particularly when it comes to French vineyards that were compromised by the use of synthetic fertilizers following World War II. He urges growers with whom he works to use organic methods as much as possible, a principle they refer to as *lutte raisonnée*. Today, some of those growers have advanced their practices to the point that their vineyards qualify as certified organic.

QUOTE DU JOUR

"Why am I in wine?" poses Milwaukee Brewers scout Tom Hinkle. "Because you meet the nicest people. If you like wine, you like good food and good company."

Being Green

The Anderson Valley estate vineyard of Handley Cellars has received organic certification for its 30 acres of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Gewurztraminer, and winemaker Milla Handley says she is looking forward to offering vintage 2005 wines made from organically-farmed grapes.

The certification was the next logical step for Handley. For more than 10 years, she has farmed the estate vineyard sustainably, using organic methods and avoiding synthetic amendments whenever possible. She believes that organic farming methods encourage healthy, living soils, which in turn produce vines that yield the most flavorful fruit.

The concept of "terroir" is Handley's guiding principle: a wine is a reflection of the environment where the grapes were grown. She is among those winegrowers who believe that the balanced farming methods used in organic farming help develop a wine's expression of regional and varietal character.

Trip Planner

Tickets are now on sale for the 14th annual Paso Robles Zinfandel Festival, a celebration of California's heritage variety and the first variety to bring acclaim to Paso Robles Wine Country.

The three-day Zinfandel Festival weekend takes place March 17-19, with a marquee event on Saturday, March 18 at the California Mid-State Fairgrounds in Paso Robles.

More than 80 wineries will host an array of special events throughout Paso Robles Wine Country during the Zinfandel Festival weekend.

Winemaker dinners, food pairings, seminars, open houses and special tastings are just a few of the activities in store. For a complete list of activities, visit PasoWine.com.



Successors Carry on Gil Nickel's Legacy at Napa's Far Niente

Napa Valley's gorgeous Far Niente Winery lost its visionary modern-day proprietor in 2003, but its current owners are carrying on his legacy.

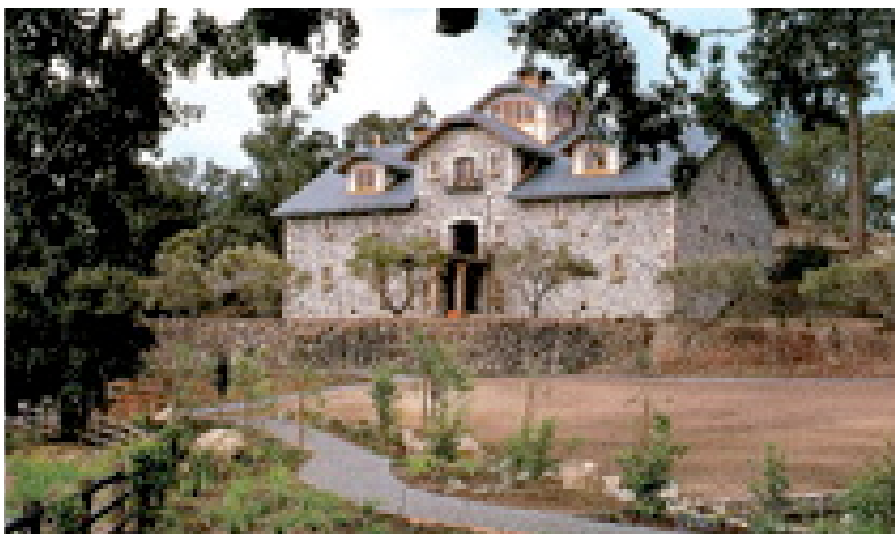
Far Niente was founded in 1885 by John Benson, a 49er of the California Gold Rush and uncle of American impressionist painter Winslow Homer. Benson hired architect Hamden McIntyre, creator of the former Christian Brothers winery — now the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone — to design the building.

Far Niente prospered until the onset of Prohibition in 1919, when it was abandoned and left to fall into disrepair. Sixty years later, in 1979, Gil Nickel purchased the winery and adjacent vineyard and began a three-year restoration of the property. During restoration, the original name, Far Niente — from an Italian phrase that romantically translated means “without a care,” was found carved in stone on the front of the building. The picture here shows the winery building immediately following restoration.

where it remains to this day. We felt an obligation to preserve the name with the hope that we could recapture a bygone era when life was indeed without Winemaking returned to Far Niente in 1982, with the harvest of the winery's first Cabernet Sauvignon. Chardonnay also was produced at the winery for the first time that year. Today, the winery continues to focus on producing only those two varieties.

Gil Nickel was a visionary of the Napa Valley wine industry. While his passions were many, his friends and long-time associates agree that he was driven more by his ideals, loyalties, friendships and sense of humor, than his business interests. That is why he is missed so much.

Far Niente welcomes visitors by appointment Monday through Saturday. Call 707-944-2861 for information.



Isinglass. No, this is not a wine glass made for consuming ice wine. It's a gelatinous material used in clarifying wine — made from the air bladders of sturgeons and other fish. (Could this be what they mean by “white wine with fish”?)

Jammy. Refers to a thick, very concentrated berry flavor. Often a characteristic of Zinfandel.

KMW. Acronym for Klosterneuburger Mostwage, the Austrian scale for measuring sugar in and determining the ripeness of winegrapes. Not to be confused with BMW, a favored mode of transportation among California winemakers.

Lagrima. A Spanish term referring to a wine made from free-run juice, with no mechanical pressing utilized.

Metodo Tradizionale. The Italian equivalent of Methode Champenoise, the traditional method of making sparkling wine.

Nonvintage. Refers to a wine made from more than one vintage of grapes, common in Champagne and Port making. A more accurate phrase would be “multi-vintage.” The method of blending juice from a number of vintages is utilized to assure a dependable “house style” for a particular bottling.

Off-dry. A wine with just a hint of sweetness, usually with a residual sugar level of no more than 1 percent. The term sometimes is used interchangeably with “semi-sweet,” although vintners use that phrase to describe somewhat sweeter wines, in the 1-3 percent range of residual sugar.



PONZU SAUCE

The flavors of Japanese cooking are unique in all the world. More than with almost any other cuisine, sauces help define Japanese recipes, giving the dishes their unique flavors.

For pairing with certain bottlings of Chardonnay, Vinesse Wine Steward Katie Montgomery recommends dishes that include a Japanese Ponzu Sauce. In fact, with the Ross Estate Chardonnay now being featured by American Cellars Wine Club, Katie suggests pairing it with a sesame-crusted and Ponzu-marinated Ahi tuna.

If you'd like to try that tasty combination, here's an easy-to-make recipe for Ponzu Sauce, which makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 cup soy sauce
- 3/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup rice wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup dried bonito flakes

Preparation

1. Boil soy sauce in a pan.
2. Add bonito flakes in the pan and cool it.
3. Drain the soy sauce.
4. Mix soy sauce, vinegar and lemon juice.

RIGATONI

An Italian heritage variety such as Primitivo calls for an Italian heritage dish such as Rigatoni. This one makes 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 1 (8-oz.) package rigatoni pasta
- 2 (15-oz.) cans cannellini beans
- 4 tomatoes, chopped
- 8 oz. fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon dried basil
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3/4 cup tomato juice
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Preparation

1. Cook rigatoni in boiling water until al dente. Drain, and set aside.
2. Drain and rinse cannellini beans; set aside.
3. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Saute mushrooms, garlic, and scallions with pepper and basil.
4. Add tomatoes, pasta, beans, and tomato juice to skillet. Bring skillet mixture to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer for 15 minutes or until mixture is hot. Serve immediately. Top with grated Parmesan cheese.

Special Deals on Special Wines

from the  Cellar

WHITE WINES

Member Price

2003 Vinesse White Zinfandel	\$11.99
2004 Thorton Moscato	\$12.99
2003 Tenuta Ca Bolani PG	\$12.99
2004 Big Ass Chardonnay.....	\$14.99
NV Loridos Brut	\$18.00
2004 Trou de Bonde Pinot Blanc.....	\$29.99

RED WINES

Member Price

NV Stella Rosa.....	\$15.99
2000 Konzelmann Ice Wine Vida.....	\$16.00
2004 Fetish "The Watchers Shiraz"	\$17.99
2003 Leaping Lizard Grand Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon	\$19.99
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