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“Vigne de l’Enfant Jesus”

Since it is Memorial Day Weekend, I thought it appropriate to kick off this issue with a French Burgundy feature. It was, after all, the efforts of our serviceman that saved France from the Nazis in World War II. More importantly to wine lovers, the vineyards of Burgundy survived. The Nazis and Americans fought over them, but did not fight in them,



Beaune Greves Vigne de l’Enfant Jesus is the flagship wine from Bouchard Pere & Fils who is the sole owner of almost 4 hectares of this notable Premier Cru from Beaune. In the 17th century, this vineyard was given to the Carmelite nuns who worked there until the confiscation of the clergy’s lands which became national property during the French Revolution in 1789. In 1791, during an auction of national property, Bouchard acquired the land.

Legend has it that the name “Vigne de l’Enfant Jesus” refers to an amusing old story which tells that Marguerite du Saint Sacrement, the Carmelite founder of the “Domestiques de la famille du Saint Enfant Jesus”, predicted the birth of Louis XIV– Le Roi Soleil– the King of France, when his mother, Anne of Austria was sterile. Ever since, this piece of land, in the heart of the “Les Greves” appellation has borne the name “l’Enfant Jesus”.

The Bouchard family ran the domaine for nine generations, but by the early 1990’s, the winery was wavering, for its size was difficult to manage and overhead costs were out of control. Joseph Henriot, a businessman who formerly managed Veuve Cliquot, and owner of well-respected Champagne Joseph Henriot, purchased the domaine. He spent a small fortune on improving the vineyards, updating the winery’s winemaking technology, and acquiring top-quality lands. The domaine now owns 130 hectares in Burgundy, including the biggest holding in the Cote d’Or, and twice the size of the estate owned by the Hospices de Beaune. Two-thirds of its holdings are in prized Premiers Crus and Grands Crus. Since Henriot took over, there has been a dramatic improvement in quality.

The “l’Enfant Jesus” vineyard is situated on a very steep, sandy slope. The wine is velvety, filled with fruit and spice, and finishes with a touch of wood. The best recent vintages have been ‘99, ‘01, and ‘02. The 2002 release is available *en primeur* from www.whwc or www.wineclub.com (\$51)

**If You Drink
No Noir, You
Pinot Noir**

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Why is every vintage bottling described by the retailer or winery as “best in the series so far” or “better than last year”? The reason is that the last vintage, which may in fact actually be better than the current one, is sold out or being sold off to make way for the latest incarnation. Pleeze– quit saying this!

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Lost Canyon Winery Pinot Noir Impressive

I first ran a short article on Lost Canyon Winery in Vol 3, Issue 26 (Feb 21, 2004) at the time their 2002 Pinot Noirs were being released. I obtained samples of each of the three wines, cellared the wines for a few months, and drank through the lineup this week. I was totally seduced by all three marvelous Pinot Noirs.

The winery is both old and new. Founded back in 1978, as Lost Canyon Cellars to produce small-lot ultra-premium wines, it was basically a garage winery run by Jack States and Randy Keworth. They teamed up with Bob Riskin, a former Levi executive with a passion for wine, and the winery was bonded in 2001. The winery is now located in a renovated vintage 1900's warehouse along the San Francisco Bay waterfront south of Jack London Square in Oakland. The winery has acquired long-term contracts with top growers in the Russian River Valley and Carneros appellations. No expense has been spared in the new winery which has state-of-the-art equipment. Over twenty years of experience can now be used in this new facility to make wines which they promise "will give an extraordinary experience that will be remembered for years."

2002 Pinot Noir, Las Brisas Vineyard, Los Carneros (\$38) They have worked closely with the owner-grower of this vineyard, Francis Mahoney, to select clones 115 and UCD 18 for this wine. A soft and elegant wine typical of many Carneros Pinots. There is a lot of Chambolle-like spice with raspberries and cassis throughout. Built to last but a nice experience already. 250 cases.

2002 Pinot Noir, Dutton Ranch, Morelli Lane Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$38) Made from Dijon 115 and Pommard 5 clones. Terrific cherry and brulee nose. Earth, dark fruits, and a touch of game with a long cherry-kissed finish. All silk and satin. Great. 200 cases.

2002 Pinot Noir, Saralee's Vineyard, Russian River Valley (\$36) This vineyard is well-known in Pinot circles. Grapes are Dijon clones 115 and 777. This is about as good as it gets for a Russian River Valley Pinot Noir. A nose of crushed violets and wet wood. Smooth, silky, and seamless. A veritable spice cabinet— more spice than Tyra Banks on a Victoria Secret runway. 250 cases.

This is a serious winery with obvious talent. The winemakers have a deft touch with Pinot Noir— the word elegant kept popping up in my tasting notes. Visit the website at www.lostcanyonwinery to join the mailing list and to purchase the wines.



Tannin Buzz

Sonny Martin, owner of Urban Gourmet Marketplace in Visalia, California publishes an informative wine newsletter for his customers (www.urbangourmet.com). A recent issue discussed the euphoria produced by tannins in wine. This was a new subject to me. Tannin is a histamine, and during digestion, it combines with starches the body uses to produce serotonin. Serotonin is one of the human body's mood regulators and tannin in red wine has the effect of producing a euphoric buzz by altering the serotonin levels. The euphoria may be intensified by the histamine effect of dilating blood vessels, creating a flushed or warm feeling.

Pinot Noir gives many people, including myself, the biggest buzz of all, yet the tannins are reserved in this wine. Apparently, the tannins are of a type and in sufficient quantity to produce the physio/psychological effect of euphoria. I think the appealing aromas and tastes in Pinot Noir also contribute to the "high".

WesMar Winery Pinot Noir Consistently Good

Those of you that read this newsletter know that WesMar is one of my favorite Pinot Noir producers. The hallmark here is consistency from one vintage to the next, and one bottle to the next, regardless of vineyard source. You can always count on opening a quality Pinot Noir and one that represents a good value. The other night I cracked a magnum of the 2001 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir with some coffee and spice-rubbed lamb chops. The wine was a beautiful, opulently-textured, sweet cherry syrup-flavored Pinot that the six of us killed in about 20 minutes.



WesMar founders, Kirk and Denise met in 1991 while working as managers for Costco Wholesale. They left together in 1995 to work for Denise's father, Ed Selyem at William Selyem Winery. They stayed until 2000, when they left to start WesMar (Ed, by the way, is retired from the wine business, loving life, traveling, and having a good time). All of the grapes are purchased from local growers in the Russian River Valley. They spend all of their energies as co-winemakers and really are a two person winery. They rent a 1500 square foot building on the north side of Sebastopol at an old apple processing facility. All phases of winemaking are carried out here from crush to bottling and shipping. They even pack, ship, and do many trade deliveries as well. No employees, consultants, or brokers are involved. I think it is this personal touch that accounts for the high quality of the wines.

Call Denise at 707-829-8824. There is still some 2002 vintage available for sale: Piner Ranch (wow!) \$35, Olivet Lane (a great RRV vineyard) \$35, and Russian River Valley appellation (yummy) \$29.

Hope & Grace Pinot Noir

Hope & Grace are the names of Charles Hendricks' two daughters. The owner/winemaker has had years in the winemaking business, with stints at Viader, Barnett, Regusci, Bacio Davino, Paoletti, and Steltzner. He has always wanted to make a Pinot Noir, and jumped in when offered some fruit from Sam Balderas of Talbott Vineyards. He was able to produce 328 cases of the **2002 Hope & Grace Pinot Noir** from the coveted Block "A" of the famous Sleepy Hollow Vineyard.

Hendricks wanted to produce a Burgundy-styled Pinot Noir rather than a "fruit bomb". He employed Burgundy barrels. Burgundy barrels have thicker barrel walls than Bordeaux barrels. The thickness and the shape of the barrels impart more tar and smoke to the fruit. Burgundy barrels are also airtight, whereas Bordeaux barrels allow air to get in. Bordeaux needs air, Burgundy does not. He also employed a unique technique of using two different yeasts for fermentation: Assmanhausen and Montrachet. Each yeast provides complimentary qualities to the juice making the wine spicy and rich.

The wine is highly recommended by Bob Schumacher (bob@thewineprofler.com) who describes it as a classic Burgundian-style. "The nose is of smoke, bacon fat, and jerky leading to a palate of a complex black fruit mélange highlighted by exquisite cherries on the finish." It is a massive Pinot Noir without the high alcohol (only 13.5%), yet adequate alcohol and acidity for pairing with good. \$39 btl in six pack.

If you are at a lost as to what wine to pair with a dish you are cooking, choose Pinot Noir. It almost always works. Pinot Noir is the universal default food wine. The only serious exceptions are smoked fish, oysters, sushi, asparagus, artichoke, green beans, cream sauces, cilantro, cumin, and curry.

There are multiple internet sites such as *epicurious* and *wine spectator* that have wine/food pairing information. If all else fails, call Master Sommelier Rene Chazottes at the Pacific Club in Newport Beach, California. He knows more about matching wine with food and food with wine than anyone on this planet!



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Pinot Noir & Food Pairing Books

King Estate Pinot Noir Cookbook (King Estate Winery, Stephanie P Kimmel, Ed, 1996). Many excellent recipes which are elaborate. Not for the beginning cook.

The Wine Lover's Cookbook (Sid Goldstein). This book is a terrific food/wine pairing guide. The excellent recipes are accompanied by mouth-watering photos. Recipes for all varietals are included.

The Vintner's Table Cookbook (Mary Evely, formerly chef at Simi, Julia Child Cookbook Award Winner). The best book ever written on wine/food matching. The recipes are simple and straightforward. The chapters are divided by varietal. There are very helpful charts of what herbs, fish, meats, vegetables etc do and do not go with a certain varietal. I use this hardbound cookbook more than any other.

Wine & Food (Joanna Simon, a well-known English wine writer). Hardbound. The book includes a discussion of the effects of different types of cooking (ie frying, roasting) on wine/food matches. There is a discussion of the different varietals. World classic combinations are featured by country but there are no recipes. At the end of the book are food with wine and wine with food tables.

Renaissance Guide to Wine & Food Pairing (Tony DiDio and Amy Zavatto). A very scholarly approach to wine/food pairing including discussion of different flavors. The over 300 pages devoted to all aspects of the subject may be more than most people want to know. There are no recipes.

A Taste of Burgundy (Juliana Carey Mare). This is more of a travelogue of Burgundy with great photos, but includes all of the classic Burgundy recipes like Boeuf Bourguignon, Cailles aux Raisins, Escargots de Bourgogne. Hardbound.

Sharing the Vineyard Table (Carolyn Wnte and Kimball Jones). Recipes with wine-pairing notes are organized by the seasons of the year. Basic recipes for polenta, aoli, etc. are included. The recipes are from the Wente Vineyards Restaurant in Livermore, California. Hardbound.

Pairing Wine & Food (Linda Johnson-Bell). An excellent comprehensive reference. A section of the book is devoted to matching foods with several wines and vice-versa. Also included are helpful cheese/wine and mushroom/wine pairings. There is a food to wine and wine to food index.