

Subject: Oranewood Wines News No.22, November 20th, 2005

Sent: Sunday, November 20, 2005, 8:39 PM

To Our Wine Aficionados,

Introduction

One of the guiding principles for the growth of the business was that we would minimize our costs and overheads. As we grew various things break. A recent example of this was on deliveries. Greg, our now 85 year old delivery guy is very happy with his Scion xB delivering around the Phoenix area. Two weeks ago, however, we had to rent a bigger vehicle and try to get a bunch of deliveries done in Tucson. What with pick up from the warehouse, traffic on Interstate 10 and timing constraints at our customers things were not so much fun any more. So what we need is someone like Greg, who lives in Tucson and would be happy to spend a few hours a day, several days a week delivering wine to our customers. Greg is just perfect because he had been a sales guy before he retired and understands the value of customer relationships – he adds to the satisfaction our customers' have dealing with us. Greg loves driving and was bored watching soap operas. **So if you know someone who fits this profile please have them call me.**

Since the last newsletter I have visited our new wineries, Blackjack Ranch, Davis Bynum, Barlow and Strata. The rambling in this issue is extra long (groan from Laurie the editor) and covers those visits.

Box Score

New Restaurants/bars:	3
New Retail outlets:	2
New Sales people:	+1-1
New Wineries:	0

Contents

New Sales People
Szymon Piechaczek
New Locations
McMahon's Prime Steakhouse, Tucson
Montana Avenue, Tucson
El Encanto, Cave Creek
AJ's Fine Food at Pinnacle Peak, Scottsdale
Beverage House II, Tucson
Upcoming Events
Rambling

New Sales People

Szymon Piechaczek

Szymon, he says that we should call him call him Simon, is from Poland. He left there soon after the Berlin wall fell down and has been in the hospitality business ever since. He is enthusiastic about wines and has an excellent pallet. He continues with his evening job at the Royal Palms Hotel and will be focusing on restaurants along the Camelback Corridor. I have long been dismayed at our failure to be represented there and am confident that we will see our wines at the fine restaurants and hotels there.

New Locations

McMahon's Prime Steakhouse, 2959 N. Swan Road, Tucson

Sometimes the name of a restaurant is insufficiently obscure so you can guess what kind of food is served. McMahon's is one such.

Montana Avenue, 6390 E Grant Road, Tucson

On the other hand...Montana Avenue, another fine restaurant from Fox Restaurant Concepts, will have a Southwestern style food and several of our wines on their menu. What I like about the Fox restaurants is that they design the restaurant. They have a concept, design the physical location and food and wine offerings in line with the concept and then train the staff a lot.

El Encanto, Cave Creek

This place has long been a favorite destination of ours, but wine with Mexican food? Over the years this restaurant has had projects to improve in all kinds of ways. It seemed that wine became a more serious part of their offerings over the last year or two so I tried to find how to get the attention of their buyer. Bill Nelson has owned this place for ever but his daughter, Christine, now is very active in running the place. I emailed her and had given up on hearing back, but then I got a response. A little emailing led me to learn that they do taste new wines every month. I went along expecting to taste Bill and Christine, but found that this is a public event. After I got over my surprise and survived sweeping a bottle of wine on the floor (thank you Laurie for zipping along with a replacement) the evening went well and finished with an order. Great food, great wine (now) and great horned owls nesting in the palm trees, what more could you want

AJ's Fine Food at Pinnacle Peak, Scottsdale

Yet another AJ's succumbs to the charms of Orangewood Wines.

Beverage House II, Tucson

It turns out there are quite a few of these in Southern Arizona. This is the second one that we have signed up.

Upcoming Events

Dick is organizing a Sierra Foothills tasting event at the Scottsdale Culinary Institute. We are hoping that all our wineries come along – we are hoping for owners or wine makers or other fun “talking heads” to represent their wines and wineries to our customers and selected members of the public. The primary event is the evening of February 2nd – Groundhog Day. Only those who don't go to sleep after seeing their shadow will be there. So how are we selecting members of the public, you might ask? Well loyal readers, the list includes you. Send me an email and I will mail a ticket to you a couple of weeks before the event. Other events are sometimes described on our website.

<http://www.orangewoodwines.com/wine-events.htm>

Rambling

In need of some of the **Blackjack Ranch** wine and not being able to get the logistics together quickly to get it here, Craig and I borrowed an SUV (Thank you Jim and Karen) and head out towards California. I have a laptop perched on my lap because we also need to do some portfolio thinking. By the time we have our thinking done we are at 49 Palms – wow that drive went by quickly. We get to Blackjack Ranch in the mid afternoon. The sign outside has a subtitle “As seen in the movie Sideways”. Roger Wisted, the owner, told us later that the sign paid for itself within 20 minutes. Roger tasted us through most of his wines and talked about how he got into the business funded by his invention of California Blackjack. He also told us about why he invented it. He had moved to Los Angeles when gambling became legal. He said that he spent 2 years taking money off people who had no clue about playing poker. We notice that Roger has not only a poker face but also very restrained body language, he has trouble with stopping his eyes twinkling however - maybe dark glass fixes that problem! He noticed that many people came into the Casinos, but not seeing a Blackjack table turned around and left. This led to his invention and introduction of California Blackjack, to a new career signing license agreements as fast as he could and then to the Blackjack Ranch winery. He told us that his Wilkening Reserve Chardonnay is sourced from Laura Wilkening's vineyard just over there. The vineyards have been planted for 18 years – and Laurie is 90 years old. She planted them when she was over 70 – Roger commented on her optimism for longevity and the wine business.

At the Arizona State fair this year one of the groups appearing was ZZ Top. We were invited to see them by Frank and Mary, long time readers of this newsletter. We had a great time. Frank told me that he had seen that we now represent the **Davis Bynum Winery** and how they had visited the winery several times. Great wine and a great addition to our portfolio, Frank said. A week later Laurie and I fly over to Napa and drive an hour and half to the West bank of the Russian River which is where the winery is. We meet with Hampton Bynum who guides us through the vineyards and points out other notable sites. Further up the river is the Rochioli vineyard which had been selling its Pinot Noir grapes to Gallo for its Hearty Burgundy program until Hampton offered nearly 3 times as much. Hamp also talked about monoculture and showed us the Mediterranean garden with all kinds of fruit and vegetables growing there. We sampled the pineapple guava. The vineyards and wines are fully organic, we learned how they have plants more attractive to the sharpshooter than the grapevines – as their approach to that problem. When Davis Bynum first bought the property the buildings include a hop kiln which is now the winery. I thought I could detect a little hopiness in there, but I'm sure I was imagining it. Hamp told us how the first crush was when he was in his 20's. He was trying to get everything done all at the same instant. Licenses came the same day as the electric power was put on a day before the first grapes were brought in which was when the roof was being tarred. The tar caught fire so there was smoke everywhere. "???" their consulting winemaker was going around saying "This is no way to make wine!" But it was and continues to be – though I don't think they have tar fires every harvest. Hamp takes us and a bottle of the Davis Bynum Russian River Pinot Noir along to his wife's nearby restaurant. Nit's Creations is on River Rd just east of Guerneville. We sit on the patio overlooking the Russian River. Even though the restaurant has been open only 6 months it is winning awards and we soon learned why. The Pinot Noir complemented it well. After lunch we returned to the tasting room where Richard tasted us through some of the wines that we were unfamiliar with. Ritchie, as everyone called him, had been in the entertainment business for many years. He had been tour manager for several well know groups – including ZZ Top!

My final visits are on Monday after Laurie has returned to her day job. My daughter Debby comes along to visit **Barlow Vineyards** at the North end of the Silverado trail, almost in Calistoga. Entrance is through an automatic gate key code is ***** (code removed by editor). We go across a small wooden bridge and up the hill through the vineyards. Barr Smith's father and mother have built a house here. Barr Smith and his father Warren are there to greet us and explain how they had bought the vineyard and continue to supply grapes to a number of well known wineries. One of the winemakers suggested that they make wine out of the grapes for themselves. They did with great results and led to a scramble for licenses and facilities and so forth. I asked how they selected the name Barlow. Barr's full name is Warren Barlow Smith Jr. Say no more.

Debby and I return to Oak Knoll crossover from Silverado Trail to Route 29. West of 29 is where the **Strata Vineyards** are located. We are there to meet Dave Cofran and Amy Downs. The vineyards and winery are not marked and it surprised Debby to find that it is on her 5 mile running route. We have been selling the 2001 Merlot, but after a great review in one of the Wine magazine, they are sold out. Dave is just back from Scuba diving in the Philippines and so his body clock was somewhere west of Hawaii,, but nonetheless he gets us to taste the 2001 against the 2002 – which will be in Arizona shortly. Then we taste the 2003 and 2004 – both still in the barrel. Finally we try the 2005, 5 weeks in the barrel undergoing malolactic fermentation. Dave used to supply these grapes to Silver Oak for their Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, but after Silver Oak purchased the Twomey Vineyards there was more than enough Merlot for blending. The winery is shared by three neighbors. One of them O'Brien's has a wine called Seduction. Dave showed us the candlelit setup used to taste the wines. Given the hard concrete floor it wasn't clear who would be seducing whom.

So the end of another prolonged ramble. How many of you made it this far? It always amazes me that for all the length of the newsletter I really can only give the merest sketch of what I learned.

Ciao,

Richard and Laurie

Richard (newsletter writer) and Laurie Corles (editor)
Orangewood Consulting LLC