

Subject: Orangewood Wines News No. 3, March 6th, 2004

Sent: Saturday, March 6, 2004, 9:27 AM

To Our Wine Aficionados,

Introduction

In the introduction of OWN #2 we suggested that our house would be party ready by the end of February. Well, not quite. We do have our wine cellar in commission, a great relief - we can turn up the heating in the house now. However, we continue to have a long hit list, plus we have a visit to England for my mother's 90th birthday. No excuses for not attending! We leave on March 10, so our chance to continue the Mario day tradition takes a hit on its very first anniversary. Ah, well.

Box Score

New restaurants:	4
New retail outlets:	1
New sales people:	0
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Upcoming Events

March 26th

Wine Basket, Sedona

Every Friday this wine store has a wine dinner. On this date they will feature wines from Orangewood. They have room for 25 people and sell out a few days beforehand.

April 7th

Nello's, Tempe - Zinfandels

We had an internal Zinfandel tasting last month with Orangewood staff and a few people who heard about it. We met at Nello's to compare the Zinfandels we have in our (one page) catalog, as well as a couple of new candidates. We had altogether too much fun. (If you are in Napa visiting Frank Family you can ask Scott, who joined the tasting part way through.) Geno had fun, too, and has scheduled a repeat for a wider audience. Be there or be disappointed.

Event Feedback

Epicurean Wine - Cabernet Sauvignon Tasting

Scott Lloyd, the National Sales guy for both Napa Cellars Winery and Frank Family Vineyards, flew into town to support this event. It was not a well attended tasting. I think there were 6 paying guests. We tasted 2000 Napa Cellars, 1998 RustRidge and three Frank Family Cabernet Sauvignons. The Frank Family wines were the 1999 Napa Valley, 2000 Alexander Valley (the last vintage of this appellation because the contract to buy Silver Oak's grapes has run out) and 1999 Rutherford Hill Reserve. It's a pity you missed this because there is so little of the Rutherford Hill that you will have to visit the winery to try it. All the others are available at Epicurean, and the now knowledgeable staff (John, Sunshine and Scott) can find them for you.

Uptown 713

This was Uptown's inaugural, last-Wednesday-of-the-month, monthly wine tasting. Alison and I did a little scrambling to get things running smoothly - chasing round getting the right wines cooled, polishing glasses, finding dump buckets and so forth. Phil and Christina, the owners, also scrambled to get the appetizers in place and tickets printed. Uptown had over 20 regulars there, and avid newsletter reader, Robert, brought along his buddy, Hal. We focused on the Napa Cellars wines, the first time we have exposed them together. The Cabernet was the standout for this crowd.

Red Kangaroo, Scottsdale

We did the Napa Cellars thing again at Red Kangaroo. Dyane, Laurie and I entertained and were pleased to see Karen and Jim, Dyane's folks and one of her clients in addition to the modest throng of regulars. The last time we were here the wine of the night was Young's Vineyard Barbera, and they put it on their shelf. This time we took along the other two Young's wines that we have available - the 2001 Syrah and the 1999 Zinfandel. The Syrah was the winner. Diane and Gary, the owners, decided to carry the full set of the Young's wines, and they may be the only retail outlet beyond Young's tasting room to do so. If you haven't tasted these wines or seen the packaging, you are missing a treat. Pinnacle Peak Rd at Miller.

Tour De Paso Robles - Westberg Cellars Wines

This was an event with over 30 Paso Robles wineries represented. It was organized by AJ's, Scottsdale Culinary Institute and a small local distributor (not us), with the Boys and Girls Club of Arizona benefiting. It was a mob scene. Probably 600 people poured through! From our perspective it was primarily a trade event. We saw many of our existing customers and a few new prospects. We tasted wines we were familiar with and a couple of new ones in search of a local distributor. Alison, Dick and I poured the Westberg Cellars wines - our only wines from Paso Robles. Tom and Peggy had intended to be here for the event, but too many things were happening for them to get a weekend off. We were proud to pour their wines, which stood up well to the competition.

AZ Wine, Scottsdale - Sierra Foothills Wines

We offered wines from all five of our wineries in this region, and all of them tasted well. You know how sometimes a wine tastes great, other times you're not so sure? This night the wines and my taste buds reached a chronosynclastic infundibulum (extra points to those who recognize the reference.) The event was fairly well attended, which means that Dick, Alison and I had no time to crack jokes in between pouring and talking about each of the wineries.

New Locations

Razz's Bar and Grill

Laurie and I had not eaten at Razz's since he changed locations. He is on the square in the SE corner of Scottsdale and Shea. When we last were there he was on the east side of the square; now he is on the west side backing onto Scottsdale Rd. Razz is a major wine enthusiast. He tried a few of our wines and ordered the Latcham Cabernet Franc for next season (he is closed May - September). At the next tasting he loved the Frank Family Cabernet Sauvignons and has them available now. Razz impressed me after I watched him deal with a vegetarian customer who couldn't find anything to their liking on the menu. He knelt beside their table and explained the ingredients that he had and the kind of vegetarian things he could make for them. They negotiated an entree that Razz went off and cooked. This is customer service. Try it.

Mancuso's

It must be at least 15 years ago that Laurie and I headed over to Mancuso's following a terrible Friday in the corporate world. We were wowed with the service, food and wine to the point where we had to spend an hour or two at the nearby bookstore recovering before driving home. Chris is the sommelier and his father-in-law (I probably shouldn't be telling you this) is a friend of Susan and Jim from RustRidge. (Father-in-law calls Chris to "suggest" that he may want to carry RustRidge wines. Good idea!) RustRidge Zinfandel is now available, as is Frank Family Cabernet Sauvignon.

Drinkwater's Liquor and Cheese – 10802 N Scottsdale Rd

Drinkwater's lapped up some of the Frank Family wines to see how they go down with their customers. They have the Napa Valley Cabernet and Chardonnay.

Four Peaks Grill and Tap - Scottsdale

This is a new location for the familiar Tempe brewery. They feel a need for some wines for the well-heeled clientele in North Scottsdale. If you have been shopping at the Costco in Scottsdale this is a great antidote. It's on the east side of Hayden, north of Costco, but before you hit Frank Lloyd Wright. They are starting with one of the Westberg Cellar's Zinfandels.

Calico Cow - Phoenix - Central Avenue at the Canal

This location has had many incarnations. All of them have failed. Susan and Kent believe that reaching out to the local community, rather than enticing big spenders from elsewhere, is the key. Laurie and I agree and wish they had shown up sooner. Starting on Tuesday, March 9th, they will have a liquor license and will be serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. Alison was a regular at the Calico Cow's previous location and had the inside track on their introductory wine tasting event. Stop by and try this promising location and look for and try our wines there.

Visit to Napa Cellars Winery

Dick and I take a trip to the Napa Valley. The Captains of Industry, as Dick calls us, have to check the frontlines to gather local color. Our first stop is Napa Cellars in Oakville. Driving north from Napa on Route 29 we pass the Brix restaurant, followed by the Mustards restaurant. Napa Cellars is a neighbor to Mustards. A large barrel (I mean, HUGE barrel) is the sign for the winery. This barrel, we later learn, came from Leland Stanford's old farm. Leland was the governor who partnered with 3 businessmen to build the Central Pacific railroad and then founded a little college with his name on it. (See PBS's summary here: http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/s_z/stanford.htm). Napa Cellars has a couple more of these barrels and are loath to throw them out, what with all the history they are steeped in. If anyone has a good idea for them... We drive into the parking lot beside the geodesic domed tasting room and picnic area. If we had kept going north we would have reached the Oakville grocery where we could have loaded up with bread, cheese and pâté for a picnic lunch; but it's mid afternoon and there is wine to taste. Scott welcomes us - he is here, he is there, he is everywhere - together with Holly and Kerri, two of the three regular tasting staff. (Ken, the third member of this crew, is not working this afternoon.) Like Frank Family Vineyards, Napa Cellars has been owned by Rich Frank and Koerner Rombauer for several years. Until last year all the wine was sold at the tasting room. Their aggressive growth plan now has them selling in 20 states. One of the things we have on our agenda is to review the Merlot. (We were originally unenthusiastic about the 2001 Merlot they sent us, so we didn't order any. Then they mistakenly sent us samples of the 2000, which is delicious.) The 2001 Merlot has developed tremendously since our original tasting and we now predict that it will meet or exceed the 2000. So much for our ability to predict this stuff. By way of rubbing our noses in it, they also have us taste the Reserve Merlot, which is really special. (In fact, this wine is later pronounced "best wine in a lifetime" by Debby, who gets to share in a bottle in exchange for putting up with us for a night. Thank you Debby, Mike, Toby and Calvin.) The Napa Cellars wine room is definitely worth a visit. Buy yourself a bottle of that Reserve Merlot, too.

Sierra Foothills

The following day is Amador County day. We visit Vino Noceto, Young's Vineyard, Latcham Vineyards and Granite Springs Winery. We primarily want to strengthen the relationship aspects of dealing with these wineries. We pick up a couple of samples from Noceto and Granite that we will be tasting with some of our customers to decide whether to expand coverage of each winery's offering. Jim and Suzy Gullett at Noceto taste us on their latest Rosato. Despite our misgivings, this wine could have a rosy future. We'll be sampling it for the summer season. Stell Young suggests that we take wine along for dinner - ouch! Twist my arm. After a perilous journey across the canyon, with only a brief visit to the Coloma Club to fortify us, we have dinner and spend the night at Dick's sister-in-law's home in Auburn. (Thank you, Heidi and Bud!)

Our last day is primarily for barrel tasting with Neal Baumbach at Hyatt-Baumbach's historic and mighty cold Auburn winery. (Neal had connected with Dick in Tucson to preview some of the wines at restaurants there and at his alma mater, so we already know this is good stuff.) By way of education we taste two components of the Zinfandel: one in French Oak barrels, the other in American Oak. Other than the barreling, the grapes were sourced and processed identically. Both tastes are wonderful, but markedly different. The blend is different yet again. After talking about pH and sugar and Brix and stuff, I ask whether they blend based on chemistry or flavor or both. Flavor is the answer. Ron and Neal are able to predict how the wine components will turn out and which blending will allow them to achieve their intended result. Amazing. There's a lot to learn.

Feedback/Corrections

In last month's newsletter I mentioned that Arcadia Wines is on the west side of Scottsdale Road. If you are still looking, I apologize. 4251 N Brown Ave is on the east side.

Cin-cin, alla salute!

Richard and Laurie

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