

WINE GARAGE

MAY 2008 WINE SHIPMENT

Red&White Club

Anglim Rosé Paso Robles '06 \$14.99

Last Spring, I was driving back from yet another trip down to Santa Barbara and I decided to call a wine broker friend while I was just outside of Paso Robles. Karen Bria has turned me on to many small producers in Paso and she was in town and up for lunch. We stopped in to see Steve Anglim and tasted some of his new releases. One we tasted was this Rosé of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvedre, and Viognier. I loved it but told Steve that I wasn't interested in buying it for the store because it was in this really dark bottle – NOBODY bottles a Rosé in anything other than clear glass. I purchased his delicious Syrah for one club shipment last fall and a case of the Rosé for Joy and I to drink in the upcoming long, hot summer in Napa. I got back in the car headed for Santa Cruz where I was hooking up with Joy and Emma at a beach house we rented for the weekend. I couldn't stop thinking about that Rosé – it really made an impression on me. I called Karen up again and said, "I think that was the best Rosé I have ever had", and she agreed. So I told her to ship 5 cases for the store and I'd try to forget about the dark glass it came in and see how it would sell. Well, Joy loved it, too. Then our wine industry friends loved it once they sampled it. Then we couldn't keep it on the shelves it sold so well. Rosé is very trendy these days amongst the "wineratti", and the wineries, who were simply dumping their "sangnee" in the vineyard, decided to make a buck and bottle it up. You see, when you are making wine with young vines, sometimes the juice is too light in color. So, to darken it up...you want more skin to pulp ratio...you bleed out some juice to bump up the ratio. The winemaking term for this process is called, in French, "Sangnee". People are making Rosé out of every conceivable grape variety, including Cabernet and Petite Sirah! Those don't really work so well...the Rhone grapes do though. Just try a \$35 bottle of Bandol sometime from the Southern Rhone, made from Grenache, and tell me you don't love it. So I was thinking of putting the very first Rosé ever in the Club this spring and called Karen up to see if Steve bottled the '07 in clear glass, so I could turn you folks on to it. I found out to my amazement (and chagrin) that he didn't make a Rosé in '07...He discontinued the Rosé program! What a huge mistake! But there was some of the '06 if I wanted it...just enough to fill the Club order...and I jumped on it. The color of this wine is the closest I have found to a true Bandol Rosé – the only term I can think of that nails it is "salmon", light pink. The nose is of just-picked strawberries...like when YOU do the picking and have the delicious nectar all over your fingers. With a scent of dried flowers and honey. A rich mouthfeel and backbone of bright acidity on the finish. The flavors of strawberry, white peaches, and wet slate. I LOVE this wine! It is absolutely perfect. Serve very cold and try it with that classic Italian dish of fresh strawberries drizzled with aged balsamic vinegar. I have very few cases left.....

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TENZ (Tom Eddy New Zealand) Sauvignon Blanc 2007: \$19.99

Marlborough

What?!? Todd is sending me an IMPORT in this wine club, is he?? Well...yes...sort of. This is a very unique wine, made in a new and unique way that is revolutionizing winemaking. My good friend, Tom Eddy of Tom Eddy Wines and a Calistoga resident, flew over to New Zealand during our winter (which is their summer) to make this delicious SB during the Northern Hemisphere winemaking shut-down months. Usually winemakers here in California use the wintertime to take vacations, fix equipment, rack barrels, or just chill after the crunch-time of harvest. But not Tom. He devised a way to increase his productivity by making wine in another Hemisphere. New Zealand roared onto the wine scene a decade ago, when a famous wine writer reviewed a Marlborough SB and declared it was one of the best he had ever tasted and used this now-famous flavor profile: "like a cat pissed on a gooseberry bush". Marlborough sits on the northern tip of the south island of NZ and with the cool ocean breezes, abundant sunshine and unique soil compositions, this area produces amazing Sauvignon Blanc. This is my favorite style of SB, for New Zealand as a whole. I would characterize the wines from Marlborough as having loads of grapefruit and other tropical fruits on the palate, and a distinct herbal, grassy, mineral and unctuous nose, finishing with a clean and crisp mouthfeel. Same for this wine as a whole, but with a delicate Californian touch that brings out more subtle flavors of pink grapefruit, kiwi, freshly cut grass, pineapple and pears...and a richer mid-palate...and a floral nose that I can't seem to get enough of. Tom is old school – literally, he graduated from Davis with a degree in viticulture in 1972 and was the GM and winemaker at Chateau Sovereign at the ripe age of 29. He was an integral member of the new wave of winemakers that shaped our palates for the last 30 years and made the wine industry what it is today. Last year, wine finally outsold beer in this country. I have a special place in my heart for Tom. He tutored me in the art of grape buying – it was Tom who turned me on to that Cabernet vineyard up on a hill in Calistoga that we made into our first wine and bottled last week. If you didn't buy any "futures" last fall you have one more chance before I raise the price – the wine turned out better than I could have imagined and I just contracted for more fruit from the same vineyard for our '08 vintage – three times the price I paid for the grapes in '06. This Sauvignon Blanc is perfect for throwing back a glass on the front porch with a pretzel – or a refined gourmet dinner of seared diver scallops with browned butter.

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David Girard “Cour du Terroir Blanc” White Rhone Blend 2007: \$21.99

Sierra Foothills

Here is the blend: 43% Roussanne, 17% Grenache Blanc, 17% Rolle, 17% Marsanne, and 6% Viognier. Wow! I have in fact heard of Rolle, but NEVER tasted it and sure didn't think that it was grown in California. This is what I like about the wine business, someone is always thinking outside of the box and it's my job to find them and bring their products to you for your enjoyment. Mari Wells is the winemaker at DG. I met her at the Family Winemakers Tasting several years ago and that's when I first tasted her wines. Outstanding wines! I purchased her Grenache and Mourvedre for the store. Several weeks went by and I received a call from Mari (I had bought all the Mourvedre she had left of the 04 vintage) and she asked if I got the wine 'OK' and I said "yes I did." Then she yelled "you son of a BLEEP, I just got 94 points and a cellar selection in Wine Enthusiast and you have it all!". I know she was only half kidding, but what a better testament to my wine buying skills, no? Anyway, I promised her that one year, if she could spare enough juice, I would introduce her goods to the club and finally the production is up enough to get this beautiful white wine in your hands. I always say that blends are more complex than individual varietals and this blend goes the next step in co-fermenting all the grapes together to make a seamless wine of pronounced complexity. This is why French wines seem so different than others – the blending. This wine explodes in the mouth with richness, complexity and austerity all at the same time. Stone fruit, like peaches and apricots, but also orchard fruit like green apple...and then tropical fruit such as passion fruit and papaya, melon and honeysuckle. Man, what a mouthful of flavors. Notice the crisp, clean and tart characteristics but at the same time it is rich and round, with body and weight. An amazing wine! Have this with your last chance to taste fresh wild Salmon (FYI: fishing Salmon has been banned in California and Oregon this season due to a serious drop in fish counts). So, get some Alaskan Salmon (wild) and grill that baby up on a bed of rosemary soaked in wine (this one would do) and a squeeze of lemon. The richness of the fish, paired with the lemon, will make this wine sing.

Qupé Marsanne 2006: \$18.99

Santa Ynez Valley

I know you are probably thinking: What is this guy doing? Where is the Chardonnay? Well folks, I promised to turn you on to delicious, but sometimes unusual, wines in this club and life is too short to get into ruts by always drinking the same varietals. This grape is originally from the Rhone Valley in France and is primarily used as a blending grape. Marsanne adds a wet-stone like minerality to blends. When the fruit is outstanding, winemakers can't resist spotlighting a varietal that stands up on its own, like this offering. Bob Lindquist, founder of Qupé, got his start in the wine business at the retail level at a shop in the little burg of Los Olivos. Los Olivos is one of the cutest towns you ever saw and the site of Mayberry, North Carolina (the town in the Andy Griffith Show). Bob got lucky and was terminated for seeing

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a Kinks concert that his boss didn't want him to go to. So, he got a job at Zaca Mesa Winery as a cellar rat where he met Ken Brown and Jim Clendenen. They encouraged Bob to make wine and Qupé was started in 1982. In '89, Bob and Jim (founder/winemaker of Au Bon Climat) decided to build a winery together to share between their two brands at the site of the Bien Nacito Vineyard. This wine was fermented in older French Oak barrels, was allowed the secondary malolactic fermentation and aged on its lees for 8 months. So, you Chardonnay drinkers, I think you will enjoy this wine as well as ABC (anything but chardonnay) drinkers. A rich and plush mouthfeel, but a clean mineral finish. Wet stone, peaches, Meyer lemons, honey, dried flowers and an interesting hazelnut component on the finish. This wine will age due to the high acidity and develop into a different wine than the one you are tasting now. This is a perfect aperitif wine. I am having a glass right now with a toasted pita with a lemony hummus schmear on it.

Downhill Winery "Slipstream" Bordeaux Blend 2005: \$12.99 Alexander Valley

I am very excited to share some recent discoveries with you from wineries in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Downhill is the creation of Frank Ashton, a former natural foods retailer, who after 20 years in that business, sold his stake and got into the wine biz. He described the switch as riding your bike up a giant hill for 20 years (food retail), finally getting to the top...and then getting to coast "downhill" (wine business) was the fun part of a strenuous ride. He obviously is into biking. (I get the fun part, but the wine business certainly does not equal coasting all the way.) Frank and I have some similar philosophies including a dedication to local, sustainable farming practices and we are both active members of "Slow Food." But regarding the wine business, Frank is making wine with fruit from all over California's wine growing regions and utilizing the best varieties of the respective AVA's: Barbera from Amador, Zin from Dry Creek, Chard from Sleepy Hollow (I have this in the store now and is very yummy), Cab from Napa, and this blend from Alexander Valley in Sonoma. I try to do the same thing in purchasing wine for the store. You won't find Chardonnay from Paso, or Cab from Santa Barbara, or Pinot from Amador in the Wine Garage. We select the best representative varietals from the regions that produce the best wine from those varieties. You'll see for yourself when you pull the cork on this bottle. The aroma hits you even before you can get your nose down in the glass: Dried rose petal, blackberry pie and currants blast into your olfactory pie-hole. Then notice some earth components like leather, tobacco and a hint of black truffle grasp your palate. A long, lingering finish of more black cherry fruit, mocha, mint and moderate tannins complete the circle. Made from mostly Merlot and blended with 35% Cabernet. Solidly shocking for \$15!

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Tractor Shed Red 2004: \$12.99

Napa Valley

This blend is made by Tудal Winery located just down the street from the store and the generous donors of their winery guest house to the winners of the Wine Club Referral Contest. TSR gets its name from the 1947 Massey Harris tractor that John Tудal pulled out of the weeds down by the Napa River and parked it in front of the shed next to the tasting room. The legend was born. They recently restored the tractor to its old glory and entered the old girl in the world famous "Calistoga Tractor Parade" this past Christmastime and won the grand prize of being named "Best in Show." The tractor parade is really a spectacle that you should experience sometime. Joy and I saw the very first one back in 1992 by complete accident. We came up from the City for a little romantic weekend and were wondering why all these old tractors were parked near downtown. We soon found out. All these old tractors were completely decked out in Christmas lights and garland and came roaring down the main street in town. What a sight! Some of the tractors were dating back to the 1920's and completely restored. Then there were those that were complete rust buckets and barely able to finish the 4 block length of the parade. They rumbled, coughed, and choked, spitting smoke and holiday cheer. Nowadays the parade lasts almost two hours with every conceivable farm machine, dump truck, and earthmover imaginable lit up like roman candles with hundreds of folks cheering them on. The last couple of years, we have had a complete manger scene with real live camels sashaying down the boulevard backed up by a pooper scooper team. Last year some of our friends in town bought an old tractor just for the sole purpose of entering into the parade. They pulled a float filled with all our friends' kids, Emma included, throwing candy canes and other holiday treats to the bystanders. Everything was great until they ran out of gas right in the middle of Lincoln Avenue and stalled the whole dang parade until someone ran home to get a gas can. Calistoga has an equally fun and unique Fourth of July parade that kicks off the Napa County Fair. Saint Helena may be the "Beverly Hills" of Wine Country but Calistoga revels in their small town, down home charm. We chose the right town to open the Garage in; Calistoga, and the Wine Garage, don't take themselves too seriously. Tractor Shed Red doesn't take itself too seriously either and it is seriously good wine. A blend of 60% Sangiovese, 20% Zinfandel and 20% Merlot, this wine has bright fruit, good balance and just the right amount of acidity to stand up to many different foods. Aromas of strawberry, cranberry, and flowers on the nose. On the palate: strawberry tart, cherries, and raspberry fruit from the Sangio, a rich velvety mouthfeel from the Merlot...and blackberry, spicy black pepper and huckleberry jam from the Zinfandel. All for \$13! In the spirit of Calistoga's Mexican population, and the upcoming Cinco De Mayo Parade (Calistoga has a parade for just about everything), pair this wine with tacos de carne asada with a chipotle salsa.

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Sawkar Merlot 2003: \$24.99

Sonoma Mountain

Raghu Sawkar is a man of many talents...a vascular surgeon who also has college degrees in viticulture and vineyard management, plus he is a former restaurateur and chef. Whew...what a resume! Raghu had the only Indian restaurant in Napa Valley, which is unfortunately now closed (those bozos down valley in Napa city just couldn't wrap their arms around chicken tikka masala like us former Big City ...SF...folk do). Every time we venture to the City (SF), I insist on Indian food. Well, Napa's loss was an oenophile's gain. Now Raghu has more time to concentrate on his wine business. He has produced some excellent Cab, Zin, and Merlot from vineyards high up on Sonoma Mountain. This Merlot, in particular, received very high numbers from a well known wine magazine. Plush and rich with creamy vanilla on the palate, extracted and concentrated fruit, seamless balance and complexity. Cola, raspberry, pomegranate syrup, dark chocolate, and cream are all apparent on the palate. This wine plays between richness and tartness, velvety extravagance and clean acidity. Raghu has recently jumped with both feet into the wine world by his purchase of the Work Vineyards, right here in Calistoga just up the road from the Garage. Work Sauvignon Blanc has been one of the best SB's coming out of Napa, but also an expensive one. Now that we are neighbors, Raghu is willing to "work" the price in our favor and I now have it in the store for under \$25. He has expanded the line to include Cab, Zin, and Syrah...all are of which are outstanding. Try this wine with my recipe for Secret Bolognese Sauce, found in this newsletter. The velvety richness of the meat sauce, coupled with the acidity of the tomatoes, is a match made in ragu heaven.

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