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Reserve Pinot Noir Club™
Shea Block 25 Pinot noir 02
Lachini "S" Pinot noir 02

NW Big Reds Club™
Basel Cellars Syrah 02
Sheridan L'Orage 01

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541-752-7418

This month we have two new Pinot noirs, one from the grand old Shea Vineyard, the other from a new vineyard, planted in 1998, but made by the wonderful Peter Rosback, of Sineann fame.

Lachini Vineyard

Lachini Vineyard's forty-five acres are located in Newberg, the heart of the North Willamette Valley, approximately 30 miles southwest of Portland. The sloping Estate Vineyard is comprised of Willakenzie series soils ranging from 18 to 48 inches in depth. The shallow, fine silt loam over sedimentary rock has lower water capacity due to its sandy consistency and thus forces the vines to compete and develop deep root systems.



The emerging terroir of these dark-brown to yellowish-brown soils reveal Pinot Noir wines with strong earthy notes, chocolate, and a definite flavor of anise and spice.

Ron Lachini purchased the property in 1998 and planted the first five acres with Pinot Noir (Pommard clone) in June of 1999, after clearing and natural site preparation. In the following '00, '01, and '02 growing seasons, he planted additional blocks that now entail just over 20 acres of planted Pinot Noir. Most recent plantings include Dijon and Wadenswil clones.

The winemaker for Lachini is Isabelle Dutartre, and she supervised the vineyard's planting and management. Isabelle is also winemaker for DePonte Cellars. Isabelle has a great deal of experience making superior wines and has been in the wine industry for over 20 years. Most notably, she was trained in classical Burgundian Enology and Viticulture in Beaune, France and worked extensively under the Maison Joseph Drouhin. Isabelle has made wine for ten vintages in Burgundy, France. She has also had experience with Pinot Noir from Oregon, where she previously worked for five vintages at Domaine Drouhin of Oregon. Isabelle resides in the south of France and makes frequent trips to Oregon.

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This month, a Walla Walla rising star, Basel Cellars, and the flagship wine of one of Washington's best vineyards, Sheridan.

Basel Cellars

Trey Busch is like many young winemakers lured to the Walla Walla Valley to help pioneer the wine industry's growing reputation for luscious Merlot, powerful Cabernet Sauvignon and silky Syrah.



But Basel Cellars is not an ordinary winery, and the wines produced are far from average. For starters, the \$14 million estate features a 13,000 square-foot luxury overnight lodge perched on a hill overlooking the Walla Walla River and valley floor. Combine a well-stocked pond, complete with fly fishing lessons and landscaped grounds overlooking golden wheat fields nestled next to the foothills of the Blue Mountains, and you know you have something special going on.



And, the crème de la crème is the wine, bottled under two labels, Basel Cellars and the second label Vierra, producing an exciting and elegant Bordeaux blend called Merri-ment, and small productions of some of the best

Syrah in the region. Vierra, captures some of the essence of Basel wines at value prices with a Claret, Syrah and a small amount of Cabernet Franc.

A native of Atlanta, GA, Busch realizes just how lucky he was to land the top winemaking spot at Basel Cellars, which opened officially in 2003. After college and a two-year stint in the Navy, Busch moved to Seattle and began a career working as a buyer for Nordstrom's.

But life at one of Seattle's premiere department stores took a toll on the 34-year-old who spent part of his life living out of a suitcase and motel rooms, and long work weeks away from his wife Jennifer.

"I just didn't want to do this anymore," Busch admits. "By the time we had our daughter Kailey, I knew I wanted a life closer to home. I wanted a different challenge."

While visiting friends in the Walla Walla area, Busch was introduced to Eric Dunham, winemaker for Dunham Cellars, who offered Busch a way out of the retail rat race and into the grape business.

"Eric needed an assistant winemaker, especially one who understood production and sales," Busch said. "Obviously, I didn't know squat about wine at the time, other than I liked what was being produced in Walla Walla. But we looked around and realized it was the perfect place to raise our daughter, and the job was intriguing enough to take the plunge."

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Reserve Pinot Noir Club™
 Shea Block 25 \$48
 Lachini "S" 02 \$30

Northwest Big Reds Club™
 Basel Cellars Syrah 02 \$55
 Sheridan L'Orage 01 \$43

New Discoveries Club™
 Canoe Ridge Merlot Reserve 01 \$45

Dessert Wine Club™
 Hood River Marionberry \$19
 Tualatin Muscat \$17
 Ankeny Gold \$16

Big Reds Club continued

Continued from page 1

For three years, Busch worked for Dunham, learning the ropes of the wine business, taking courses in winemaking and production and participating in weekly tasting sessions with a group of winemakers from the area. He read everything he could get his hands on, holding Kailey in one arm while reading a technical manual with his free arm. He spent countless hours in the vineyards.

"It was an intense learning period and I learned a lot from Eric Dunham," Busch said.

The work paid off.

The Basel Connection

As his passion for wine and technical experience grew, Trey Busch began nurturing a plan to someday make his own wine. As another winemaker recently commented, "you can't be around Walla Walla for long and not pick up the enthusiasm that abounds for winemaking—it is like an infectious laugh and once started, everybody is at least giggling."

Greg Basel, a grape grower in Walla Walla, (Pheasant Run Vineyard) and his partner Steve Hanson wanted to build a winery in the area. When the estate of a former wireless communications executive came up for auction, the two partners quickly realized they could turn the mansion and grounds into a winery and a destination site for guests who purchase a membership to Basel Cellars. The membership allows the mansion to be rented for up to 18 guests in rustic but elegantly-furnished home.

Memberships started out slow, but according to Lynn Anderson, Basel Cellars marketing and sales guru, "weekends are totally booked for the year."

With the new location, which happened to already have grapes planted, the two business partners needed a winemaker. And, through word-of-mouth, Trey Busch became one of the luckiest and newest winemakers in Walla Walla.

"I knew I was lucky and better yet, Greg and Steve wanted to make the best wine they could from the best fruit available," Busch said. "That was the top goal—to get the best out of the vineyards."

The Wines

Because Walla Walla can remain very hot during the summer months, Busch said he has to deal with elevated pH levels, either by acidifying the wine or blending with fruit from other areas such as the Columbia Valley. Busch then separates the free-run juice from the press juice. All the press juice is destined for Vierra wines while the free running juice is stored in new oak and eventually is part of the blend for Basel wines.

The Basel wines, says Busch, are crafted for longevity. They are intense now, although drinkable, but will age with grace and power. The 2001 Merriment is a blend of 50 percent Cabernet Sauvignon, 40 percent Merlot and 10 percent Cabernet Franc. This is a gorgeous wine filled with plum, dark cherries and herbs in the mouth. The tannins are smooth and approachable. Busch says his 2002 Merriment will be released in December.



The Big Red Club Wines

Basel Cellars Syrah 02 \$55

A small production, multi-vineyard cuvee' of 100% Syrah, 100% free run juice, aged for 19 months in 95% new oak. Only 18 barrels of this magnificent wine were produced.



There are intoxicating aromas of freshly crushed red berries, flowers, spice, and mocha. On the palate, the wine is super rich, viscous, and multilayered. Complex flavors of red and black fruits and the continuation of the mocha are dominant on the long finish. The fine grained tannins support the wine throughout. This is a serious wine, meant for long term aging. Highly recommended, drinking deliciously now, safe to lay down for 3-5 years.



This wine is a topic of great interest among winemakers in Walla Walla, as are all the Basel Cellars wines. Avalon Club Members received the Basel Cellars Merriment earlier this year, and will receive the new vintage of the Merriment when it is released.

Sheridan Vineyard L'Orange Red Wine 01 \$45

The followup to Sheridan's monster initial offering, the 2000 Sheridan "Red", Scott has renamed their flagship red wine "L'Orange".



Some of WA's most respected winemakers mention Sheridan Vineyard and owner winemaker Scott Greer when asked about up-and-coming stars. This is a remarkable wine.

The young 55 acre vineyard is the source for Andrew Will Winery's Sheridan 01 and Chris Camarda, Andrew Will winemaker and owner, has planted a vineyard just next door to Sheridan's called "Two Blondes". Chris believes that the area around Sheridan, north of the town of Zillah, could grow some of the best Oregon red wine grapes. Given the spectacular flavors and complexity of Sheridan's first Red (the 2000, which received a 92 point rating from Wine Spectator), the maturing vines may start showing the world some amazing wine.

The 2001 L'Orange Red is a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot from the Sheridan Estate Vineyard. The wine is deeply colored, velvety rich, with well integrated yet definite tannins. Flavors of black berries, dark chocolate, blue fruits, fresh saddle leather, and a long, long finish.

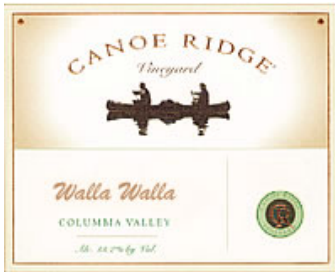


Wine Spectator said: "This will be a sizeable operation when all 76 acres of the vineyard near Zillah are producing, but this first effort, from Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot vines planted in 1997, marks this label as one to watch."

New Discoveries Club

**Canoe Ridge
Merlot Reserve 01 \$45**

Exclusive to Avalon Wine. Black cherry, chocolate, toasted espresso bean, fresh saddle leather, chewy but well integrated tannins, just a huge, complex, world class Merlot. Made by John Abbott before he left to start his own winery, this wine is quite special.



ABOUT THE VINTAGE The 2001 vintage continued a four-year streak of exceptional vintages at our Canoe Ridge Vineyard estate and in the Columbia Valley as a whole. We enjoyed warm, dry growing conditions with average crop levels, which is perfect for Merlot. The grape berries and clusters were small, in turn, yielding concentrated, richly-colored wine.

ABOUT THE VINEYARD Our Reserve Merlot is grown primarily in a vineyard block that shows a great balance in the soil with the fine sandy loam prevalent at our vineyard overlying volcanic basalt. This mixture slows vine growth, which produces grape clusters and berries that are small and very concentrated in flavor and color. Our estate vineyard's unique location at a broad expanse of the Columbia River in eastern Washington allows it to grow superior grapes. The vast river moderates the temperature, extending the grapes' hangtime on the vines during the long summer, yet protecting the vines in the winter. The vineyard's location on the northeast side of the ridge protects it from wind damage. It is one of the largest estate-owned single vineyards in the state.

ABOUT THE WINE For our 2001 Canoe Ridge Vineyard Reserve we blended one barrel of Lot 2 Cabernet Sauvignon with our Lot 10 Merlot. The lot numbers come from our practice of fermenting the wine in small lots so we can extract the best expression of different blocks of the vineyard. Depending on the lots, we used different fermentation practices, yeast strains and barrel coopers to create individual components that make up the final blend. In 2001, Lot 10 was the Canoe Crew favorite. The black cherry, raspberry and chocolate aromas found in our estate Canoe Ridge Vineyard Merlot are even more intense in our Reserve bottling. These concentrated flavors allow us to use more new oak barrels to bring richness and roundness to the palate and sweet toasty aromas without overpowering the fruit flavors. The addition of one barrel of Cabernet Sauvignon adds to the full mouthfeel plus brings additional aromas and complexity.

FOOD RECOMMENDATIONS The richness of this Reserve Merlot makes it a good partner with equally full-flavored foods such as roast lamb, New York steak or duck glazed with a dried cherry sauce to match the wine's fruit.

NW Dessert Wine Club

**Hood River
Marionberry Dessert Wine \$20**

Intense, deeply fruit flavored, sweet and tart, earthy Marionberry flavors- perfect mixed with Champagne over ice for a celebratory cocktail, or have straight with bittersweet chocolate. Yumm!

Tualatin Semi Sparkling Muscat \$16

The Tualatin Semi-Sparkling Muscat is a clone of an Italian Moscato d'Asti. Its boisterous orange blossom and raspberry aromas lead to a fresh, zesty, medium-bodied personality. This velvety-textured wine has tangy orange, red berry, and floral flavors in its character. Like the Italian Moscatos, it has low alcohol (6.5%) and an off-dry sweetness. It should be drunk over the next 6-8 months as an aperitif, or as I like to drink this style of wine, while watching the first football games of the season on warm Sundays. This is an excellent value that should be consumed over the next six months."

**Ankeny "Gold" Pinot gris Dessert Wine \$16**

Yumm! Sweet but not cloying, flavors of apricot, peach, and pear, fresh and delectable, with a light finish that leaves you wanting more! Delectable by itself or with cheesecake. Everyone loves this wine!

**Patricia Green Cellars Wine Club
July/August Club****PGC Pinot noir "Goldschmidt Vineyard" 02 \$55****PGC Sauvignon Blanc 03 \$22**

Details in the PGC Club newsletter.

About the Club

Ten shipments a year starting April 2003.

Four different exclusive "cuvees" selected by Patty and Jim for the club- special barrels expressing aspects of terroir, winemaking, soil, varietal. Available only to Club members.

Newsletter with each shipment containing stories about the wines, insights and anecdotes about the vintage, the winemaking process, Patty's and Jim's evaluations of the wines in the shipment.

First priority on purchase from Avalon of her hardest to get wines- Balcombe 1B, Goldschmidt, Notorious, Bonshaw, etc. Some are very limited, but the Club will get what there is available.

First priority on very limited 2003 Pinot noir futures- the 2003 crop level was down about 15-50% depending on the vineyard, and the wine will go quickly.

Theme shipments exploring Balcombe Vineyard, The Estate Vineyard, Soils, Food Matching, PGC and the influence of Burgundy, Blending, and more.

Call Jean to signup!

Reserve Pinot noir Club continued.....

Lachini Vineyard currently has fifteen acres bearing fruit. Over the next five years, the entire vineyard will come into full production, with maximum planting to 30 acres on this site.

Vineyard spacing is 4' X 6" or roughly 1700 vines per acre, which forces the vines to compete. The winery tries to limit annual production under 2 tons/acre. For the '01 and '02 harvests, they limited yields to one cluster per shoot, and essentially dropped nearly 60 percent of their fruit to ripen the best clusters.

Lachini Vineyards uses drip irrigation to help establish the young vines and control the amount and timing of water delivered to each plant. They are presently experimenting with administering nutrients such as compost tea direct to each plant.



Vineyard Management

To quote owner Ron Lachini: Our philosophy is shared by many in Oregon- To respect the land, treat it well for generations to come."

Lachini Vineyards are hand-farmed using sustainable agriculture and organic practices. Sustainable viticulture not only protects and renews soil fertility; but minimizes adverse impacts on natural biological cycles and controls as well as minimizing impacts on health, safety, wildlife, water quality and the environment.

Low Input Viticulture and Enology, Inc. program (LIVE, Inc.) is a program providing vineyards and wineries official recognition for sustainable agricultural practices that are modeled after international standards such as the practice of Botanical diversity in the cover crop and management practices that favor beneficial insects. Lachini is seeking certification of L.I.V.E. status.

Vineyard Management techniques include:

- Natural, organic, elemental-spray solutions to combat vine diseases like mildew and botrytis. (primarily sulfur)
- Natural and indigenous predatory insects and bacterium to control noxious pests.
- Compost and verma compost teas instead of industrial fertilizers to feed soils and young plants.
- Foliar sprays of kelp, fish emulsions, and pulverized plant and mineral elements to help maintain the health of the plants during the dry summer months.

Lachini "S" Pinot noir 02 \$30

The '02 Lachini Vineyards Willamette Valley Estate 'S' Pinot Noir consists of 100%Pommard clones from the Estates East Block. 'S' - for la Sorella, is therefore the Sister wine in Italian, as made by Peter Rosback of Sineann.



The wine is not for the faint at heart as it is a deep saturated ruby bomb with dark fruits, spice and cola flavors. More bold than the Lachini Estate, it is rich and extracted, with well-focused layers of currants and wild blackberries. Finishes lively, spicy and firm.

Peter Rosback's style is big, bold, saturated, deeply flavored, and this wine shows his trademarks. Avalon is sending this wine from Lachini to our members as it is ready to drink, while the Lachini Estate 02, made by Isabelle Dutartre, is a wine to cellar and will drink beautifully after a year or two of cellaring, to allow integration of flavors. Lachini is a new winery, one that Avalon members will want to keep an eye on. The quality of the first wine to come from this new Estate shows that it could start producing some truly memorable wines.

Shea Wine Cellars Block 25 Pinot noir 02 \$55

From the winery: " This is our first vintage to designate Block 25. It lies just next to the Beaux Freres block and the former Sine Qua Non block. Like those blocks it was planted to Waidenswill Pinot noir in 1990. We used to sell this fruit but now that we are using it ourselves, we realize it makes an outstanding wine on its own."



Very, very dark color. The almost black color of the center of the wine fades to a deep purple garnet at the rim. This is the most masculine of the 2002 Shea Wine Cellars Pinot noirs and that is immediately apparent in aromas of smoke, sassafras, spice, cassis, game, huckleberries and black raspberries that erupt from the glass. These flavors echo in the mouth from the attack to the extremely long finish. Thick and structured on the palate the 2002 Block 25 has the balance, integrity, and harmony to age gracefully for the next ten to twenty years.

A very small amount of this wine was made in 2002, and although not as well known across the country as the Block 23 or Homer, this wine is a really outstanding 2002 Pinot noir. Because so few cases were made, and the excellence of the wine, Avalon chose to send it to our Club Members. In a year of outstanding Pinot noirs, this Block 25 is a rare gem. Enjoy!

