

Reserve Pinot Noir Club™
Iris Hill, Daedalus, and
Patricia Green Cellars Balcombe 03

NW Big Reds Club™
Focus on Owen Roe
Yakima Red, Cabernet Franc

**December
2004**

This month we feature one established, old favorite Pinot noir, Patty Green's Balcombe 03, and two Pinots from up-and-coming wineries with exciting releases of outstanding wines.

Balcombe Vineyard

Balcombe Vineyard is only 7.25 acres, but its importance to PGC, and to Oregon pinot noir lovers, is greater than its size would suggest. From this vineyard, divided into five sections, come some of the best Pinots made by Patty. The Balcombe Vineyard was named by owner Matt Cooke for his grandfather, who plied the Pacific between Japan, SF and Seattle as a trader in the 19th century. Matt was a pilot, based in Japan and Hawaii, before settling in Oregon and starting the vineyard. He was one of the first vineyard owners in his Dayton area to plant wine grapes onto phylloxera resistant rootstock.

Balcombe is adjacent to the White Rose Vineyard, and Patricia Green (at left, with a bottle of Balcombe PN) was managing that vineyard in the mid 90's. Matt literally talked over the fence to her vineyard manager about Patty taking over the Balcombe Vineyard. In 1996, she bought Balcombe fruit, and in 1997, she took over the vineyard management and began purchasing all the vineyard's grapes. Previous to Patty's management, the vineyard was farmed by Willamette Valley Vineyards, and the grapes went into their Willamette Valley Pinot noir.

About the Vineyard

The Balcombe Vineyard is planted entirely to the Pommard Clone of Pinot noir. The Pommard clone of pinot noir is sourced from the Pommard district of Burgundy. It is historically one of the two dominant clones of pinot in Oregon, along with Wadenswil. Pommard ripens somewhat earlier than other clones, so it was selected for this cooler site. The berries are smaller than those of the Wadenswil and somewhat looser, but there are more clusters per vine. Yields are similar to the Wadenswil. The Pommard has traditionally contributed aromatic blackberry flavors to the pinots of Oregon.

Patty took several initial steps in her management of the Balcombe Vineyard. First, she divided it into five parts (shown at right). She says she does this with every vineyard she starts working with, to make the vineyard easier to organize, and to permit different viticultural practices to be performed more easily in selected "Blocks".

The vineyard had been cropped at 3-4 tons per acre, a lot of fruit for a young vineyard to produce, and in the first year that Patty managed the vineyard, she cropped way back to give the vineyard a rest. She raised the trellis to provide more canopy and began studying the characteristics of the site.

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If there is such a thing as the luck of the Irish, winemaker David O'Reilly has found a pot of gold underneath his Willamette Valley, Oregon rainbow.



O'Reilly is a dapper man-meticulous in appearance and in his work. When he smiles, there is mischief in his eyes and smile crinkles-a sign that smiling is a frequent behavior. Everything O'Reilly touches has to be the best. It is almost an obsession with him. From huge, gorgeous wines to hand-numbered bottles and objects of art gracing his labels, O'Reilly spends the money for a total package.

"Every thing we do is meticulous," said O'Reilly, 37, one of 12 children born in Belfast, Ireland. "What we do is totally uncompromised. It is a lifestyle that includes hard work, but the product is thoroughly rewarding."

Everything O'Reilly does is also thoroughly Irish. The wineries associated with O'Reilly-Sineann (pronounced Shen-ay-yan), Owen Roe, and O'Reilly's -all have ties to his former homeland. Sineann is Gaelic for Shannon River, considered the lifeblood of Ireland. The name stems from a mythical princess of the Leprechauns, who drowned in the river. Owen Roe was named for Owen Roe O'Neil, a great Irish patriot. And, of course, O'Reilly's, which features a drawing of a huge Irish wolfhound on the label.

" I like to tell people that I got involved in the business to follow an Irishman's dreams," said O'Reilly with a wink and an Irish brogue that comes and goes. "Imagine making a living by drinking!"

He jokes of course, because O'Reilly is dead serious about wine making. Although he enjoys the high ratings bestowed on his wines, O'Reilly says he is more satisfied with great taste. The combination of his Irish heritage and obsession about being the best says a lot about the affable winemaker. His luck and his taste for the good life wasn't always granted.

As a young child in Belfast, the O'Reilly family-all 14-was of modest means. Life was harsh, and often violent as the family witnessed a depressing catalogue of death and injury due to sectarian violence.

O'Reilly said two of his uncles were murdered, a sister suffered a traumatic injury, and one never knew when and where a homemade bomb would explode. His family scraped up enough money to move to British Columbia, Canada just before his teen years, and O'Reilly never looked back.

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**Reserve
Pinot Noir Club™**

Patricia Green Cellars
Balcombe 03 \$40

Iris Hill
Pinot noir 02 \$20

Daedalus
"Labyrinth 02 \$40

**Northwest
Big Reds Club™**

Owen Roe
Yakima Red 03 \$46

Owe Roe
Cabernet Franc 03 \$38

**New
Discoveries
Club™**

Novelty Hill
Cabernet 01 \$20

Goose Ridge
Cabernet 01 \$30

Dessert Wine Club™

Kestrel
37.5 Brix Ice Wine \$37

Harris Bridge
Pinot gris Dessert Wine
Will Valley 02 \$21

Big Reds Club continued from page 1**On to Oregon**

Instead, O'Reilly looked to the future, majoring in philosophy at Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, CA, where he met his future wife, Angelica. It was there that he discovered a love of land and soil. He worked at a small winery in Southern California performing all the tasks necessary to get the wine out the door.

"If you want to study truth and reality, it's grounded in nature," O'Reilly said. "The wine business is drawn intrinsically to nature and soil. You don't get into this business to make a fortune-I was drawn to it."

For more than six years, O'Reilly worked for Elk Cove performing marketing tasks. However, he was leaning more and more about winemaking. The urge to make his own wine was singing inside his head. It was at this time that he met Peter Rosback, an amateur winemaker who helped the winery during crush.

Rosback was also bitten by the urge to produce wine. With Irish heritage and love of good wine in common, they struck a partnership and created Sineann.

"David has a great palate and is one of the best marketing people in the state," Rosback said. "We're a good team. Each of us brings talents to the table to produce the best wine we can. Of course, it starts with great fruit, and that also has to be the best we can get."

In addition to Sineann, Rosback also makes wines for Medici, where the owners allow Sineann to be produced. He also consults with O'Reilly on Owen Roe and O'Reilly's.

"Peter brings an irrepressible passion to everything he does," O'Reilly said. "I think that's why we are such good partners."

O'Reilly and Rosback left Elk Cove in 1998 to produce wines in relatively small quantities. While Sineann is produced at Medici, O'Reilly has a new winery to produce Owen Roe and O'Reilly's. He spends a great deal of time on the road, from spot to spot, overseeing vineyards. He and Rosback purchase grapes from the Willamette Valley to Hood River to Walla Walla and Columbia valleys in Washington state.

The good news comes in the form of a converted barn, his own facility for Owen Roe and O'Reilly's. Sineann will continue production at Medici for the time being.

"I will be happy to have one location to produce my wines," he added.

Below, David in the winery, early 2004.

**Owen Roe Yakima Red 03 \$46**

Owen Roe Yakima Red is a blend of 45% Dubrul Vineyard Merlot, 34% Rosa Mystical Block Cabernet Sauvignon, and 21% Rosa Mystical Block Cabernet Franc. According to winemaker David O'Reilly, the 2003 is a rich, highly structured wine with great complexity, resulting from the severe crop thinning that heat and drought produces in the vineyards. As usual, very very limited amounts were made.



Peter Rosback, David O'Reilly, and Jerry Owen

Owen Roe Cabernet Franc 03 \$38

Excellent varietal character, Cab Franc at its best, from the very special Rosa Mystical Block Vineyard in West Yakima. The grapes are from older vines, and the vineyard receives stress from both soil type, heat, and dry farming methods that have led to intense, savoury flavors. Highly recommended, and quite limited.



New Discoveries Club

Cabernet Sauvignon from Washington

This month we feature two Cabernets from Washington with unusually good quality for the price. Both are made by fine Washington winemakers best known for their much more expensive signature labels.

**Novelty Hill
Cabernet Sauvignon 01 \$20**

Wine Advocate 89 points: "A winner, the 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon, bursts from the glass with spicy blackberries. Medium-bodied, elegant, highly flavorful, and seamless, it exhibits boisterous flavors of spiced cassis and blackberries whose effects linger in its long, fruit-filled finish. Drink it over the next 5-6 years."

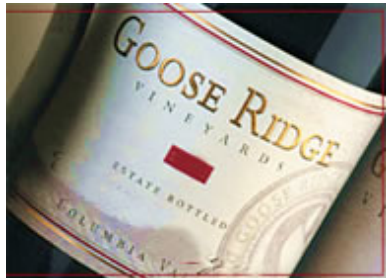
Wine Spectator 90 points: "Crisp and bright, with surprising density to the pure blackberry and currant flavors, developing a halo of mocha and spice from oak on the long, lively finish. Best from 2005 through 2010. 1,030 cases made."(HS)

Winemaker **Mike Januik** sourced grapes from some of the best vineyards in the state to produce this complex, multi-layered wine. Ripe black fruit and vanilla aromas complement the dense currant and deep black cherry flavors.

Goose Ridge Cabernet Sauvignon 01 \$28

Made by **Charlie Hoppes** of Fidelitas.

Rich and complex, this deep garnet color wine expresses layers of luscious black cherry flavors and aromas accented with notes of cedar, cassis and spice. A well-balanced integration of fruit and oak linger on the finish.



Goose Ridge Estate Vineyard is planted on a gentle, south-facing slope adjacent to Red Mountain, one of the warmer areas of the Columbia Valley. Throughout the growing season, winemaker Charlie Hoppes visited the vineyard frequently and, working alongside our viticulturist, selected five low-yield blocks for preferential water and canopy management producing fully ripened fruit for gentle hand harvesting.



NW Dessert Wine Club

**Kestrel
37.5 Brix Dessert Wine 375 ml \$37**

From the winery: "The color is that of a dark rose or garnet possessing light color. The presentation is profound and penetrating. Flavors and aromas are honey, raspberries, strawberries, cranberries and a fabulous streak of ripe mango. At times there also appears to be some nice ripe papaya fruit as well. The rich life-giving acids and sugars are in great balance. The structure is full and very satisfying. I estimate this wine possesses a solid 15 to 25 years of cellar potential. No need to trouble yourself with preparing a dessert. This wine is dessert in a glass!"

The fruit was hand picked and sorted. I estimate approximately 45 - 50% of the berries were raisined as a result of natural dehydration and the Botrytis cinerea mold. As this was a very late harvest, the maturity of the fruit was reflected in the 37.5 Brix, 3.8 grams of acidity per liter and pH of 3.80. The fruit was gently pressed, yielding 130 gallons of syrupy juice per ton. The juice was settled two weeks prior to racking to a stainless steel fermentation tank. Acid was added (seven grams per liter) to boost the wine's acidity and firm-up the palate. The Wadenswil 27 yeast strain (Swiss in origin) was used to conduct the primary fermentation. The yeast fermentation lasted 42 days, about three times the normal length! This wine was sterile filtered at bottling to ensure no fermentation takes place in the bottle."

**Harris Bridge Pinot gris Willamette Dessert Wine 02 \$21**

Intense aroma with essences of honey and fruit. The mouthfeel is crisp with flavors of caramel and apple. It finishes smooth and strong. Best enjoyed with a dessert such as tira misu or pumpkin cheesecake. Enjoy with fresh pears, apples, and cheese or with a rich dessert.

Harris Bridge Vineyards and Winery is the only Oregon winery exclusively devoted to Dessert Wines. Nathan and Amanda make three ice wine styled dessert wines from estate and purchased grapes. This young couple has received very positive response from the Corvallis community, and their fame is spreading across the Northwest. Avalon is so pleased to offer these delicious dessert wines.

Reserve Pinot noir Club continued....

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Soil and Sun

The soil of Balcombe Vineyard is volcanic Jory soil, bright red in color, typical of the Dundee Hills Appellation, which Balcombe lies just west and south of. Dundee Hills soils are reddish, silt, clay, loam soils derived from Columbia River basalt flows and provide moderately deep and good water-holding soils. Patty estimates that the soil in Balcombe is over 3 feet deep.

Cultivation and cover cropping was started by Patty in 97, with the goal to increase the humic matter in the soil. Organic compost is currently added each year.

Sun exposure was managed by different leaf pulling regimes for different parts of the vineyard. The vineyard is at 600-650 ft elevation, and air movement and exposure are critical factors for grape ripening. At 600 feet, the vineyard cools off quickly at night. The leaf canopy is altered to allow for sun exposure and to allow the ground to receive heat from the sun to warm it up and encourage growth.

Patricia Green Cellars Balcombe Pinot noir 03 \$40

From the winery: "Balcombe Vineyard is simply one of the best vineyards we work with and every year it produces wines of terrific quality that are absolutely true to the Dundee Hills. For those of you who don't know this site is located toward the top of the Dundee Hills on Breyman Orchard Rd. It was planted in 1990 to Pommard and we have worked with the fruit every year since 1997 so we have become pretty accustomed to how the grapes grow, ripen and ferment into wine. All very important pieces of making high quality Pinot Noir."

Iris Hill Pinot noir 02 \$20

Every once in a while, a small winery makes an immediate splash. Such is Iris Hill. The vineyard, called Chalice Vineyard, is the source for all the grapes that make the wines. The property, about 870 acres, is south of Eugene, Oregon. About 100 acres of the property are well suited to growing grapes, with 44 now producing.

All three of Iris Hill's first releases have attracted our attention, and won a good number of awards and high scores. The 2002 Pinot noir won 90 points from Wine Enthusiast and is a real "Best Buy", in our opinion.

For a first release at a reasonable price, this wine has pleasing aromas of black cherry, vanilla, and the spices associated with Jory soil— clove, cinnamon, and nutmeg. The flavors are black berry and stone fruit, and the wine is unusually well balanced. Tannins are fine and well integrated, and acidity is very well set for pleasant drinking with food. Particularly good with duck breast.



Daedalus Pinot noir "Labyrinth" 02

Aron Hess was winemaker at Rex Hill after Lynn Penner-Ash left, and he's now gone part-time, with more attention paid to his Daedalus Cellars Winery. His first, 2001 vintage wines were a bit closed, although they are coming around with aging. His 2002 wines are both accessible and worthy of cellaring. This wine, his second vintage and a special cuvee of his best barrels, shows tremendous promise and delicious flavors.



The Labyrinth 02 is very collectable. It is classic Burgundian style at its best, with nose of black berry and stone fruit, flavors of cinnamon, anise, red cherry, black berries, black cherries, licorice, minerals desert herbs, they just keep coming. Very sophisticated and cellar worthy.

Aron is one of the most promising of the "next generation" of Oregon winemakers. In 1996, Aron followed his nose to Europe to tour the wine regions. One Sunday when the wineries were closed, he followed a tip from a guide book and found himself in a tiny ferme auberge in the Dordogne where he met his wife and business partner, Pam Walden. Several months later they arrived in Oregon with a dream to make the best Pinot Noir this side of the Atlantic.

Aron worked first at Flynn Vineyards and occasionally at Evesham Wood Winery before joining Rex Hill Vineyards in 1998, first as the Enologist, later as the Assistant Winemaker working with Lynn Penner-Ash, and for the last two years as the Winemaker. Aron's tenure at Rex Hill has included some of the most innovative and cutting-edge experiments in the region, while focusing on very traditional methods of vinification. His passion for the terroir can be appreciated in the elegant and nuanced wines that he produces both at Rex Hill Vineyards and with his own project, Daedalus Cellars.

In 1999 Aron and Pam purchased 17+ acres on a south-southeast slope of the Dundee Hills, the future site of the estate vineyard. Daedalus Cellars began a year later with the production of just four barrels of Phelps Creek Vineyard Pinot Noir. The winery now produces around 700 cases annually of small-lot, hand-crafted Pinot Noir, Pinot Gris and Syrah.

