

## Reserve Pinot Noir Club™ Focus on Patricia Green Cellars

Released in late November, Patricia Green Cellars' Pinot noirs are an annual reason for celebration. This year, the 2002's were marked by a frenzy of visitors to the winery over Thanksgiving, where they found, alas, that some of the most prized single vineyard Pinots were already sold out. But Avalon's customers, and the Reserve Pinot noir Club members in particular, have access to most of the sold out wines, and we feature three of them in this month's Club Selections.



### Why Patty's Wines are so Good

Over the last year, I've visited with Patty and Jim most weeks, checking on the progress of the vintage and talking about how they do what they do. Patty and Jim's passion for the wine is obvious, their professional attitude and attention to detail are clear in the quality of the wines. What I have discovered as I continue to visit them as often as possible, is a deep affinity for the vineyard, the climate, the soil, the vines themselves. Perhaps it's her past career as a tree planter, but Patty seems to have an almost gut level connection to the land, and to the state of her vineyards. And her crew, who have been with her for many years, share that connection. They are a group of gardeners with very green thumbs, or whatever the viticultural equivalent would be called.



The winemakers whose production is most consistently excellent all seem to be tied to the land—visiting the vineyards constantly, consulting with the workers and vineyard managers, or managing the vineyards themselves, like Patty and Jim do. Just as many people

examine their roses, their tomatoes, their Dahlias daily as they strive for the most beautiful bloom or fruit, the best winemakers are meticulous in their attention to their grapes.

Patty and Jim also do some things in the making of their wine that set them apart. They ferment using only native yeast, that is, they do not add commercial yeast to the grapes to get them to start fermenting, or to ferment with a specific kind of process that commercial yeast allows. Rather, they use the yeast that is present from the natural terroir of the vineyard, and this is a tricky high wire act to pull off.

I used to wonder why Patty had divided the winery into so many rooms, each capable of being closed off from each other, until this year, when I visited an exhausted and juice-

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## NW Big Reds Club™ Seven Hills and K Vintners

Casey McClellan (at right) and Charles Smith— an interesting pair, one a pioneer in the Walla Walla wine community, restoring the old Whitehouse Crawford Planing Mill downtown into a beautiful winery; and the other a young iconoclast, new to Walla Walla, who with his friend Christophe Baron (Cayuse), is making waves in this small, tight knit community.



Two more contrasting characters would be hard to find, yet both are doing what Walla Walla is fast becoming world famous for— the making of huge, complex, fascinating, world class wines.

### Seven Hills and Pentad

Two years ago, Casey McClellan, owner and winemaker at Seven Hills Winery in Walla Walla, began work on a new wine. This was to be the best of his already stellar lineup— a special blend of the best barrels, with a special name and label. After lots of work, about 100 cases of Pentad were released in September of 2003.

The wine is something of a culmination of a series of huge changes that Seven Hills has taken on over the last decade. Seven Hills used to be based on the other side of the Columbia River, over in Oregon.

They had a small and very simple tasting room. They used to own the pioneering Seven Hills Vineyard, planted in 1980, and sold to Norm McKibben in 1995 during a period of reorganization. And they used to have a much lower profile in the wine world, quietly making very nice wines, but not achieving the ratings and awards that are now routinely received.

Perhaps the most visible change for Seven Hills has been their move to downtown McMinnville, to the old Whitehouse Crawford Mill building. It has been beautifully restored and now contains the Seven Hills Winery and Walla Walla's best restaurant, also called Whitehouse Crawford. The tasting room is open full-time and attracts a steady stream of visitors, and the space contains a rotating exhibit of local art.

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December 2003  
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**Reserve Pinot Noir Club™**  
Focus on Patricia Green Cellars  
Goldschmidt 02 \$45  
Balcombe 1B 02 \$39  
"Reserve" 02 \$29

**Northwest Big Reds Club™**  
Focus on Walla Walla  
K Vintners  
Morrison Syrah 02 \$45  
Seven Hills  
Pentad 01 \$55

**New Discoveries Club™**  
Domaine Meriwether  
Discovery \$17  
K Vintners  
Magnificent Wine Co.  
Merlot 02 \$21

**Dessert Wine Club™**  
**Combined Nov and Dec Club was shipped in November**

## Big Reds Club page 2

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The mill created beautiful finished wooden architectural objects like stairwells and turned beams and hand chiseled pediments. Some examples of the work, and some of the tools used, are on display. The space has been tastefully and beautifully restored and remodeled into the winery. It is a delight to visit.

The confusion that followed the sale of the Seven Hills Vineyard has almost resolved, ten years later, but Casey still explains the difference between the winery and the vineyard to visitors. Casey still makes wine from grapes purchased from the oldest blocks of Seven Hills Vineyard, but also purchases grapes from other vineyards. His wines have received increasingly higher ratings from major publications as the changes allowed with the new winery have produced richer, more complex wines, culminating in the Pentad release.

Read more:

<http://www.northwest-wine.com/sevenhillswinery.html>

## K Vintners— Winemaking to the Beat of an Impassioned Drummer

Charles Smith, in contrast to Casey McClellan, is a newcomer to Walla Walla. He arrived after a stint in Scandinavia, and hails originally from Northern California. He and his friend Christophe Baron (owner and winemaker at Cayuse) share a passion that shines in his eyes and empowers his energetic quest for the best possible Syrahs. A young man with a wild shock of hair and a vibrant, iconoclastic

personality, Charles and Christophe have shaken up the Walla Walla wine community with their biodynamic vineyard management methods. Meticulous vineyard management, featuring rocky, dry soils and careful attention to the European pioneered biodynamic viticultural methods have produced wines that have topped the charts. Check out the rocks in the "En Cerise" vineyard photo at right!



Charles Smith is both owner and winemaker at K Vintners and previously lived in Scandinavia. He has been involved with wine professionally and personally his whole life. Currently K Vintners is producing wine from 3 different viticultural zones: Red Mountain, Columbia Valley and the Walla Walla Valley. Each of these areas are proving to be unique and impressive for the viticulture of Syrah.

In April '02 K Vintners planted two separate blocks of vineyards to Syrah adjacent to the winery in the rocky dry creek beds that run through K Vintners property. The winery produces small lots of single vineyard Syrah, with production level is at 2000 cases per year, which is divided between five wines.

The "K" Syrahs all show a great deal of terroir in their flavors. Most of the winery's production is very small lot single vineyard Syrah, with a second label, "The Magnificent Wine Company" producing some blends and a very French styled Merlot.

Read our website for more info:

<http://www.avalonwine.com/K-Vintners.php>

## The Wines

### Seven Hills Winery Pentad 01 \$55

Seven Hills' very limited Bordeaux style blend is Casey McClellan's finest wine. Less than 100 cases were made, of a blend of the very best grapes from his best vineyards.

From the winery: "Pentad, our proprietary, blended, vintage red wine, establishes a new level in our expression of Walla Walla Valley winemaking. Three years in the making, this wine is the culmination of our many years of craftsmanship. Composed from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot, it offers a deep complexity by nose and mouth, supported by a structure of refined elegance and depth. Extreme care has been taken in its production, and our aim has been to provide the ultimate in enjoyment and collect ability.

Pentad means "group of five", and symbolizes the balance, wholeness, and evolving sensory qualities of the blend. The name also reflects its organic origins in the grapevine, as the pentad resonates throughout natural forms."



### K Vintners Morrison Lane Syrah \$48

Wine Spectator rating 91 points 12/03

Wine Spectator says: Charles Smith takes a different approach from his Washington colleagues with Syrah, striving for a more European balance, and he gets it with this round, ripe and decidedly gamy red. It's an impressive mix of plum, berry and roasted meat flavors, hinting at pepper and exotic spices as it all lingers on the fine-grained finish. Give it time to develop. Best after 2005.—H.S.

The winemaker says: "This is my personal favorite of the vintage! Aromas of a summers' fresh cut field. Violets, lavender & wild dry grass. The palate is smooth, long and compelling."



## New Discoveries Club

### Domaine Meriwether “Discovery” Sparkling wine \$18

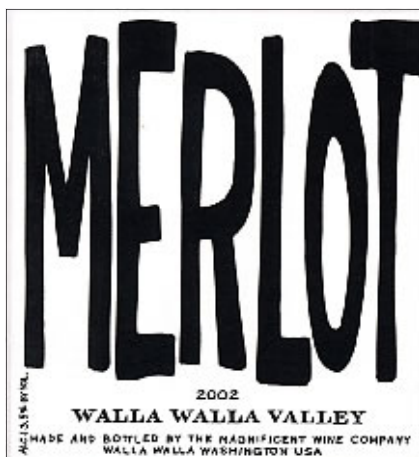
Domaine Meriwether is an Oregon winery best known for their delicious sparkling wines. The wines are named after aspects of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, that famous early exploration of the Pacific Northwest sponsored by then President Thomas Jefferson in 1803. Domaine Meriwether's French winemaker, Jean-Louis Denois, has created five sparkling wines that are quite delicious and very reasonably priced, and the historical themes add interest and make great gifts, particularly to history buffs. The Domaine Meriwether Discovery Cuvee was served recently at the White House.



### K Vintners “Magnificent Wine Company” Merlot 02 \$21

We'll let you read about Charles Smith and his winery in our Big Reds feature this month, and just add that the Magnificent Wine Company is his “second label” for his blended wines.

This Merlot was made from fruit sourced from the Cayuse “En Ceres” Vineyard, and is an old world style Merlot, full of earthy, meaty flavors. About as far from a typical California Merlot as you can get and still use the same varietal to make the wine! A remarkable value, the wine shows the complexity and range of scents and flavors that Charles strives to produce in those rocky, dry fields under the blazing sun.



## Avalon Recommends Domaine Meriwether Sparkling Wines

We don't usually cover wines other than the Club selections in this newsletter, but I am so impressed with these sparkling wines, I wanted to let you know about them. The flavors are wonderful and the packaging is beautiful. They celebrate the pioneering efforts of Thomas Jefferson, Meriwether Lewis, and Thomas Clark to explore the Pacific Northwest in 1803-1805.

Fort Clatsop  
CUVEE BLANC de BLANCS  
\$21.00

Fort Clatsop was the winter camp on the coast of Oregon that Lewis and Clark rested in after arriving at the Pacific. This 100% Chardonnay wine is a delight. Domaine Meriwether's French winemaker from Champagne, Jean-Louis Denois made this sparkling wine in limited quantities in 1998. It

is just being released in late 2003. Only 200 cases were made. The color is yellow straw... abundant foam that dissipates into a persisting crown. Impressive mousse with continuous stream of small fine bubbles. Aromas of tropical fruits with hints of butterscotch and apricot. Palatal impression is lively, fresh, round, and creamy. Flavor profile has hints of quince, spice and passion fruit.



1998 THOMAS JEFFERSON  
CUVEE PRESTIGE \$24.00

This is Domaine Meriwether's top of the line cuvee, made from a selection of the best of Domaine Meriwether's wines. Thomas Jefferson is commemorated on the bottle's neck- it was Jefferson who initiated the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The winery evaluated the sixteen different 1998 vintage base wines, single lots of Pinot Noir (Upright clone) and Chardonnay (UCD 108 and Draper clones) from Rebecca's Vineyard in Yoncalla, OR stood out because of their superior balance and structure. From these two selections, talented French winemaker from Champagne, Jean-Louis Denois, made a limited quantity (400 cases) of Prestige Cuvee. Slow controlled oxidation during barrel fermentation adds complexity to this remarkable first effort to demonstrate that Oregon can produce world-class Pinot Noir-based sparkling wines.



1998 OLIVIA'S CUVEE BRUT ROSE \$30

Domaine Meriwether's French winemaker from Champagne, Jean-Louis Denois, made this remarkable Rose sparkling wine in limited quantities during Domaine Meriwether's first year of Methode Champenoise wine production in Oregon in 1998. It was just released in December 2003.

As done in many houses in Champagne (such as Gosset, de Cazenove, and Charbaut), this colored wine is made from white Chardonnay grapes purchased from four different growers. The Rose color was achieved by the addition of a small amount of the Meriwether 1998 Dion Vineyard Pinot Noir table wine to the blended Cuvee base wines prior to bottling and secondary fermentation.

This wine is my favorite and is simply exquisite. Such an attractive wine, dry, with intriguing hints of fresh strawberry and toffee, clean finish, intriguing hints of violets on the finish. Yumm.

**Reserve Pinot noir Club**

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covered Jim during the 2003 harvest. He had been up for several days babysitting vats of fermenting grapes, groups of which were being carefully kept at different temperatures. Some of the vats were out in the cool main room, some in a side room with some warmth, some in another room that felt quite hot. Each was being monitored every few minutes and moved towards or away from warmth, carefully controlled with a combination of experience, testing, and gut feel. What a lot of work!

Wineries with more expensive equipment do this work with temperature controlled tanks (Gary Andrus at Gypsy Dancer has designed double hulled tanks that can be cooled or heated by controlling the temperature of the space between the two layers of tank). But Patty and Jim produce wine the basic way, and what a lot of labor it is!

Patty also builds texture and complexity in her wines by adding back lees into some of the best barrels. Huh? What?

Lees are the seeds and skin and solids that are left in the juice after fermentation. The solid stuff that gets left behind when the wine is bottled. It can be an unpleasant, sour mess, but with some vineyards' grapes, for some reason, the lees are quite pleasant, having a scent and flavor of blackberry yogurt. It is these lees, usually from the Balcombe 1B block of her vineyards, that Patty carefully saves and drops into selected barrels of the best wine. If you have tasted and smelled these lees, their presence is obvious in the Balcombe 1B and Notorious Pinots in particular. There is a texture of shot silk on the palate, an extra dimension of rich, complex flavor, that I sense comes from this source, at least in part. Fascinating.

Patty is also known for the dark color she achieves in her Pinot noirs, even in a "light" year like 2000. My next project is to ask her to explain what she does. I know that several very respected winemakers have consulted her on her techniques.

The impressive results achieved for 18 vintages now by Patty are produced with remarkably basic equipment, but with a passion and energy that continually moves forward. The results are also achieved with a plethora of good cheer, positive attitude, and easy going management that has created a fanatically loyal group of volunteer "cellar rats" and a highly experienced team of vineyard workers. As she approaches her 20th vintage, with who knows what kind of special celebration planned (but you can bet it will be something special!) we at Avalon look forward to the continuing privilege of vicariously participating in the unfolding opera that is Patricia Green Cellars.

What do you think of PGC wines? We want to know. Email us and we'll post the comments on the website, and in this newsletter.

-Jean



Patricia Green Cellars, harvest 2003, sorting table going up into vats

**The Wines**

**Patricia Green Cellars  
Balcombe 1B 2002**

\$39



The wine has a silky texture and sensual viscosity in the mouth, with initial scents of toasted coffee bean lingering as the flavors of red cherry, raspberry, and cherry, cherry, cherry spread out in the mouth. A hint of burnt toast on the long warm finish adds a nice touch. Still quite closed in comparison to some of Patty's wines, this wine is one to cellar for at least 6 months to six years. Should be a long laster, with a well articulated tannic backbone.

**Patricia Green Cellars Goldschmidt 2002**

\$45

If you want a hedonistic in your face gushing fruit flavors boisterous kinda Pinot noir, the Patricia Green Cellars Pinot noir Goldschmidt Vineyard 02 is the wine for you. So forward it almost jumps out of the glass at you, this wine is a raucous delight. Big toasty cocoa bean nose is followed by huge red cherry and black cherry flavors, shot through with buttery hints of oak and plum.

New vineyard for Patty and Jim, it is owned by the former Governor of Oregon, Neil Goldschmidt and has already produced grapes used in top rated wines.

**Patricia Green Cellars "Reserve" 02**

\$29

The new Patricia Green Cellars "Reserve" 02 is made from selected barrels of their single vineyard wines. It has a vanilla/mocha nose, with flavors of spice, a big tannic backbone that calls for cellaring, and a long finish, with hints of vanilla and black cherry. There is a creaminess and a hint of blackberry yogurt that comes from the lees that Patty throws back in the barrel. They add a highly pleasant additional flavor. The finish just goes on and on, with raspberry, black cherry, red cherry, and toast flavors lingering.

A blend of Goldschmidt, Shea, Eason, Estate & Quail Hill. Intended to be a larger scale (in tannins) wine than their other offerings. Should be quite interesting. Like the Oregon in that it is a blend but using barrels from only their best vineyards-the Oregon has Bradley & Patton Valley in it-as well it will be a higher percentage of new wood than the Oregon (about 15% there) so will be fuller and richer.



Group at PGC's July 2003 IPNC Party