

Reserve Pinot Noir Club™

Two New and One Pioneer:

Francis Tannahill, Evesham Wood, Ce Soir

This month we offer three intriguing Pinot noirs with one common theme— acknowledgement of the supreme importance of the vineyard in the expressiveness and complexity of the final wine.

Francis Tannahill is a merger of winemakers from two of Oregon's most distinguished wineries— Cheryl Francis from Chehalem, and Sam Tannahill from Archery Summit.

Ask Sam and Cheryl Tannahill who makes the wine for their new Francis Tannahill label and they answer simultaneously—and with enthusiasm—"We do!" What other answer could there be when you combine two of Oregon's finest Pinot noir winemakers in both marriage and winemaking?



There's been a lot of excitement among Oregon wine aficionados about the debut of the Francis Tannahill range of wines—after all, Sam Tannahill and Cheryl Francis-Tannahill have Pinot noir winemaking credentials that are hard to beat.

Sam worked side-by-side with Gary Andrus to help make Archery Summit one of the best-known and most respected Pinot noir producers in America (taking over the sole winemaking job after Andrus left the winery, before Sam himself left to help start Francis Tannahill). Cheryl Francis shared winemaking duties with Harry Peterson-Nedry at Chehalem winery, producing a range of exceptional Pinot noirs for that prestigious label that have become some of the most sought after of all New World Pinots.

And now, as husband and wife and business partners, Sam and Cheryl are turning their formidable talents to the more personal effort of making their own wine their own way.

Pinots with "Power, not Size"

"We know that we have only a little bit of wine and a limited amount of time in our lives to make it" proclaims Sam, "so we want to make the best we can!" Having already helped produce some of Oregon's most famous "blockbuster" Pinots, Sam and Cheryl now want to make Pinot noir that is a bit more personal, and that reflects a different sensibility.

"We think the industry as a whole has gone too much to heavily concentrated and extracted wines," explains Sam. "We're looking again at how to make Pinot noirs that are concentrated, but without excess extraction." Sam calls this ideal of balanced extraction with high concentration "power without size." Or, to put it another way "We know how to make wines that shout, now we want to make wines that sing!"

But how are they going to achieve this delicate balance? "Concentration happens in the vineyard," says Sam, "and it is extended in the cellar." Carefully managing both processes is key to the success of Francis Tannahill wines.

Continued on page 4

NW Big Reds Club™

A Huge Red, a Sophisticated Red

Andrew Will, Owen Sullivan, Willow Crest

Sophisticated red wine at its most complex and nuanced, a little bargain blend with Pinot gris in the mix, and a blockbuster, bruiser of a Brick Sh*t House— this is an interesting month for the Big Reds Club!

Andrew Will Winery is recognized by Parker as one of only four "Outstanding" wineries in Washington State. Winemaker Chris Camarda has taken Washington red wine to a new level with his sophisticated red blends, carefully crafted from different varietals grown in the same vineyard, achieving a new level of liveliness and freshness within a "Big Red" framework.



Andrew Will is a small winery in the Seattle area producing limited quantities of red wine. Owners Chris and Annie Camarda named the winery after their son Will and their nephew Andrew (son of co-founder Tommy Martino) when beginning the operation in 1989. The winery is in a residential neighborhood on Vashon Island and is never open to the public.

Robert Parker says in his Guide that "Andrew Will's wines have virtually perfect tannins. They are present but buffered by the loads of dominating sweet fruit. Furthermore, what is amazing about Chris Camarda's wines is that they are concentrated yet grateful. Camarda's (wines) blend power with elegance, concentration with finesse, and supersweet fruit with definition. Chris Camarda is a brilliant winemaker."

In a recent conversation, Chris described his shift in winemaking, producing a few single vineyard blends, as opposed to his previous single vineyard wines that were made from only one grape varietal. He stated that he believes that the best expression of Washington red wine is through blends of different varietals. He has carefully nurtured his sections of several highly regarded vineyards— Champoux, Ciel du Cheval, Klipsun, Sheridan to produce several different red grapes (Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc). He then works magic in the winery, blending one Cuvée from each vineyard. His Champoux 01 is the result of his methods with grapes from the Champoux Vineyard.

Owen Sullivan— Blockbuster Reds Break out of the Pack

Winemaker Bill Owen has been in the restaurant, wholesale and retail wine business for over 25 years. He has traveled and studied extensively in the wine regions of France, Italy and Germany and developed his interest in winemaking while working with two of Washington's top winemakers. Partner Rob Sullivan is a retired Seattle-area banker with an entrepreneurial spirit and a wine-loving heart. Owen and Sullivan joined forces in 1997.



Continued on page 2

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Reserve Pinot Noir Club™

Francis Tannahill
"The Hermit" 02

Evesham Wood
"Cuvée J" 01

Ce Soir 01

Northwest Big Reds Club™

Owen Sullivan
BSH 01

Andrew Will
Sorella 01

New Discoveries Club™

Latitude 46 Syrah
"Power and Glory"
02

Willow Crest
"Rockin L" 01

Dessert Wine Club™

Harris Bridge
Dessert Wine
\$28.99

Big Reds Club continued

Continued from page 1

Owen and Sullivan say that they started their winery with one goal in mind; to capitalize on the availability of Washington's excellent wine grapes by securing fruit from the best vineyards to craft some of the Northwest's finest wines. They focus on select sites, combined with a winemaking ethic centered on simplicity (i.e. no filtering, no fining). Their policies seem to have given their wines a more generous mouth feel and a more complete flavor profile.

Owen Sullivan wines are aged exclusively in French oak barrels with approximately 35% new and the remainder in second, third and fourth year.



Bottling is done by gravity. Their style emphasizes the terroir and the specific quality of the fruit, with the oak in a supporting role. The results are opulent, voluptuous and concentrated wines that are immensely pleasing in their youth, yet possess the structure and balance to reward cellaring.

With small production and volunteer help to get the wines bottled and labeled each year, Owen Sullivan stayed obscure until recently. Although they had a loyal, almost cult-like following in the Seattle area, it was only recently, with the separate 93 point ratings of two of their wines in Wine Spectator within a few weeks, that they have come to national attention. Their R3 was described by Wine Spectator in December, 2003:

"Winemaker Bill Owen and partner Rob Sullivan, an ex-banker, truck grapes from Columbia Valley to their winery in a warehouse not far from the Seattle airport. They make small lots that just keep getting better with each vintage. This Merlot-based Bordeaux blend is smooth and refined, with blueberry and currant fruit at the core, layered with exotic spices and a touch of coffee as the flavors sail on and on over a firm finish. Drink now through 2010."

The 93 point rating of the BSH (Brick Sh*t House) by Wine Spectator this month led us to send the wine to Wine Club. It's a huge bruiser of a wine, from a winery that is obscure no more.

The Wines

Owen Sullivan BSH 01 \$43

This wine really is, as the winemaker says, built like a Brick Sh*t House (BSH).

Wine Spectator says: "From their jury-rigged winery in a nondescript business park near Seattle-Tacoma Airport, Bill Owen and Rob Sullivan are making some of Washington's plush and headiest reds. This Cabernet Sauvignon blend (with 25 percent Merlot and 5 percent Cabernet Franc) is typically ripe, supple and graceful, plump and generous with its mocha- and spice-scented plum and black cherry, bay leaf and licorice flavors that linger intensely on the plush finish. Tannins are beautifully integrated. Drink now through 2010. From Washington.—H.S."

We are sold out, but try the Owen Sullivan "Red" 2001 and the Owen Sullivan Cabernet Sauvignon 01 for more "big bruisers"/

The Wines, continued



Andrew Will "Sorella" 01 \$65.00

Chris strongly believes that Washington vineyards' best wines are made by blending the varietals grown at the site. He uses words like "lively", "panache", "vibrancy" to describe the additional positive qualities that he finds when he makes red wineblends, versus, for example, a straight Cabernet Sauvignon. "Sorella" is his finest example of this philosophy.

Here's what Chris has to say about the Sorella 2001: "The Sorella sums up the vintage, vibrant and laden with fruit as well as flavors and scent from flowers and earth. We like the body of this wine as well as its structure. Each year when we make it we are challenged to find the wine in the components presented to us by the vineyard and vinification of the preceding year. We hope we have brought forth something to applaud."

Robert Parker had this to say about the 2001 Sorella: "Camarda's top wine, named Sorella in honor of his deceased sister, is typically one of the finest offerings out of Washington state. The 2001 Sorella was produced entirely from fruit purchased from the Champoux Vineyard. A blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon (from 30-year-old vines, extremely old by Washington standards), 7% Petit Verdot, and the balance divided between Cabernet Franc and Merlot, this is an intense, juicy, deep wine. Blackberries, cassis, and dark cherries are intermingled with herbs in this oily-textured, refined, concentrated wine. Projected maturity: 2007-2017. Camarda offered me a glimpse of a few of his 2001s. The notes are abbreviated, as this wine will be covered in detail a year from now, prior to release. **91-94 points, Drink from 2007—2017.**"

Sorella is made from grapes sourced from the Champoux Vineyard. Champoux Vineyard is up Alderdale Road five miles from the Columbia River. The vineyard was first planted in 1972 and, therefore has vines which are reaching maturity. This older area of the vineyard is called Block 1. Chris Camarda uses the Cabernet Sauvignon from this block for Sorella.

The soil is sandy loamy (Warden-Schano-Esquatzel). Like most vineyards, which are able to produce exciting fruit, this vineyard is well drained. The area is differentiated from other parts of Washington by the wind from the Columbia River Gorge, which never seems to stop.

Paul Champoux, the leader of the partnership that owns the vineyard, monitors the growth each year. The balance of the plants is sought through the use of micro nutrition and keen viticulture practices. Paul is able, after decades of farming experience, to grow some of Washington's most prized fruit. Chris loves the vineyard and have made wine from it since his first year 1989. Andrew Will Winery are part of the minority ownership of this exalted property.



New Discoveries Club

Latitude 46 "Power and the Glory" Syrah 02

A new winery, Latitude 46 hit the ground running with a "Clifton Cuvee" that blasted out the door before we could get enough to send to the club. We caught up with them as they were releasing the "Power and Glory" Syrah 02 and had to have it for February.

This guy knows how to make Syrah. And it's an art, as is becoming evident with the tasting of numerous Washington and Oregon Syrahs recently arriving on the scene. Some are watery, some are monolithic but simplistic, and some are just wonderful. This Syrah falls in the latter category.

There seem to be two key elements to success with Syrah in the NW- first, for concentration of flavor, deprive the vines of water so the fruit concentrates, even to the point of letting the grapes turn into raisins on the vine. Second, for complexity, make a blend of Syrah from several vineyard sites, and include some other varietal(s) in the blend. The Latitude 46 Syrah demonstrates both factors.

This wine has nuanced fruit flavors, starting with a gushing fruity, juicy quality, but continuing to offer that "something extra" that makes the wine a winner. There is a subtle midpalate hint of jasmine that Don identifies as coming from the Milbrandt Vineyard fruit, and wafting notes of floral and fruit flavors that keep changing in the mouth. This wine shows such promise, we'll be closely monitoring Latitude 46's future offerings.

Yumm! Big juicy luscious wildly intense with lots of body - a total crowd pleaser. A blend of four vineyards, with 17% Grenache. A standout among Washington Syrahs. Yumm! Big juicy luscious wildly intense with lots of body - a total crowd pleaser. A blend of four vineyards, with 17% Grenache. A standout among Washington Syrahs.

Latitude 46°N

Willow Crest "Rockin L" Red

This is a LOT of wine for the price. Big blended red flavors, a blend of Cab Franc, Syrah, and Pinot gris. Delicious quaffer. All estate fruit.

This excellent value is 56% Cabernet Franc, 36% Syrah, and 8% Pinot gris. Why Pinot gris? Well, normally Viognier is added in small amounts to enhance complexity and the bouquet. Since the winery didn't have Viognier, but they grow a very highly regarded Pinot gris, they added the gris. And the wine benefits from it- the Pinot gris balanced the tannins and added hints of crisp apple and pear to the scent.

This winery drops fruit to maintain harvest levels of no more than 3 tons per acre. Growing grapes since 1985, the winery's Snites Gap vineyard is a major supplier to Stimson Lane (Chateau Ste Michelle, Columbia Crest, Snoqualmie). The wine is aged in 80% American, 20% French oak.

NW Dessert Wine Club

Harris Bridge Ice Wine "Premier" \$29

Harris Bridge is a new Oregon winery, located in Corvallis, and it is dedicated to making dessert wines. This intensely flavored wine has been a favorite at our store. It is not distributed outside the Corvallis area, so we thought you'd like a chance to try this unique "sticky".

The alcohol leads a heavy molasses aroma followed by hints of pear and apricot. This dessert wine has a crisp mouth feel with flavors of caramel and apple. It finishes smooth and strong. Best enjoyed with a dessert such as tira misu or pumpkin cheesecake.



Check out the Avalon Website for the new articles on the 2003 wine vintage, including barrel tasting notes on the Patricia Green Cellars and Birk House Pinot noir. There's also two articles on the devastating effect of the cold weather on Washington State vineyards, and major updates to the Best Deals, Highest Rated, and Avalon Recommends Lists.

Vintage 2003
"What the Grapes Gave us"
Barrel Tasting Report

Weather Worries
WA Winemakers

Wine Spectator
Smart Buy

Reserve Pinot noir Club continued.....

Evesham Wood— a Bit of Burgundy in the South Salem Hills

Because it is essential for Russ's philosophy of winemaking to maintain a high level of personal involvement and quality control both in vineyard and cellar, he never intends to go much beyond his current 3600 case annual production. Russ says, "Besides, it's good for our sanity too, as we're at a point in our lives where we'd like to simplify not complicate things (our *raison d'être* in life goes beyond viticulture & enology)".

To maintain a high level of quality, the Raneys rely on two basic principles: obtaining optimally ripe low-yield fruit from the best possible sites in their area, and using minimal intervention in the winemaking process. They feel that this is the surest way to create wines which express their unique heritage. For example, their Pinot Noirs and vineyard-designated Chardonnays are not filtered prior to bottling, so as to preserve texture and flavor complexity.

Evesham Wood's main sources of inspiration and advice have come from two of Burgundy's top small producers: the legendary Henri Jayer (Vosne-Romanée), and Michel Nielon (Chassagne-Montrachet). Russ says, "Even if, as "new world" vintners, we aren't ashamed to admit that we strive for certain subtle aspects of great Côte d' Or Pinot and Chardonnay, we appreciate the fact that there will always be identifiable Eola Hills' characteristics in our wines, distinguishing them from every other region of the world".

Of his winemaking philosophy, Russ says:

" We don't manipulate our winemaking methods to produce a 'sameness' in quality from year to year, or attempt to compete with the large producers by making our wines appeal to a larger audience. Like any quality-conscious winery, we will try by natural means to maximise quality and flavour intensity of our wines in the 'lesser' vintages, but only if it doesn't mean having to alter our basic wine style, and always giving preference to decisions made in the vineyard rather than the cellar."

Ce Soir— Intriguing, Exotic, Delightful

Peter Posert is an Oregon wine distributor and part time winemaker whose tiny Ce Soir label makes one wine, a Pinot noir, each year. His Pinot noir this year was made for him by Peter Rosback, (pictured at right) famed winemaker of Sineann and Owen Roe fame.



Out of the numerous new wines Avalon receives to try each month, this wine stands out from the rest. While Peter Rosback is known for his huge, hedonistic wines, this one shows some restraint, allowing an exotic range of earthy, herbal, floral, and red fruit flavors to emerge from a beautifully balanced framework of fine tannins.

The Wines

Evesham Wood "Cuvee J" 01

This is one of Jean's favorite Pinot noirs, Russ makes very little of this wine, his best, and its subtle complexity and evocative scent and flavors improve for 8-12 years with cellaring.



The wine is of medium color, with aromas evocative of a piney wood, with an undercurrent of raspberry and red currant. The wine has a viscosity and texture in the mouth that is unexpected, given the medium color, and the sweet fruit flavors are enhanced by layers of everchanging hints of the flavors of smoked meats, basalt, black fruit, minerals, and pine. While open and inviting now, this wine would benefit from 4-6 years of cellaring, and would continue to be interesting and pleasing for 10-12 years. An Avalon highly recommended wine.

Parker rating for 2000 was 90 points, this 2001 wine is better.

From the winery: "For this year's bottling we selected the best barrels among our Le Puits Sec and Anden lots, the final blend being 72% from the former and 28% from the latter. By doing this, we were able to capture the silkiness and subtlety of the Le Puits Sec barrels, and the structure and depth of fruit from the Anden, creating what we feel is both profound and harmonious. 171 cases produced. It could be paired well with the right meal even in the first year, but would benefit from another 4-5 years of bottle age.

Francis Tannahill "The Hermit" Pinot noir 02

The wine starts with a most distinctive scent of Burgundian barnyard, flowers, and a perfumed spicy hit. The flavors are succulent, sweet, a combination of complex red and black fruits and berries, and an earthy, woody quality. This wine is still quite tightly wound, with intriguing hints of flavors and scents that promise great things with cellaring. Well made, beautifully balanced, and a most promising first release.

From the winery: "The wine possesses a beautiful dark garnet burgundy color from the almost opaque center to the rim. Excellently focused aromas of violets and smoke immediately emerge from the glass. Complex spice, sweet raspberries, Bing cherries, blackberries, game, minerals (wet stones) and earth notes come out with aeration. Very ripe and perfumed, the aromatics lead to a rich and succulent palate. The opulence of the wine is given firmness and definition by the ripe tannic structure. Classic, broad and intense the wine finishes with an outstanding finish of depth and purity of flavor."

Vineyard – The 2002 Francis Tannahill The Hermit Pinot Noir is a blend from Shea Vineyard (70%) and Momtazi Vineyard (30%). Block 26 from Shea Vineyard was planted with the Wadenswil clone of Pinot Noir and has a southern exposure that sits at an elevation of 550 feet on the west hill the vineyard outside of Yamhill, Oregon on Willakenzie soils. The vineyard is owned by Dick and Deirdre Shea and managed by Javier Marin. The clones 115 and 777 from Momtazi Vineyard were planted in 1999 on a large biodynamically farmed vineyard in the Coast Range outside McMinnville, Oregon. The vineyard is owned by Moe Momtazi and managed by Jimi Brooks.

Ce Soir Pinot noir

A really interesting Pinot noir, starts with that wonderful Burgundian "barnyard" nose, with an undercurrent of tart fruit and dusty blackberry leaves. Flavors ripple between white pepper, white strawberry, raspberry, with a nice finish echoing the white pepper, nicely balanced, well integrated tannins, and a long, lovely finish.