

Reserve Pinot Noir Club™
Focus on Shea Wine Cellars

Back in January of 2003, Dick Shea, owner of Shea Vineyard and Shea Wine Cellars, and Sam Tannahill, his winemaker, were kind enough to show us their then in barrel 2002 Pinot noirs and we were very impressed. Sam, as winemaker at Archery Summit, had always made super rich, highly complex Pinot noirs, but this was the first time we'd tried his wines out of the Archery context. They were stunning back in January, and now that they have been released, we can say that they have only improved.



The grapes for these wines come from sections of the Shea Vineyard that were previously sold to other wineries. As Dick Shea has taken back some of his best vineyard sections, the wines from his own winery are rapidly ascending to the ranks of Oregon's best. And in Sam Tannahill, as with Patty Green last year, he has chosen one of the region's best winemakers.

Sam uses several techniques that bring out the nuances of Pinot noir, including fermenting the grapes in wooden barrels, a technique notoriously hard to control, temperature wise. His meticulous cleanliness and precise management of the wine pay off in simply succulent Pinots.

Shea Wine Cellars and Shea Vineyard

Dick Shea has grown grapes for more than ten years on a 200-acre estate in Yamhill County, supplying some of the best winemakers with fruit, including Ken Wright Cellars, Beaux Freres, Patricia Green Cellars, Westrey Wine Company, Panther Creek Cellars, Raptor Ridge and St. Innocent. About 140 acres produce grapes, although 50 acres are young vines.



"I sort of feel we have our own mini-viticultural area here," says Dick Shea as he walks among the summer vine growth in one of his blocks. And it is true that with elevations ranging from 400-ft. to a bit over 600-ft, and topography that offers numerous rolling southerly and easterly exposures, the vineyard does have its own microclimate-which seems to translate into a developing Shea terroir.

The first plantings at what was to become Shea Vineyard took place in 1989 with Pommard Pinot noir vines placed in the ground on their own roots. Since then Dick has planted additional acreage of different Pinot noir clones, along with some Chardonnay and Pinot gris. In 1995, however, the first traces of phylloxera were detected in the vineyard, and a long-term program of replanting began, to be finished in the next few years.

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NW Big Reds Club™
Basel Cellars & Andrew Rich

This month we focus on two winemakers. Trey Busch (at right) is an up-and-coming winemaker at Basel Cellars, a private resort in Walla Walla with a members owned winery. He has been featured in Wine Enthusiast as a "Winemaker to Watch" on the cover of their December 2002 issue.



Our second winemaker, Andrew Rich, will be familiar to our members. We have enjoyed his Cabernets, his wonderful desert wine, his Roussanne, his Cabernet Franc, and his Tabula Rasa Red in past club shipments. Andrew is one of Oregon's best winemakers, bringing his unique focus on Rhone varietals, NW style, to his winemaking.

Trey Busch, at 34, is one of Walla Walla's new generation of hot winemakers, making much talked about Cabernet, Syrah, and a Meritage "Merriment" that we are featuring this month. Basel Cellars owns the Pheasant Run Vineyard, adjacent to the famous Pepperbridge Vineyard, source of some of the fruit for Merriment. The rest comes from Lewis Vineyard, another Walla Walla vineyard known for its distinctive terroir. Trey was formerly assistant winemaker at Dunham cellars.

Basel Cellars is an exclusive private resort, whose members have access to the wines, eventually to the exclusion of the public. Avalon was able to obtain the 2001 Merriment Meritage for our Big Reds Club as the supply has not yet outstripped the member's demand. Basel Cellars's club membership is similar in concept to that of a country club where the members share an interest in golf or tennis — only the Basel Cellars members share an interest in wine. At each level of membership there are various privileges that include quantities of wine, the privilege to reserve the estate for personal use, invitations to several exclusive hosted events, and the opportunity to purchase wine.

The winemaking facility is housed in a 9600 sq. ft. subterranean structure that is modeled after the famous Chateau Mouten-Rothschild in the Pauillac appellation of Bordeaux. The facility is in full production for the 2003 harvest. The main resort is pictured below.



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 "Homer" 2002 \$70
 "Block 23" 2002 \$48

Northwest Big Reds Club™
 Basel Cellars
 Merriment \$75
 Andrew Rich
 Cabernet Sauvignon
 Klipsun \$39.99

New Discoveries Club™
 Bergstrom
 Pinot noir 02 \$20
 CSM Merlot Indian
 Wells 01 \$19

Dessert Wine Club™
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 Ice Wine \$22

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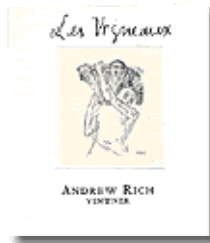
Andrew Rich, our second featured winemaker, has released a single vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, his Klipsun Cabernet Sauvignon 01. Andrew is quite modest when it comes to his wines, and when he told me that this was "the good stuff", I knew we'd have to send it to the Wine Club.



Andrew Rich Winery was founded when Andrew moved from Santa Cruz, California, to Portland, Oregon, in 1994—after a six-year stint at Bonny Doon Vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountains of California, it was with the idea of giving Rhône varieties a particularly Northwest spin. Pity the grapes just weren't there yet.

With the 1999 vintage, the Syrah finally came in, but in the meanwhile Rich turned his attention to Pinot Noir and Cabernet, the flagship grapes of Oregon and Washington. Mainstream, sure, but in a brave act of redemption he has taken up the cause of the noble and greatly underappreciated Chenin Blanc, and continues to make a case for Rosé. His Sauvignon Blanc has a following that buys up his entire supply a few months after release.

Andrew left a successful career as a magazine editor to enroll in wine school in the Burgundy region of France, where he developed an interest in the wines of the Rhone. The one other American student was Oregonian John Eliassen (now of La Bete wines). Andrew soon became friends with John and wife Kay. Their friendship would lead to his discovery of Oregon.



After studying in France and developing an interest in the wine of the Rhone, Andrew sought work that would allow him to develop his skills with Rhone varieties. He was attracted to Bonny Doon Vineyard in California when he discovered that Randall Grahm, Bonny Doon's owner and winemaker, was making wines from Rhone varieties. Andrew applied for and got a position as "cellar rat" and later was placed in charge of Bonny Doon's second wine cellar. He was in charge of making the

white wines, including the dessert wines, beginning with the '89 vintage. He remained at Bonny Doon for the 90, 91, 92, and part of the 93 vintages, moving to Oregon with his Vizla, Romeo in January 1994.

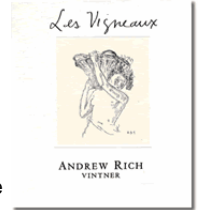
Andrew Rich produces wine in the state-of-the-art Carlton Winemakers Studio, the nation's first "green" cooperative winemaking facility. The studio, which is a partnership between Eric Hamacher, his wife, Luisa Ponzi of Ponzi Vineyards, and Ned and Kirsten Lumpkin of Lumpkin Construction in Seattle and Lazy River Vineyard in Yamhill, promises to be an archetype for Oregon's wine industry. Each winery operates independently, with separate cellars and staff, but all benefit economically from sharing state-of-the-art equipment in the gravity-driven building designed to use natural light, passive solar heat and recycled materials.

The Studio has registered with the USGBC (United States Green Building Council) for certification when completed, and is the first LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certified winery in the US, encompassing crush pad, fermentation room, laboratory, office, tasting room, case good storage area, bottling room, cellars etc.

The Wines

Andrew Rich Cabernet Sauvignon "Klipsun" 2001 \$40

This wine was aged for almost two years in French oak, and is restricted to the best barrels from the highly rated Klipsun vineyard. The nose has opulent red fruit, espresso bean, and elusive herbal notes, the flavors are of red and black fruits, distinct cedar, and a complex depth, dense and layered wine. Age 6-20 years.



Klipsun Vineyards is located on Red Mountain, a relatively new appellation in Benton County in the Tri-Cities area of Eastern Washington. Red Mountain has a reputation for producing grapes that make premium wines with big flavors and heavy structure. Klipsun's intensely flavored fruit is sold out every year. Wineries using Klipsun grapes include Andrew Will Cellars, DeLille Cellars, Seven Hills Winery, L'Ecole No. 41, Quilceda Creek, Woodward Canyon, Foris Vineyards, DeStefano and McCrea Cellars.



The Red Mountain Red Mountain AVA was established in 2001. Located in the southeastern flank of the Yakima Valley AVA, Red Mountain covers 4,040 acres (1,635 hectares), with over 600 acres of vines planted. The AVA receives 6 to 8 inches average annual precipitation and enjoys an average annual growing season of 180 days. The light-colored, high calcium carbonate content of the soils allows suitable drainage for varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Syrah, and Sangiovese. Seven wineries currently call Red Mountain home.

Klipsun has attracted attention for its concentrated reds, but why the vineyard packs such power into its fruit remains a mystery. Chris Camarda, who's been making his Andrew Will Klipsun Vineyard Merlot since 1995, doesn't really know. "I've gone over this, and I can't come up with good answers," he says. Is it the soil, the shallow sandy loam? The hot dry winds that sweep through the area? The extremes of hot and cold? (Red Mountain temperatures can shift 30° F. between day and night.) The lack of rain? Klipsun and Red Mountain's other vineyards are some of Washington's warmest, driest spots and generally get harvested earlier than Walla Walla or other Columbia Valley sites.

Basel Cellars "Meriment" Meritage 2001 \$75

Kevin says this is just about the best wine he's ever had from Walla Walla. Seeing as he went to school there and knows everyone and is a big Walla Walla wine aficionado, that is some high praise.



This gorgeous Bordeaux-style blend is deep red in color, and has a plush texture like crushed velvet. The nose is reminiscent of tobacco leaf and sweet cherry syrup. The flavors are dominated by plums, dark cherries, herbs, and spice. The tannins are smooth and supple. This wine is sure to age beautifully, revealing its complexity over the next 8-10 years.

New Discoveries Club

Bergstrom Pinot noir 02 \$20

Bergstrom wine comes from a new generation of Oregon winemakers. Josh Bergstrom is one of the youngest commercial winemakers in Oregon. Josh Bergstrom learned from studies in France that intense farming of grape crops produces the best wine. And Bergstrom's wines are lovely and intense with plenty of fruit flavor lingering in the mouth.



The wines are surprising for such a youthful winemaker. Mention Bergstrom's youth, and it usually produces a grin on his face and a slight shrug of the shoulders. Bergstrom learned his craft well, and continues to learn from such winemakers as Lynn Penner-Ash, Dick Ponzi, Eric Hamnacher and Mike Etzel from Beaux Freres.

"We're farming all the time and in the vineyard all year long. We know exactly what's going on in our vineyards," said Bergstrom, who works the fields with his assistant, Anthony Filiberti.

"It's in the vineyards that we make our wines."

We are so excited that the 02 has been released. If you are a fan of the Bergstroms, you know that they produce some of the best Pinot noir in the valley, and receive high scores from Wine Spectator and wine competitions across the world.

This wine is even better than the 01, full bodied with lush black fruit and berry flavors, hints of violet, rose, and spice to my palate, this is a wine that compares favorably to many \$30-\$40 offerings.

CSM Merlot Indian Wells 01 \$19

Chateau Ste Michelle is best known for their well priced and ubiquitous "grocery store" wines that sell for \$5 to \$10. Perhaps not as well understood are their array of single vineyard and reserve bottlings, made in much smaller quantity. CSM's Indian Wells Vineyard is the source for single vineyard Merlot, Cabernet, and Chardonnay. The Merlot, at under \$20, is a particularly great buy.



The wine received 90 points from Wine Spectator, who said: "Ste. Michelle's Merlots from Indian Wells always deliver crisp, lively fruit character. This one is bright and juicy, bursting with fresh blackberry, currant and a touch of spicy oak, all of it echoing beautifully on the finish. Drink now through 2005." —H.S.

The Indian Wells Merlot is drinking well now, but its strong, well balanced backbone would permit it to age for several years. Unusually complex for a Merlot, the range of black and red fruit flavors in the palate and finish make it quite delightful. You will find this wine elsewhere on the web for \$35!

NW Dessert Wine Club

Covey Run Riesling Ice Wine \$23



This unique wine is filled with rich flavors of apricot, creating a very sweet dessert wine. One of the most unique wines in the Covey Run Reserve series, this Ice Wine has a wonderful aroma of apricots and honey with a luscious, creamy mouth feel. You can also find bright acidity and a long finish.

Food affinities: A golden treasure and a true treat, when you are able to find this wine, it is best when served alone. Or try paired with nuts, biscotti or peaches. It has all of the wonderful qualities of a great dessert: color, intensity, flavor and aroma. Enjoy after your next dinner party for an unusual treat.

Wine Spectator rating 92 points: "Beautifully balanced, harmonious and polished, showing off its elegant, seemingly endless bounty of pear, nectarine, honey and loquat flavors with remarkable grace. Delicious. Tasted twice, with consistent notes. 600 cases made."

"Highly recommended" by Wine Spectator.

From the winery: "Ice Wine is the rarest of dessert wines. It is made from grapes that froze on the vine. The conditions that create ice wines do not occur every year, but in 2001 we left part of the Riesling and Gewürztraminer crop hanging unpicked until it first became botrytised and then froze during a cold spell in November. Picked and pressed frozen, the grapes grudgingly yielded a small amount of rich juice in which the original sugar, acid, and flavor had been concentrated. This nectar, after fermentation, became our ice wine.

Fermentation: When the conditions are cold enough and just right, we rush out and gather the frozen grapes before they thaw. Back at the winery, each load of grapes is carefully pressed. The small quantity of juice is hard to coax from the almost solid berries. Eventually the grapes give up the precious nectar and we may have from an eighth to a quarter of the normal yield of the grapes.

Wine Description: Sweet, unctuous, and brimming with rich, honeyed apricot and orange peel flavors, and balanced by a bracing acidity.

77% White Riesling
23% Gewurztraminer

Harris Bridge Ice Wine \$22

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.

Reserve Pinot noir Club continued.....

With 11 different wineries making wine from Dick Shea's grapes, there is bound to be a certain unique thread of "Shea-ness" in the wines. And yet, with some of Oregon's finest winemakers putting their own stamp on the fruit from Shea Vineyard, there are bound to be differences.

Among the similarities, many tasters have detected a consistent floral character in Shea Vineyard-designated wines. Also, a certain dark red fruit character that seems unusually clear, often with a hint of spice, is detectable. And yet, when tasted together, the wines from each winemaker often show very different characters: some are heavier in style, others more delicate; some display a compelling velvety texture, others a kind of assertive and almost rough fruitiness.

In 1996, Shea decided to start his own winery, and asked some of the state's top winemakers to help in the process. ("They were all friends, producing wines from my fruit, so why not?" Shea says) He started out with Michael Stevenson, winemaker from Panther Creek, who produced Block 21 in 1998. In 1999, Stevenson produce a Chardonnay for Shea and Ken Wright crafted the Pinot Noir.

By 2001, David Autrey, from Westrey, produced the Chardonnay. Stevenson produced one block of Pinot Noir and Patty Green produced another vineyard block.

"We signed Patty to a two year contract and were very pleased with her style of wines," said Shea. "Then we learned that Sam Tannahill was available and decided to go with a full-time winemaker-our own employee."

The team of Shea and Tannahill clicked. For Tannahill, the opportunity to put his own signature on wine he produced was important to both of them.

"There is consistency now," said Tannahill, referring to all the previous Shea wines with different winemakers. "If there is one thing I bring, it is consistency. The style will be consistent."

Although Tannahill and Patty Green "are more alike than different" in their winemaking style, Tannahill says he will add a little more structure and tannins to his wines. He describes the Patty Green wines as a little softer, but lovely.

About 30 percent of the 2002 wine (the Shea 2002 Pomard Clone) is the work of Patty Green. Tannahill produced the remainder.

Shea says he has great respect for Green and Tannahill and believes them to be similar in style.

"If I had to compare Sam's style of winemaking, I'd say it's similar to Patty's, but they both have their differences," Shea said. "The wine shows through the vineyard, and that's what we were looking for. We didn't want a lot of new oak."

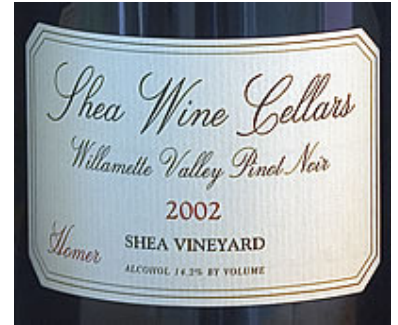
The hit of Shea's offerings is the 2002 Pinot Noir "Homer." This is the finest Pinot produced by Shea for the 2002 vintage, blending the vineyard's six best barrels. Shea, a big baseball fan, said the winery "hit a home run" with the '02 Homer, and thus, the name. He also conceded that his wife says he sometimes acts like Homer Simpson.

There are a tremendous number of different blocks of Shea vineyard from which Dick has wines made. In fact, when Patty Green produced the Homer blend, she had a huge room of Shea barrels in a specially built annex of her winery and called the area "Shea Stadium."

The Wines

Shea Wine Cellars "Homer" 2002 \$70

The Shea "Homer" 2002 \$60, available exclusively to Avalon's Reserve Pinot noir Club, is nothing short of remarkable. A dark black purple garnet color is coupled with a nose full of black cherry, jammy blackberry, cassis, Asian spices, complex spice and floral notes, violet, rose, a long, textured finish with creaminess and body. Opulent, yet with good acidity for cellaring, and the constantly changing, highly pleasant sensation of different scents and flavors that lingers in the finish. Yow! Just a wonderful wine.



From the winemaker: "Super saturated purple from center to the rim. Crafted from the best of the cellar, this wine is the quintessence of Shea Vineyard. Intense and exceptionally complex aromatics of ripe black raspberry, cherry, crystallized violets, flint, minerals and cassis fill the glass. With aeration sweet earth, smoke, blueberry and huckleberry aromatics all make an appearance. The attack is sweet and expands rapidly to fill the mouth. Large scaled and rich, the mid-palate leads to an unbelievably long finish. This wine has the structure, depth and intensity to push it to be the best wine from Shea Wine Cellars in a superlative year. The 2002 Homer will certainly deepen in complexity into a tremendous wine over the next fifteen years. 143 cases made.

Shea Wine Cellars "Block 23" 2002 \$48

The Shea Block 23 2002 \$48 is loaded with sweet, jammy berry and cherry fruit, richly expansive and textured with layers of candy-like fruit. The nose has hints of roasted meat, sweet jammy fruit, toasty oak, cassis, and blackberry. The finish is hedonistic, rich, huge, reminiscent of the Archery Summit Arcus Estate Pinot noir in complexity, richness, and style. It has a deep purple color with a beautiful ripe bouquet. Black raspberries and vanilla cream are among the complex array of flavors exhibited. The wine is big up front. Focus and structure come at the mid-palate and the finish lingers.

Winemaker notes from Sam Tannahill: Deep purple hue. Fantastic dark color to the rim. The aromas of super ripe raspberries, cassis, minerals and bing cherries explode from the glass. Black raspberries, smoke, violets and soft floral notes all swirl behind the primary aromas on aeration. A succulent entry is followed by a thick, mid-palate with loads of texture and personality. A stronger tannic structure than the Estate brings focus and definition to the long finish and helps buttress the precocious nature of the attack and mid-palate. The 2002 Shea Wine Cellars Block 23 effortlessly and brilliantly showcases the feminine and beautiful nature of Shea Vineyard. 197 cases made.

