



Avalon Wine Club News

Inside this issue:

Reserve Pinot Noir Club Penner Ash and Hamacher Cellars "Founding Members of Carlton Winemakers Studio"

Last month Reserve Pinot noir Club members received Soter Vineyard's Pinot noir Beacon Hill 99, produced at the **Carlton Winemaker's Studio (CWS)**. This month we feature wines from two more CWS wineries, **Hamacher Cellars and Penner Ash**.

We want to make sure our **Reserve Pinot Noir Club** members know about this group of top winemakers. The wineries in the cooperative include Hamacher Cellars, Soter Vineyards, Andrew Rich Wines, Bryce Vineyard, Domain Meriwether, Dominio and Penner-Ash Wine Cellars.

Carlton Winemakers Studio is the nation's first "green" cooperative winemaking facility.

The eco-designed building and land is a joint project of Eric Hamacher and his wife, Luisa Ponzi, of Ponzi Vineyards and their partners, Ned and Kirsten Lumpkin, owners of Lumpkin Construction based in Seattle. Each winery operates independent of one another, 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 received USGBC (United States Green Building Council) certification, 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.

Oregon's Sokol Blosser Winery has an LEED certified cellar building now in operation. It opened in April of 2002.

When **Lynn and Ron Penner-Ash** announced last year that she was leaving Rex Hill Winery to form their own small winery, they were already talking to Hamacher about joining The Studio.

"We're so small, with just 1,900 cases per year, that purchasing all the equipment and a facility was too much for us," said Lynn.



"The winemaker studio was perfect for us. And, as a winemaker, I think it will be neat to work side-by-side with the other winemakers and see what they're doing. It should also be a lot of fun."

The Penner Ashes will eventually will build their own winery at their estate vineyard in Ribbon Ridge, near Shea Vineyard.

Northwest "Big Reds" Club Fidelitas and Tamarack Cellars

Charlie Hoppes released the first wines under his own label this month, and is counting on faith, loyalty and a family name to carry his vintage.



Fidelitas is the Latin word for fidelis—meaning faithful, loyal and true. It also happens to be a version of his wife's family name—Fidelas. The name has been in Terry Hoppes family for six generations.

Hoppes (pronounced hop-pas) uses the name as a mission statement. He intends to be faithful to producing Bordeaux-style blends, true to traditional winemaking and loyal to the terroir of the Columbia Valley.

"That says it all for me," Hoppes said. "It says so much, and it is still a family name."

Hoppes began his adult career as a test engineer for Boeing in Seattle. But he wanted more creative work, and began exploring winemaking after making wine in the basement of his in-laws house in Pasco.

In 1984, Hoppes applied to the University of California at Davis. He quit Boeing in 1985 and began life as a full-time student in Northern California. After three years, he had a degree in viticulture and enology.

Mike Januik hired Hoppes in 1988 while he was making wines for Snoqualmie Winery. Stimson-Lane purchased the winery a few years later and Januik brought Hoppes with him to Chateau Ste Michelle.

In 1993, Stimson-Lane opened its red wine facility at Canoe Ridge near Patterson, WA, not far from Columbia Crest Winery in Eastern Washington. Hoppes moved his growing family (by then he had two girls) to the area.

Although Hoppes said he was happy with his work, and the learning opportunities, the idea of working in a large company was still unappealing and he longed to work for a small label. His goal was produced wines under his own label.

"Anyway you looked at it, it was corporate winemaking and I wasn't enjoying it anymore," Hoppes said. "I also wasn't THE winemaker—just one of many."

A new Walla Walla winery, Three Rivers, offered Hoppes the chance to start from the ground up and produce their wines. Hoppes jumped at the chance, and made three vintages for Three Rivers—1999, 2000 and 2001. He then started his own winery.

"One of the main reasons I did this was for my kids," Hoppes said. "I wanted to be more involved in their lives."

In addition to his own winery, Hoppes also hires out as a consultant to other winemakers, including Ryan Patrick, Goose Ridge Winery and Zefina.

Reserve Pinot Noir Club™

Penner Ash 01
Hamacher 00
Hamacher 98

Northwest Big Reds Club™

Fidelitas Meritage
00
Tamarack Dubrul
Vyd Reserve Blend

Northwest New Discoveries Club™

Cuneo Bordeaux
Blend 99
Cuneo Cannas
Feast 00

Northwest Dessert Wine Club™

Laurel Ridge
Pinot Noir Port

Reserve Pinot Noir Club– Penner Ash and Hamacher Wines

Penner Ash Pinot Noir 01 \$45.00

Harvest Date:
October 8-16, 2001
Brix at Harvest: 23.8
Finished TA: 5.9 g/L
Finished PH: 3.77



Vineyards: Jacob Hart 23% Seven Springs 22% Weber 15% Carabella 15% Maresh 12% La Colina 7% Arcus 6%

Aged 9 months in 40% new French oak, 25% one year-old French oak and remainder two year-old French oak
Bottled: September 2002
Released: June 2003

Tasting Notes: Dense black cherry fruit and smoke with a sweet rich roundness. Hints of toasted oak encase the finish, refined tannins.



From the winery:
The growing season of 2001 started off what we might say as normal. The bud break and bloom were neither early nor very late. It seems over the years we typically see bud break occur around the same time taxes are due. This year our bud break started slowly and was in full swing by the 19th of April.

The months of April, May and June offered us a typical spring in Oregon. One moment cold, wet and gray and the next minute we were blessed with clear crisp blue skies.

Once set was completed we headed out to the vineyards to see how much fruit was on the vines. The 2001 crop year started out strong and we discovered all of our vines had a very successful set, translating into potentially larger than experienced clusters. After diligently sampling 10 to 20 vines per acre, counting the clusters and weighing the fruit we estimated we had far too much crop on the vines to give us the intense quality we expect in our wines. Our vineyard crews were sent out immediately to drop the number of clusters at most sites down to one cluster per shoot. One cluster per shoot will typically yield 2-2.25 tons per acre.

After thinning our acreage down to where we wanted them, we experienced an abnormal weather streak in Oregon - a spike of extremely hot temperatures. Some sites hit well over 100 degrees. These uncanny highs are very hard on vines when they have been experiencing temperatures only in the mid 70's. Physiologically, the vines weren't prepared for such intense heat.

What followed is now called the green-berry phenomenon. Clusters that were damaged by the high heat reacted by never maturing past the point they were when the heat impacted them; leaving green berries on one side of an otherwise beautifully mature cluster. Some winemakers chose to try and pick individual green berries off, while others tried to shave them off. We chose to drop the affected clusters completely resulting in lower crop yields. In some instances we had only one cluster per every other shoot!

Our first Pinot noir was picked on October 8, with the remaining fruit arriving within the week. Harvest 2001 provided us with lovely, round ripen fruit with no compromises. The wines from 2001 are free from disease or rain.

Hamacher Pinot Noir 00 and Pinot Noir 98 \$34.99



Pinot noir 00:

A racy, vibrant wine with bright red fruits underlain by spicy plum and cedar notes. Flavors deliver what was promised by the nose but with substantially more weight. Mouth coating, sweet and supple with a loooooong finish. Ready to go but reward awaits the patient! Will only improve for years to come.

Pinot noir 98:

Robert Parker rating 92 points: "The 1998 Pinot Noir is an outstanding wine that merits inclusion in this article, as it had not been tasted a year ago. It exhibits a medium to dark ruby color and cedar, tobacco, and dark fruit aromas.

Medium-bodied and gorgeously expansive, this is a satin-textured wine crammed with dark fruits, black cherries, and loads of spices. Hints of chocolate can be discerned in its fruit-dominated yet well-focused and refined personality. It has the firmness characteristic of the 1998 vintage, yet possesses the density of fruit to cope with it. Anticipated maturity: 2004-2010."

And Reserve Pinot noir Club members receive the last few bottles, direct from the winery where they have been carefully cellared since release.

Growing up in Carmel, CA, Hamacher worked at fine restaurants in high school, and always wondered why people would spend \$100 on a bottle of wine. He eventually became intrigued about winemaking and graduated from the University of California at Davis in enology.

Hamacher worked a harvest in Oregon in 1987 before returning to California. He told his parents he wanted to eventually start his own winery in Oregon, making Pinot Noir. In 1995, Hamacher moved to Oregon. In 1996 he married lifelong Oregonian Luisa and began making wine in Oregon.

"The average vineyard in Oregon is approximately five years old," said Hamacher. "When people talk about letting a vineyard site express itself in the wine, it's kind of funny to me, because we're talking about baby vineyards here. It's going to take another 10 to 15 years to find out what expressions come from our vineyards."

Numerous different clones and numerous different root stocks are used in Hamacher's wines. He said he blends 30-year-old vineyard fruit with 5-year-old fruit to create a complete, complex, powerful and elegant wine.

What is important to Eric today is making the best wines he can while having a sustainable life and consistently doing things that are important to him. He and wife Luisa live on a 40-acre farm near Gaston in a historic farmhouse that has been in the Ponzi family for nearly half a century. There they raise their two children, Nico and Mia.



Big Reds Club— Fidelitas and Tamarack Cellars

Fidelitas Meritage 00
\$45.00
Wine Press NW rating
"Outstanding"

Wine Press NW says:

"Charlie Hoppes' new winery is off to a resounding success in its first judging. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, this opens with subtle spice and black currants and dark, elegant, complex flavors. A wine with tremendous aging potential."



From the winery: "Concentrated black fruit aromas of cherry and blackberry highlight this wine that has been aged in small barrels for twenty four months. This blended wine show great fruit concentration on the palate upon its release, yet tremendous ageing potential. Meritage wines represent the highest form of the winemaker's art: blending.

VINTAGE A cool spring and exceptionally warm summer growing season led to near perfect conditions in 2000. Moderate fall weather led to ample "hang time" for the fruit not yet picked to mature and ripe flavors to develop.

VINEYARD The grapes for this wine came from various vineyards from throughout the Columbia Valley. The Cabernet Sauvignon is from Martinez Vineyard near Alderdale as well as Katherine Leone Vineyard located near Mattawa on the Wahluke Slope. The Merlot for the blend is from Alderidge Vineyard near Alderdale as well as Katherine Leone Vineyard.

FERMENTATION AND AGING All the fruit for Fidelitas was hand picked and sorted in the vineyard. Upon arrival at the winery the fruit was destemmed and crushed directly to the fermentation tanks where the wines were either punched down three times daily or pumped over twice daily. Primary fermentation was from five to ten days in length. Upon completion of fermentation the wines were gently pressed off and went immediately to barrels. Once fermentation was complete in barrel, all wines were then put through malolactic fermentation in barrel.

While aging in oak barrels the wines are raked every four months to naturally clarify the wine.

VARIETAL COMPOSITION 62% Cabernet
38% Merlot

OAK AGING 24 months
50% French and American Oak

ALCOHOL 14.1%

PRODUCTION
375 Cases

RELEASE DATE
April 1, 2003



Tamarack Cellars
Dubrul Vineyard
Reserve Blend 00
\$50.00

Top rated by Wine Press NW:
 "Outstanding" in Fat Cab tasting.

Very very limited, only available to
 Big Reds Wine Club members.

62% cabernet Sauvignon,
 31% Merlot,
 7% Cabernet Franc.

Excellent wine, highly recommended.

Wine Press NW rating "Outstanding":

"Winemaker Ron Coleman strikes again with this top-rated wine. It opens with aromas of espresso, chocolate, cardamom and black fruit and flavors of rich, huge, jammy fruit with deep, spicy complexity. A massive wine to savor with the best cuts of beef or venison."

Founded in 1998 by Ron and Jamie Coleman, Tamarack Cellars is dedicated to the production of small lot, hand-crafted wines from select vineyards in the Walla Walla Valley, Yakima Valley, Red Mountain and Columbia Valley appellations. The winery is located in a restored WW II fire station and barracks at the Walla Walla Airport Complex.

Production began in 1998 and is currently up to 5800 cases of the 2001 vintage. Wines made are Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, DuBrul Vineyard Reserve, Syrah, Chardonnay, and Firehouse Red.

Ron Coleman serves as winemaker and general manager. He comes to the job after a long career in the wine industry with experience in wholesale and retail sales, as a sommelier, and through cellar work for Waterbrook and Canoe Ridge wineries.

Cooperage:

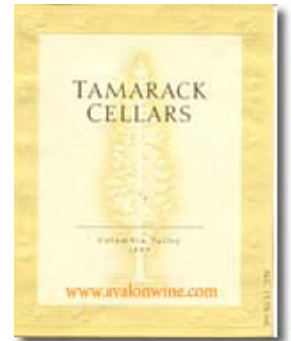
65% new oak, the majority of oak French with a compliment of American and a small amount of Hungarian oak. All the barrels are chosen from select coopers and the oak is from a wide variety of forests.

Winemaking:

Crushed gently and dropped by gravity into 1.5 ton or smaller bins, cold soaked a minimum of 48 hours, then inoculated with a variety of yeasts, hand-punched and pressed directly to barrel where the wine finishes both primary and secondary fermentations.

Vintage:

Vintages are commonly characterized by some unusual or significant weather event. The year 2000 is most notable for its lack of any extreme weather. It was not too hot or cold, dry or wet, nor short or long in hang time allowance. It was a text book, classic growing season in which perfectly ripe fruit with excellent balance was harvested.



New Discoveries Club

Cuneo Cellars Bordeaux Blend 99 \$16.99

This is one of the best values we've seen this year, even with all the price reductions.

This is a lovely, rich, deeply colored full bodied red blend with big, ripe, fine grained tannins, well integrated with lovely plum, black cherry, spice, and espresso notes in a long long finish that keeps changing in the mouth.

A SUPER DEAL! I think they are offering this wine at such a low price to get you to try their line- they have recently expanded production- take advantage of this introductory price. Drink now through 2006. -jy

From the winery: "As the name implies, we take an Old World approach to the Bordelaise wines -- Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet franc, Merlot, Malbec and Petit Verdot. Using these varietals in combination, produces a final blend that we believe gives us a more complete wine.

We find also that a combination of vineyards in Eastern Washington, produces the best results. Vineyards on the famous Red Mountain give us highly colored, highly structured wines. Others, like Champoux (formerly Mercer Ranch), contribute a more opulent texture and flavor to the final blend."

Cuneo Cellars Canas Feast \$33.99

From the winery: "Cuneo Cellars is a small, family owned winery dedicated to making exceptional red wine from the Pacific Northwest.

Limiting our production allows us to use traditional handcrafted wine-making, which enhances varietal and regional characteristics. Producing only small lots also enables us to be extremely selective in vineyard sourcing, which has resulted in contracts with some of the finest vineyards in the Northwest.

From the warmth of Eastern Washington and Southern Oregon come Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec and Petit Verdot, all which are selected and combined for our Bordeaux-style blend. The Italian varietals of Sangiovese and Nebbiolo are also being produced with fruit from these, our warmest sites.

Our Pinot noir is estate-grown from the oldest vineyard in the renowned Eola Hills, located in the Willamette Valley of Western Oregon. This much cooler site has proven to produce world class Pinot noir.

Our wines are produced under the "Cuneo" label. In exceptional years our best wines are given the coveted "Cana's Feast" label.



Dessert Wine Club

Laurel Ridge Pinot Noir Port \$35

From the winery: "This exquisite port was also made from the Pinot Noir grape, this time originating from our famous Finn Hill estate site.

As the source of our new estate wines, and the new home of Laurel Ridge winery, Finn Hill is arguably the best local example of the old French proverb "Le gout est dans la terra", meaning "The taste is in the Earth".

The unique characteristics of the soil and the clone, combined with careful harvesting, fermentation, and over 18 months in oak barrels, make this limited production 'vintage style' Port truly unique.

Deep purple in color with intense aromas of chocolate, leather, and black fruits, combine perfectly with a thick mouthful of dark fruit and rich flavors to make this a winner! Look for future vintages to come!

RS: 6.2% TA: 5.3g/L pH: 3.72 Alc: 20.3%



Get Andy Perdue's New Book With A Case Wine Order! *

*We'll be sending a free copy of Andy's new book with an order of a full case of wine priced at \$200 or more, starting June 1. One book per person, please.

Andy is the editor of Wine Press NW magazine and this book is a very useful compendium of information about Oregon and Washington wineries.

If you're a yearly subscriber to the Reserve Pinot Noir or Big Reds Clubs, you'll be receiving a book in your next shipment or so. Just depends on when the publisher gets them to us. Enjoy!

