

Reserve Pinot Noir Club™

St Innocent White Rose 03, Ribbon Ridge Vyd 03,
Hamacher 01

This month we send our Reserve Pinot noir Club members three Pinots that we at Avalon are particularly excited about. The **Hamacher 01**, released years after most 01's have come and gone, gives you an opportunity to experience what careful aging does to a well made Pinot, without having to cellar the wine for three years yourself.

The **St Innocent White Rose 02** shows the effects of terroir on Pinot. White Rose Vineyard is a small, steep vineyard at the highest elevation of any vineyard in its Dundee region. Rocky and exposed to colder temperatures, stronger wind and more extreme weather than most vineyards, the wine shows a complexity that winemakers relate to its location and soils. In particular, the wine has a characteristic floral bouquet in the nose that is most intriguing.

The **Ribbon Ridge Vineyard 03** is the first release from a small Estate winery, and shows yet again how good the Ribbon Ridge area is for growing grapes. Ironically, this is one of the first vineyards planted in the area, yet this is the first vintage they have released. We're thinking that this source may show up in shipments to the Club in future years, along with its neighbors from Beaux Freres, Penner Ash (Dusky Goose), Patricia Green, and Bergstrom.

Hamacher—No Wine Before its Time

Eric Hamacher is unusual in his winemaking practices - he ages his wines several years longer than most wineries before release. His Pinot noirs are made traditionally, using wild yeast and bacteria, aging for a year-and-a-half in barrel before racking by gas pressure, and blending and bottling by gravity. Then the wines are carefully aged for two or more years until Eric feels that they are ready for release. He feels that "Often the classic vintages need some time to flesh-out and wrap their complex flavor profile in the velvet which is great Pinot Noir". Thus, the Hamacher Pinot noir 01 was released in April of 2005.

Eric is ruthless in declassifying as much as 60% of a vintage if the wine is not good enough. He says:

". .Why go to the trouble? Taste what's in the bottle...you'll understand. Elegant, rich and balanced Pinot Noir is why we set the bar so high. Pinot is at its best when its naturally tendency towards complexity is not muted by the hand of the winemaker, when its structure is aided by sound decisions not overwhelmed by them and when its suppleness and succulence are revered not ignored. All our winemaking practices flow from these thoughts."

The 2001 Pinot noir is a blend of wine made from eight different vineyards. Eric says:

"Each (vineyard) is farmed to the particular needs of that site. Subsequently, there is a tremendous difference among the wines from each vineyard and even amongst the blocks of a given site! It is with this diversity that we set about pulling together "the best" of each vintage. Within these barrels is a snapshot of what the growing season in Oregon was like. Within each blended bottle is that picture as interpreted by the Hamacher style of elegance over power, of complexity and suppleness."

NW Big Reds Club™

A BIG Red and BC's Best
Osoyoos Larose and Owen Sullivan "Ulysses"

Big Reds Club this month receives two very full bodied red wines, one from perennial favorite Owen Sullivan Winery, and a new wine from British Columbia, the pet project of a huge corporation, with no expense spared in an attempt to produce the very best of BC.

Osoyoos Larose is the project of Groupe Taillan of Bordeaux, France, and Vincor International, based in Ontario, Canada. They formed a joint venture partnership in 1998 to develop vineyards and a small winery dedicated to the production of Canadian VQA wines, that would meet if not exceed the quality standards of their Bordeaux counterparts.

The wines would be made from the classic Bordeaux varietals: merlot, cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc, petit verdot and malbec. The partners believe that the unique terroir of Canada's western wine-growing region, the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia and, in particular, the southern part of the Valley, is capable of producing fruit of sufficiently high quality to achieve their goal.

The wine's name, Osoyoos Larose, reflects the partners' roots in France and Canada. Osoyoos refers to the location of the vineyards in the Okanagan Valley, on the mountain slopes above Lake Osoyoos. Larose is derived from one of Groupe Taillan's most prestigious estates in Bordeaux, the Deuxième Cru, or second growth, Château Gruaud-Larose, which reflects the centuries-old winemaking traditions of the world-famous wine region.

Osoyoos Larose wines are made in the town of Oliver in an 11,500 square foot winemaking center specifically designed and constructed adjacent to Vincor International's large winery. The wine is made extremely carefully, to protect the grapes and fermenting wines during vinification. The winery utilizes gravity flow, and avoids mechanical pumping where possible. The equipment in the Osoyoos Larose winery was sourced exclusively for its own wines under the direction of Groupe Taillan's consultant, Alain Sutre. The facility employs some of the most advanced technology in the world.

Blending a Bordeaux-inspired wine from up to five different grape varieties is a complex and constantly evolving process. Like an extraordinary perfume, the wine will take some of its character from the complex array of climatic, soil and geographic influences, and from its naturally occurring sugars, yeasts, tannins and other mitigating factors related to the vinification process.

The alchemy of all these elements contributes to the wine's color, clarity, bouquet and flavor. Guiding Pascal Madevon's work during the fermentation and aging process is internationally renowned winemaker, Michel Roland, also from Bordeaux. Tank and barrel samples are regularly sent to France for Michel's opinion and advice.

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June
2005

Reserve Pinot Noir Club™

Hamacher 01 \$35

St Innocent
White Rose 03 \$35

Ribbon Ridge
Pinot noir 03 \$30

Northwest Big Reds Club™

Owen Sullivan
Ulysses \$50

Osoyoos Larose 01 \$37

New Discoveries Club™

Colvin
Carmenere \$26

Winters Hill
Rose \$13

Dessert Wine Club™

David Hill
Early Muscat Port \$26

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Gismond on Wine had this to say about the Osoyoos Larose Winery in May, 2004:

"Osoyoos Larose, the wine and the project, is a joint venture between Canadian-owned Vincor International Inc. and Bordeaux based Group Taillan. Vincor is North America's fourth-largest wine producer whose brands include Jackson-Triggs and Inniskillin Wines (both Okanagan and Ontario versions), Sumac Ridge Estate Winery and Hawthorne Mountain Vineyards in the Okanagan; R.H. Phillips, Toasted Head and Hogue Cellars in the United States; Goundrey Wines and Amberley Estate in Australia; and Kim Crawford in New Zealand."

"Group Taillan is no shrinking violet either, given its claim to being the largest producer of appellation controlee wines in France, with operations in Bordeaux, the Cotes du Rhone, the Loire Valley, Provence and Languedoc. The group also lays claim to six Bordeaux estates: the "grand cru classe" properties of Chateau Gruaud-Larose, St-Julien, Chateau Ferriere, Margaux and Chateau Haut Bages Liberal, Pauillac."

"Merlot and, in a much smaller way, pinot noir have been the focus of most of B.C.'s best red wines, at least those made post-1995. Osoyoos Larose takes us in a different direction, using cabernet sauvignon, cabernet franc and merlot in its first release and the winery plans to quickly add a small amount of petit verdot and malbec to succeeding vintages."

"When you stand at the top of the densely planted, meticulously laid-out vineyard, the vines appear to tumble down the hillside and disappear into the lake. From the outset Sutre has worked hard to balance the meagre mix of sand and gravel with the addition of organic material and fertilizers. He has also installed an intricate system of spray nozzles to irrigate the vines without wetting the leaves, reducing the incidence of plant disease."

"The vines, an unusual (for B.C.) 5,000 per hectare, offer several rootstock and clone combinations. Each is imported from the Mercier nursery in Bordeaux. The trellising system allows for detailed canopy management, such as shading only one side of the vine for sun protection, and the density of vines helps to naturally regulate the bunch yield per vine, keeping them low."

"It's not revolutionary viticulture, or even totally French, but seeing everything in one place, on one vineyard, concentrated on making one wine, is enough to make a crusty old wine writer weep."

"Everything at Osoyoos Larose is done by hand, from pruning to picking to leaf stripping. The blocks are picked in successive passings taking only the fruit that is physiologically ripe."

Owen Sullivan Winery

Owen Sullivan is a tiny "garagiste" winery that just happens to make some of the biggest, densest red wines in Washington State. 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 and Owen Sullivan was born.

Bill Owen comments of the winery's philosophy:

"Owen Sullivan was created in 1997 with one goal in mind; to capitalize on this resource by securing fruit from the best vineyards to craft some of the Northwest's finest wines. This focus on select sites, combined with a winemaking ethic centered on simplicity (i.e. no filtering, no fining), gives our wines a more generous mouth feel and a more complete flavor profile."

Osoyoos Larose 01 \$37

This wine is an excellent value. Winemaker Pascal Madevoners has made a wine with layers of flavor, heralded by a rich ripe strawberry scent in the nose. The wine has a firm tannic structure, with plenty of fruit to sustain aging. Chocolate, green olive, vanilla, white pepper and smoke notes emerge from an overall black cherry and black berry flavor. The wine will benefit from 3-5 years of additional aging.

"The premier edition of Osoyoos Larose has an impressive dark, black cherry colour and a nose that mixes chocolate, green olive and bell pepper scents with smoke, vanilla, pepper and black cherry aromas. The entry is smooth with dry, chalky, grainy tannins that give the red a measure of grip in the mouth. More cedar, smoke, pepper, black olive, cassis and vanilla mark the flavour and give it a Bordelais style."

It's still young and tight and should improve over the next three to five years. The 2001 blend is 66/25/9 merlot/cabernet sauvignon/cabernet franc. Perhaps its best attribute is balance that, even in a so-so vintage like 2001, gives the wine an instant pedigree that is never easy to come by."

- Gismond on Wine, May, 2004



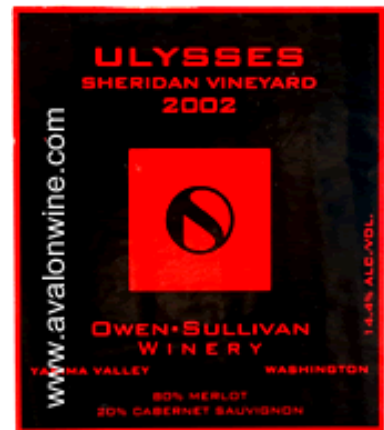
Owen Sullivan "Ulysses" 03 \$50

Owen Sullivan's "top of the line" Big Red, made from 100% Sheridan Vineyard fruit.

New for April 2005, the 2003 vintage was made from fruit that was grown in extremely hot conditions. Bill Owen's penchant for over-the-top, wildly rich wines was given full expression with this vintage's ripe, ripe fruit. This is a huge wine, as always, and will please our Owen Sullivan customers and others who enjoy very, very big red wines. Also available in magnums.

From the winery:

"The 2003 Ulysses from Sheridan Vineyards is a dark ruby/garnet accompanied by aromas of seasoned saddle leather, raspberries, sweet tobacco, rose, vanilla and amaro cherries. This opulent and savory blend inspired by Bordeaux's right bank offers the palate maturing fig, raspberry and red currents with graphite and Belgian chocolate nuances complimented by generous acid interwoven with rich fine tannins and an extensive finish."



Sheridan Vineyard is a family owned vineyard and winery in the heart of the Yakima Valley, outside Zillah. The vineyard provides grapes to wineries such as Quilceda Creek and Andrew Will.

The property was purchased in 1997 and the family planted the first four acres in April of that same year with Cabernet Sauvignon. Out of the seventy-six total acres, Sheridan Vineyard currently has fifty-five acres bearing fruit. Over the next two years, the entire vineyard will come into full production, planted to Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Merlot, and Syrah. With the combination of Sheridan's climate, 1,200-foot elevation, and shallow rocky soils, it makes for one of Washington's premiere vineyard sites.

New Discoveries Club

An Unusual Varietal, Carmenere, and a Top Rated Rose

Colvin Carmenere \$26

An unusual grape varietal, usually blended into Bordeaux style wines. This rare Bordeaux varietal reveals elegant vanilla and sweet herb aromas with flavors of black pepper, cinnamon, ripe fruit and milk chocolate. Winemaker **Mark Colvin** calls it his "300-pound line-backer that eats sushi and loves opera".



Wine Press NW says: "This rare Bordeaux variety shows why it was so revered more than a century ago and why Mark Colvin is reviving it in the Walla Walla Valley. It reveals elegant vanilla and sweet herb aromas with flavors of ripe huckleberries and creamy milk chocolate across the palate."

Colvin is known for their introduction of the Carmenere, or Grand Vidure grape, to the Walla Walla Valley. Hundreds of years ago, it was well-known as a terrific blending grape. For years, winemaker Mark Colvin had been looking for this Bordeaux varietal, thought to be extinct following the in the mid-1800s destruction of French vineyards by phylloxera.

Seven years ago, however, the grape was rediscovered in Chile. Mark had been searching for it for ten years, and finally tracked plants down in California. Colvin Vineyards is a pioneer in planting Carmenere grapes in the Walla Walla Valley.

Winters Hill Rose 04 \$13

Rosés are excellent food wines due to the balance of acidity and fruit and a light to medium body. They are a great companion to shrimp, scallops, crab dishes, cold meats and meat salads, chicken salad, pasta salad, barbecued chicken, grilled halibut, pan-seared fish, paella or salmon in parchment paper. In the South of France, rosés are famously associated with salads, especially salad nicoise from the Cote d'Azur.



Winner, Best of Class and Gold Medal, Northwest Wine Summit.

Deep strawberry color, classic Pinot Noir fruit flavors in a light summer wine. Good structure and long, crisp finish make this a perfect match for salads, a cheese plate, cold cuts or barbecued chicken.

In a tasting of thirteen dry Roses of Pinot noir, this wine won the Gold. Delicious.

Winters Hill has 21 acres of Pinot Noir planted at 1089 vines to the acre. The grapes from which the Rosé is made comes from Block 1 of the vineyard planted with own rooted Pommard vines in 1990 and trained to a Scott Henry divided canopy. The south facing vineyard slopes lie between 550 and 700 feet above sea level. The vineyard is all on Jory soil, the most sought after soil type for the growing of premium grapes. Jory is a silty clay loam desirable for balancing good water retention properties and excellent drainage.

NW Dessert Wine Club

David Hill Winery White Muscat Port \$26

David Hill winemaker Pascal Valadier and vineyard owner Milan Stoyanov took a gamble in producing their white Muscat Port: "We were warned by distributors and brokers that consumers wouldn't accept a white Port, because the color didn't fit the traditional image of a Port," explained Valadier. "But the Muscat grape imparts such a strong, sweet flavor that I firmly believed wine lovers would be receptive."

White Port gets its color from white grapes, as opposed to the red grapes used in traditional ports. David Hill's white Port, made from the Muscat grape, is golden in hue, a trait owed to the natural oxidation that occurs when the wine is aged in cask. The Port is heady and sweet, with a wealth and intensity of floral and complex aromas.

The Muscat grapes used to make the white Port, with the exception of the 2000 vintage, are estate grown on vines planted at an elevation ranging from 280 to 540 feet. The grapes are cultivated in Laurelwood silt, a soil that is deep and drains well.



The fermentation is stopped at 10 percent residual sugar by fortifying the wine with Clear Creek distilled, high-proof brandy. The Port is then aged in 132-gallon French oak puncheons for more than a year, resulting in a finished wine that's between 20 and 21 percent alcohol with intense peach, gooseberry and licorice aromas, and a soft caramel background.

Avalon's food writer, Mike Sherwood, wrote about this dessert wine in his article "Oregon Wine Dinner — The Asparagus Challenge".

Here's what he said:

"This wine was the surprise hit of the night, and that is saying something. Each of the wines served earlier in the meal was excellent - some of the best of those vintages. This wine really swept us away.

This wine and the dessert were clearly lovers in a past life. It's hard to know where to start without totally gushing. Of course by now, we've had a glass each of six bottles of wine - so we're pretty happy. You'd expect our palate to be tired. This wine rose above all to have the entire table abuzz. First of all, this is a Port style wine. Twenty percent alcohol, so the delivery system is already supercharged.

Here's what so impressed us: Big Lychee nut and soft peach flavors with an echo of some sweet orange at the end. Not acidic citrus, but sweet. At the back of the tongue there was this unctuous honey, nutmeg and mace thing going on that helped the Vulcan mind meld with the hazelnut dessert. Seven hundred thirty 6 - bottle cases were produced that come in nifty 500ml bottles at only \$26. If you like stickies, you'd be insane not to order this wine. I kid you not.

Reserve Pinot noir Club continued....

Hamacher continued....

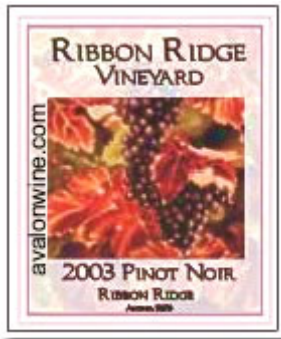


Eric strives for a "true" Pinot noir through careful selection of vineyard sites and creates silky texture and fine grained tannins through the use of longer aged barrels than the norm.

"While most Oregon Pinot vineyards are less than 10 years old, the contributors to the 2001 Hamacher Pinot have an average vine age of over 20 years. The barrel staves are aged over twice the norm of most French cooperages prior to constructing the barrel. This means the harsh, woody astringency that most coopers try to cover by burning the inside of the barrels has already been leached out of the wood by three season's rains. This allows for gentle caramelization of the wood's non-fermentable sugars rather than charring. Believe it or not "smoke" is not a natural fruit aroma!", says Eric.

Ribbon Ridge Vineyard Pinot noir 03 \$30

This is a remarkable wine, coming from such a young Estate vineyard (3rd leaf, planted in 2001). It says a lot about the Ribbon Ridge area, that Beaux Freres, Patricia Green, Penner Ash, and now Ribbon Ridge Vineyard are all making exceptional wines from this small, steeply canted valley west of Newberg. Dewey and Robin Kelly purchased their vineyard in 1978, but did not begin commercial winemaking until 2003.



The 60% Pommard-clone fruit provides a juicy foundation of black cherries and purple plum with the Dijon 777-clone fruit adding some brighter overtones of red berries and cherry. Subtle hints of violets add to the elegance of the wine and the French oak gives it a long, toasty finish. The wine is nicely structured and is very drinkable now with six months of bottle age. Drink now through 2013.

Wine Spectator says: "Rating 91 points: "Lithe and generous, a plush mouthful of spicy raspberry, cherry, and a lingering grace note of mint as the finish sails on and on. Beautifully done all around. Drink now through 2013." H.S.

The Ribbon Ridge Vineyards site is located on the shoulder of Ribbon Ridge in Yamhill County in close proximity to Chehalem's Ridgecrest Vineyard, Beaux Freres Vineyard, Brick House Vineyard, Whistling Ridge Vineyard and Patricia Green Cellars. The predominant soil type is Willakenzie clay loam. The entire property encompasses 41.13 acres, with approximately 12 acres cleared and 30 acres in timber. In Spring 2001, nine acres of grapes were planted on ten acres.

Hamacher Pinot noir 01 \$35

Robert Parker's Wine Advocate reviewed the wine (90 Points), with the following comments:

"One of the exceptionally rare outstanding Oregon reds from its vintage, the 2001 Pinot Noir displays cedar-tinged black cherry aromas. This medium-bodied, ample wine sports a lovely satiny texture, loads of spice-laden blackberries, dark cherries, and hints of blueberries. It is harmonious, lush, and has a long, fruit-packed finish. While it may age well, my inclination is to suggest drinking it over the next 3 years (through 2007) as experience has taught me to fear notes of cedar in young Pinots." - Pierre Rovani



Eric and Family (His wife, Luisa is Winemaker for Ponzi Wines)

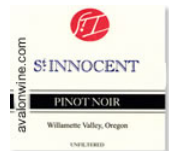
Eric has this to say about his 01 Pinot noir:

"The '01 Hamacher Pinot will no doubt appeal to Pinot purists. Earthier and darker than the 2000, this blend of dark fruit, gamey and spice aromas scream Pinot! Texturally the satin-like feel of it coats your mouth, lingering while you contemplate the complexity of its flavors. The palate is more fruit and spice driven than the nose might lead you to expect. This is an example of texture growing in the bottle. The classic vintages need some time to flesh-out and wrap the complex flavor profile in the velvet which is great Pinot Noir...on a scale of one to ten this is...yummy!"

With the nature of the 2001 vintage being one of elegance, this wine has been singled out for praise for it's exceptionally rich mid-palate and amazing length. "How do you get so much richness in your wines every vintage", Eric was asked by one critic recently. "It's the fruit, the barrels and the patience" he replied.

St Innocent White Rose Pinot noir 03 \$35

The wines from this small, high elevation vineyard get better and better each year. This wine is expressively hedonistic with multi-layered big red fruits and a truly white floral (white rose?) component. Very Limited.



From the winery: "White Rose Vineyard is our highest elevation vineyard, at 832'. It was spared the brunt of the heat wave and its effects. Picked at the peak of ripeness, it is **drop dead gorgeous**. It fills your mouth and nose with dark flowers and red fruits, but is less about flavor than about pleasure. Easily the best White Rose to date. This is our smallest lot of Pinot noir. I believe that it is one of the gems of 2003. Snooze and you will loose. Drink it now or age it up to 8 years." - Mark Vlossak

White Rose Vineyard is located on a southeast-facing slope in the Dundee Hills of Yamhill County. The vineyard was planted in 1980 at an elevation of 820' on deep Jory soil. It looks directly at the Cascade Mountains.