



Reserve Pinot Noir Club™

Rising Stars Month!

Ana 02 \$39—Black Cap 03 \$36—Alloro 03 \$28

NW Big Reds Club™

Ken Wright's Tyrus Evan Syrahs 01 & 03
Whitman Cabernet Sauvignon 01

**March
2005**



This month the Reserve Pinot noir Club offers three up-and-comers— new wineries that we think are some of the best. All three wineries' first releases are beautifully made from carefully developed vineyards.

Common themes run through the stories of the wines. First, the winemaker and owner either manage the vineyard or are deeply involved in its management.

Second, a deep knowledge of Pinot noir cultivation is present. Third, all three winemakers describe their winemaking method as "letting the grapes express themselves" rather than manipulating the fruit to a specific flavor profile.

The wines are quite different — the characteristics of the vineyard — the terroir — shows through in the wine, even from the young Alloro Vineyard. While each shows unique traits, the wines also each show common traits expected from Pinot noir — a pleasant scent, fruit flavors of berry, cherry, and/or contributions of toast and vanilla from oak. All three have great balance of acid/fruit/tannin, and are suitable for aging.



It's All in the Grape

Ana Vineyard, Alloro Vineyard, and Bishop Creek Vineyard are all small, state-of-the-art, and modern. All have benefited from thirty plus years of research on growing Pinot noir in the Willamette Valley. Jason Lett's (Black Cap/Bishop Creek) father, David Lett, was one of Oregon's first winemakers of the so-called "modern era" that started roughly around 1970. As a child, Jason watched his father plant Pinot noir and grew up with the vines. Alloro's winemaker Don Kautzner watched the development of Oregon's Pinot vineyards as winemaker at Adelsheim for over 20 years. Andy Humphries owns and manages Ana Vineyard, established in 1976, one of the older vineyards in the Willamette Valley.

Ana Vineyard and Ana Pinot noir 03

The Ana Vineyard Pinot noir 02 was made by winemaker and co-owner of Beaux Freres, Mike Etzel. While best known for his world famous Beaux Freres Pinot noirs, Mike originally moved to Oregon to start a vineyard, and his focus continues to be "to grow very ripe, healthy and intense fruit through low yields, non-irrigated vineyards and by allowing fermentation to capture the true reflection of the ... vineyard". Mike purchases Pinot noir fruit from very few, very carefully selected vineyards for his wines. Ana Vineyard is one of his sources, and in 2002, he agreed to make a wine for owner Andy Humphries under the Ana Vineyard label.

Established in 1976, the Ana vineyard is one of the last remaining own-rooted plantings in the Red Hills. At 435 ft this Jory soil site is bordered by the Arcus, Weber and Goldschmidt Vineyards. Planted with the Pommard clone, and trained using the double-guyot method this vineyard is meticulously farmed by Andy. Andy also manages the famed Goldschmidt Vineyard.

Continued on page 4

Southern Oregon is producing Syrah grapes as good as any I've tasted in the Northwest — controversial words indeed. Washington State would like to claim some Syrah exclusivity, but a few vineyards in Southern Oregon, foremost Del Rio Vineyard, are proving that Oregon has what it takes.

And great winemakers from Oregon are taking up the Syrah flag and running with it. Ken Wright, famed for his Pinot noirs, has started a new label and is producing simply luscious Syrahs at quite reasonable prices.

Ken Wright and Tyrus Evan

Even great Pinot Noir winemakers need a break from the finicky, noble grape once in awhile.



Ken Wright, known for his highly-rated, single-vineyard Pinot Noir, introduced a new label in 2003, Tyrus Evan, producing Claret, Syrah, Malbec and Cabernet Franc. The bottlings are limited—less than 1,300 cases were produced of the 2003 vintage—but the winemaker says the wines are here to stay.

"We've had a lot of fun with it," Wright said. "My first love is Pinot Noir. But the blending of these varietals is a great challenge and I am excited with the results."

Wright used the middle names of his two sons, Cody and Carson, for the new label. It is a way for his boys to enter the winemaking business, if they choose to do so. Carson is in college and Cody is now in Australia, working the 2004/2005 harvest and learning about the wine industry. Wright said he expects them to collect some experience in the world before coming back to the winery.

"Regardless of whether they choose to be involved in this process, we will continue to make the wines," said Wright. "We won't overstep the demand. Our goal is to start small and establish the brand."

In a recent tasting, the wines are vibrant and young, but a worthy addition to Wright's established reputation as an intense winemaker. He produces two Clarets, one from fruit sourced in Walla Walla and one from grapes purchased from the Del Rio Vineyards in Southern Oregon.

Two Syrahs are also produced from grapes from both regions. He has plans to add grapes from the Ciel du Cheval Vineyards to the blends.

Continued on page 2

Reserve Pinot Noir Club™

Ana Vineyard 02 \$39

Black Cap 03 \$36

Alloro 03 \$28

Northwest Big Reds Club™

Ken Wright's Tyrus Evan Syrah Del Rio 01 \$30

Tyrus Evan Syrah Del Rio 03 \$30

Whitman Cabernet Sauv 01 \$36

New Discoveries Club™

Roots Pinot noir 03 \$22

Bergevin Calico Red 03 \$18

Fidelitas Tranquility White \$14

Dessert Wine Club™

Viento "Nocturne" Muscat Canelli \$27

Big Reds Club continued from page 1**Del Rio Vineyard**

This month, the Big Reds Club receives Tyrus Evan Syrah from two vintages, both made from Del Rio Vineyard fruit. Del Rio is selling grapes to some of the most prestigious wineries in the state. Most of the wineries are known for Pinot Noir.

Del Rio Vineyards presently is planted to over 200,000 vines, twelve varieties, and 17 clones. Right now, Syrah is the hottest grape in the vineyard, literally. The heat of a long summer allows Syrah to slowly ripen. The dryer, hotter Rogue Valley produces denser, jammier Syrah than anywhere in the state.


**Tyrus Evan Syrah
Del Rio Vineyard 01 \$30**

This Syrah has a big backbone and is well structured. It's surprising that this Syrah is the more structured of the two Ken made in 2001— one from Southern Oregon, one from Washington State fruit. You'd think that Southern Oregon, with its heat, might produce a softer wine. This wine has big, rustic, hearty structure, reminiscent of a French country blend.

**Tyrus Evan Syrah
Del Rio Vineyard 03 \$30**

In contrast to the 2001 Syrah, the 2003 Del Rio Syrah, from a blazingly hot vintage, is a softer, rounder wine, but holds together with adequate acidity. It's so lush and juicy, not for cellaring, but a crowd pleaser for sipping or enjoying with grilled meats and strong cheeses.

Lovely, lush, rich and juicy, this is a classic Syrah with excellent balance, layers of black cherry, blackberry, spice, hints of toast and plummy fruit. — very very nice.

**Whitman Cellars—Tops in Walla Walla Tasting**

Last week Avalon's staff attended a comprehensive tasting of Walla Walla wines, and came back talking about Whitman Cellars. So we added this just released wine to our March Club, with more to come.



Whitman Cellars was founded by John Edwards, Larry Thomason, and Sally Thomason in 1998, and in 2002, Steve Lesard joined the team as winemaker. The winery has a new facility across from Canoe Ridge in the heart of Walla Walla's wine country. Steve's background making big red wines at California's Stags Leap Wine Cellars, then at Hedges for six vintages, has obviously contributed to make wines that stand out from the Walla Walla pack.



Whitman purchases grapes from six different vineyard sites and blends their wines to a specific style. Unlike many of the Oregon wines we send to the Big Reds Club, careful selection of vineyard site and grape quality are paired with skilled blending to create a distinct "Whitman" style. Whitman uses the following vineyards to source grapes:

Seven Hills Vineyard
Pepperbridge Vineyard
Les Colene Vineyard
Waliser Vineyard
Cougar Crest Vineyard
Yellow Jacket Vineyard
Spofford Station
Red Mountain Vineyard (Red Mountain AVA)

**Whitman Cellars
Cabernet Sauvignon 01 \$36**

The 100% Cabernet Sauvignon Whitman 01 \$36 was created by selecting exceptional barrels from six different vineyard sites in the Walla Walla Valley. Each of these vineyard sites - with the talent of the winemaker - produce wines of unique flavors and characteristics. Hence, from three different wines comes a skillfully blended elegant wine that's balanced with flavors of blackberries, cherries, tobacco, cocoa, smoke, licorice and rich velvety tannins.

New Discoveries Club

**Roots
Pinot noir 03 \$22**

Excellent value! From the slopes across the valley from Ribbon Ridge, a Pinot with lots of forward fruit, plump and tasty, good balance, drink now - 2007.

From winemaker Chris Berg's 6 acre estate vineyard, made from young vines, showing a lot of depth and nice flavors. Most of the fruit came from the upper block of his vineyard, a block comprised of Pinot noir clones 113, 115, and 777. The wine was aged in 30% new Francois Freres oak (Allier and Nevar), 40% year old Francois Freres and Gillet oak, 10% neutral oak, and 20% Hungarian oak.

**Bergevin
"Calico Red" 03 \$19**

One of the best values in red wine from Walla Walla, if you like Owen Roe's Abbott's Table you'll love this wine. A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Syrah, Zinfandel and Cabernet Franc, the wine is a juicy, ripe, intense, darkly colored wine just loaded with flavors. It oozes with intense aromas and flavors of strawberry, raspberry, black currant, blackberry, huckleberry as well as vanilla, black pepper and freshly roasted coffee beans. Nicely structured with soft and silky tannins with a lingering finish.

**Fidelitas
"Tranquility" White 02 \$10**

If you like Caymus's Conundrum, but not the price tag, or love Sokol Blosser's "Evolution" with a touch less sweetness, this wine will suit to a T.

"Tranquility" is a delicious white wine blend with intriguing hints of apricot, fresh flowers, crisp but smooth citrus flavors.

NW Dessert Wine Club

**Viento
"Nocturne" \$27**

A blend of barrel aged Muscat Canelli which has been fortified to make a port-style wine - lovely hints of almond in the flavor - unusual and savory.

Of the four principal varieties of the muscat grape, including Muscat of Alexandria, Muscat Blanc, Muscat Hamburg, and Muscat Ottonel, the most widely propagated and also most representative of the family character is Muscat Blanc, known as Muscat Frontignan in France and **Moscato di Canelli** in Italy.

Each muscat produces, with subtle variation, wines with the distinct, intense, aromatic, sweet, and easily-recognized scent of muscat and, unusual for most wine varieties, that actually taste like grapes. Muscat of Alexandria and Muscat Hamburg are, in fact, cultivated as table grapes, as well as for making wine.

Muscat is a very ancient variety and, with its strong and distinctive perfume, was probably one of the first to be identified and cultivated. Nearly every Mediterranean country has a famous wine based on muscat and varying from light and bone dry, to low-alcohol sparkling versions, to very sweet and alcoholic potions.

The muscat vine is not very vigorous in most soil types, especially sandy mixtures, and seems to prefer damp, deep soils. It also falls victim quite easily to any of several vine diseases. Normally early in budding, muscat may also suffer from Spring frosts; muscat Ottonel is particularly susceptible to shatter or coulure. All things considered, muscat would not seem to be a grape that would be cultivated so widely as it is.

The full name is Muscat Blanc à Petits Grains and the berries are quite small and round, but not always white. The spectrum includes pale green, pale yellow, golden, pink, red, brown, and black berries. Some vines produce fruit that can be different colored each vintage.

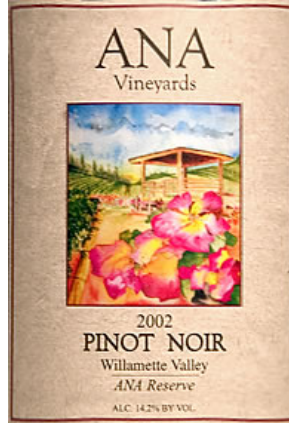


Reserve Pinot noir Club continued....

With the Ana 2002 vintage, a confluence of factors - a mature and healthy vineyard, years of experience with the site, great weather, great fruit, and a sunny warm harvest season - resulted in wine that reaches a new level of excellence for Oregon Pinot noir. Harvest proceeded at a relaxed pace, with plenty of time to hand sort the fruit under delightful working conditions- sunny days and cool nights, perfect for ripening Pinot grapes.

The Ana 02 Wine

It's just luscious. Swirl this one in the glass for awhile and scents of red raspberry, oak, and pie spices emerge, and the flavor- a burst of juicy red raspberry, followed by red cherry, a hint of violets, all in a viscous, lush framework of very finely grained tannins. Drink now through 2012.



Black Cap from Bishop Creek Vineyard

Black Cap Pinot noir 03 is made from Pinot noir grown at **Bishop Creek Vineyard** in the North Willamette Valley. The vineyard is managed by the winemaker, Jason Lett.

"When the opportunity with Bishop Creek came along, I jumped at it," says Jason. "I was ready for the challenge of pursuing my own vision of winegrowing in a unique vineyard."

Planted in 1988 at 5x5 spacing, the vineyard is one of the oldest high density plantings in the area. Close spacing, combined with a steep slope have given the vineyard a reputation as one of the area's most challenging sites. Jason saw the potential for the site to produce great Pinot noir. He stopped the use of synthetic chemicals and focused instead on canopy management and soil health. The results were gratifying: Jason selected rows of Bishop Creek fruit for his 2003 vintage Black Cap.

"Making wine from fruit you've grown closes the circle," says Jason. "An intimate knowledge of the vineyard influences how finesse the wine, and what you learn from the wine guides the management of the vineyard."

Jason says: "For me, making wine is the ultimate way to explore the concept of 'tasting place.' My intention is to express the vineyard as fully as possible. I'm doing that by using traditional tools- cool, small batch fermentations, extended macerations, native yeasts, and bottling without fining or filtration. I also use a very moderate amount of new oak - taking the Burgundian approach to oak that was traditional until the last 15 years or so. When you taste the Black Cap my hope is that you will taste an expression of place and a vintage, without the pretensions of a winemaker getting in the way. I'm proud to be a wine grower."

Jason grew up in a vineyard, working for his father, David Lett (Eyrie). He pursued research studies at University, and later as a research assistant at OSU.

"We were trying to figure out how plants express themselves from site to site," says Jason. "In a way, it was the same question one might ask when comparing a Le Musigny to a Bonnes Mares."

As a young member of Oregon's Pinot noir-making community, Jason already shows a remarkable skill for expressing the terroir of Oregon's vineyards in his wines. He is truly one of the rising stars of Pinot noir.



Alloro Vineyard

Alloro, Italian for laurel, is a small winery that crafts entirely Estate grown Pinot noirs. It is located on the southwest slope of the Chehalem Mountains, north west of Chehalem and Rex Hill Wineries.



Alloro's vineyard is planted to Pinot noir Dijon Clones 114, 667, and 777, as well as Pommard vines. The vineyard was planted using vigor inhibiting rootstocks, matched to the Laurelwood soil type, producing smaller, more intensely flavored berries. The winery was designed and built as a gravity feed facility to maximize the gentle handling of grapes that is essential to producing fine Pinot noirs.

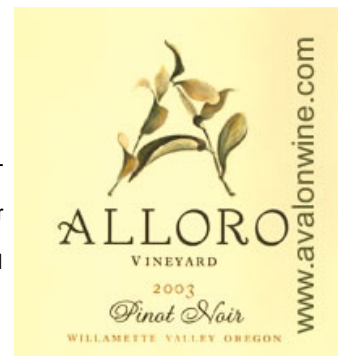
Winemaker Don Kautzner says: "we pick at the right time, handle the fruit gently, listen to what the wine tells us, and keep our imprint off the wine, allowing it to express its uniqueness."

"I've never seen a vintage like 2003, in 23 years of making wine in the North Willamette. The biggest challenge in 2003 was balance. Compared to the 2002, the 2003 wines were impacted by a heat wave in July, resulting in spikes in sugar levels in the fruit. But sugar does not mean the grapes are ready to pick- we had to wait for flavor. We harvested almost as early as in 1992, when harvest started in parts of the Willamette Valley on August 26th."

"Thicker skins on the grapes (caused by heat) made the wines potentially more tannic. The wine was taken off the skins earlier in 2003 to control tannin levels. Stuck fermentations were also a potential problem. With careful management, you could make big, fat, round wines in 2003. Or if tannins were not managed, you could make a tannic monster."

The Alloro Pinot noir 03 \$28

This is a very forward wine from a very ripe vintage. When the forward fruit eases off in a few years, Don believes that the structure underpinning the fruit will allow aging for up to 5 years. But the vineyard is young, and the wine is not a candidate for long-term cellaring.



The wine's initial presentation shows intriguing toast and smoke in the nose, with hints of spice and black fruit. The flavors start with an initial hit of sweet blackberry fruit, mouth coating, silky tannins, and gushing, rich ripe black cherry, cranberry, and black currant flavors. The finish is long- fine tannins and a balanced acidity show maturity and experience in the winemaking. True to Pinot noir, but taking everything that is fresh and fruity about the grape and twining it around a core of spice and oak.