

---

## 2008 SPRING NEWSLETTER, MORE RANDOM THOUGHTS AND RAMBLES.... (REMINISCING, PART 2)

---

In 1979 a few friends; Bob Goyette, Rick Burmetster, John Bessey, Rich Gibbons, Linda Strickland, and I, took the plunge. We formed a partnership and founded Bonded Winery CA-4916, La Crema Viñera, in Petaluma, California. It wasn't easy but we did it. I had spent the preceding months carefully doing projections until I could, upon command, tell you how many bottles of wine you got from a ton, how much space it took to ferment white juice and red must, how many barrels were needed for x amount of fruit and what it cost, down to the cent, to bottle a case of wine. I knew the numbers inside and out. I had priced out every piece of equipment needed and found cheaper alternatives. In short, we had the beginnings of a business plan. But more importantly I had decided on the type of wine we should make and where we should look for fruit. So, with most of the nuts and bolts in place, we decided to take the plunge.

It was a good year to start a winery. Just over a decade earlier American wine production and consumption had moved from a majority of dessert wines (fortified for the most part) to a majority of table wine. With that came a re-birth of the American wine industry. During the 1970's a large number of wineries popped up. While many have taken their place in the dust bin of history, many others are still with us today, although most in a form very different than those early years. It was a heady time. Airline pilots, dentists, dermatologists, car salesmen, and printers took their place alongside university trained professionals. What they lacked in formal training was, in many cases, more than compensated for by their passion, love of fine wine, determination, sense of wonder, and willingness to experiment and explore. By the time we came along, the path had been paved, but there was still room, as they said in Star Trek, to go

where no one had gone before.

At the time we started, American wine drinkers' beverage of choice was generally white, with chenin blanc and riesling, among others, arguably as popular as chardonnay. Red wine drinkers were all over the board but pinot noir wasn't even on the radar. It was therefore a little odd that three wineries in the class of '79, as it was called back then, were founded to produce Burgundy varietals. While Kistler was to be a chardonnay house, Acacia and La Crema Viñera were focused on the possibilities of that bad boy of wine grapes, pinot noir. Indeed our motto at La Crema Viñera was, "The tradition that is Burgundy, the heritage that is California, pinot noir and chardonnay in the classic manner." By that we meant that while embracing the traditional winemaking techniques and respect for terroir that were the hallmarks of Burgundy, would also honor our California heritage.

Two of the first vineyards that we used were very well known in wine circles. One was not. We seemed to do everything right with those grapes that year. While almost everyone picked by numbers, including the wild cowboy winemakers who wanted to make wine bigger and bolder than everyone else, we picked by a little different criterion. Doug Meader of Ventana Vineyard in Monterey County had taken me out into his chardonnay block to taste the fruit. He plucked a grape, put it in his mouth, spit the pulp out and chewed on the skin. He had me do the same. Mystified, I asked him what he was doing. He told me that everything that would be in the wine was in the skin of the grape and that is what I should be tasting. I told him that it was fine for a veteran such as himself but for a rookie like me it was impossible. He laughed and said he had told André Tchelistcheff the same thing when André had told him this. Before long, I was tasting grapes with confidence. I can

still remember how that fruit tasted and how the wine made from it did indeed reflect those characteristics.

Our winemaking that year was also a little out of the ordinary. The two chardonnays we made were both pressed rather quickly after crushing. Soaking of the crushed grapes was starting to come into vogue but we played it conservatively and kept the skin contact to a bare minimum. Fermentation was in French Oak Burgundy barrels, a technique not widely practiced at the time. The reason for the barrel fermentation was simple—it was what they did in Burgundy, France! And, it was also what Joseph Swan did. The pinot noir techniques were also a little different. Although there were a few wineries practicing these techniques, they were still far from the norm. I believe that we included a small percentage of whole clusters, although we may have just added back some stems. All of the pinot noirs were fermented in small open top fermenters and punched down by hand. The fermentation/maceration was fairly long and the temperature was allowed to reach the low 90's (°F). We used a small basket press (all we could afford at the time), which was very gentle. Aging was in barrels imported from a tiny cooperage in Burgundy. Bottling was when I decided the wine was ready.

Over the next few years, I embraced experimentation, not for the sake of experimentation itself but because I needed to learn as much as possible in as short of time as possible. We joined the winemaking crowd that believed skin contact on chardonnay prior to fermentation was a good thing. We even made a wine called Gonzo—a chardonnay made just like the pinot noir. With pinot noir we tried whole cluster fermentation because a new producer in Burgundy had been doing it with great success. We made lots with no whole clusters to lots with 100%. We

tried lengthening the maceration time with pinot noir, both pre-fermentation and post. We tried various yeasts including wild. We basically embraced the new age of California: no holds barred winemaking with a vengeance. Much of the time I bounced my ideas off of my friend and mentor Joe Swan, who seemed amused if not intrigued. Many of the things we tried were things that he had heard about in France. Some were techniques mentioned in various publications or new techniques discussed at seminars and trade events. Some were culled from very old wine books that talked about the way things “used to be done”. And, as you would suspect, some things worked well, some did not. But we learned an awful lot in the process.

While we were doing all of this the rest of the local wine scene was not sitting idly by. A host of new techniques came into vogue. Skin contact of white grapes prior to pressing came and largely went (not actually a new technique, as this was quite common in Europe in the pre-modern era). Small lot fermentation of red grapes in open top fermenters, particularly of pinot noir, became more widely practiced. Pre-fermentation maceration of red must became commonplace. Warmer fermentation temperatures, sur lies aging of whites (and some reds), roto-fermenters, micro oxygenation, picking of fruit at “physiological maturity” (sometimes a code name for late harvest), de-alcoholization, specialized enzymes, designer yeast and wild yeast, toasted barrels, barrels with toasted heads and barrels made from three year air dried oak, de-stemming and crushing with stems sometimes added back (with pinot noir in particular), to de-stemmers without crusher rollers in order to keep the berries whole, and no stems, but sometimes whole clusters, added to the fermentation (and no longer just with pinot noir). Membrane presses that were very gentle replaced horizontal basket presses that sometimes ground the grapes a bit. Fining and filtration were heavily utilized and then sometimes abandoned altogether. Long macerations, and short macerations with macerating enzymes to mimic long maceration were used. New varietals and blends of varietals, both based on European wines and wines unique to the New World became commonplace. Bottles went from a few standards, to specialized ones that mimicked early hand made ones, to those that were simply bigger, heavier and more unique. (Who says size doesn't

matter?!). Vineyard designates, once the exception, became commonplace. The list goes on and on. While a few things were truly new, many had been used before and were simply being re-tried. What was once old was new again. A more thorough understanding of microbiology and sanitation, along with better storage and transportation of wine has led to cleaner and better wines. It is difficult to find bad wine these days. That is not to say that all wines are equally pleasing. We all appreciate different things.

And yet, for all of the changes in winemaking, the one thing that, in my opinion, that was truly revolutionary was simply a return to the traditions of old—we evolved from grape growers and winemakers to winegrowers. The realization that wine is not produced in a kitchen or a lab but that it is truly grown has taken hold. Growers are no longer content to simply deliver fruit that meets the minimum standards for sugar and lack of MOG (material other than grapes), the two criteria used to determine penalties and bonuses paid on their contracts. They want feedback from the winemakers. They want to taste wine made from their fruit and they want the name of their vineyard on the label. They have discovered that what they do in the vineyard has a huge impact not only on the finished wine but the bottom line as well. Everything they do, from the choice of rootstock and scion, spacing, training, trellising, canopy management and crop loads has an impact. They have learned to farm for flavor and not for sugar. And winemakers are no longer content to sit in the winery writing work orders for the cellar crew. They are out in the fields and not just at harvest. They have learned that no matter how much talent they have, no matter how good the equipment and how many technological tricks they employ, the ultimate potential of the wine they produce has already been determined by the time the fruit arrives. All one needs to do to see evidence of this is to spend a little time in Saralee's Vineyard during harvest. They sell to a boatload of wineries and there are times during harvest the winemakers in the field outnumber the vineyard crew!

But there is one other big change I have seen over the years. It is how serious wine consumers get information about wine. In the “old days, if you spent time with a good merchant you were often introduced to wines from new and exciting wineries (that is if the winery could get

the merchant to carry the wine in the first place). At the same time a gold medal at the Los Angeles County Fair (or even a silver or bronze) or a mention from one of the early wine writers in a major newspaper was enough to sell a wine. Then, with the growth of *The Wine Spectator* and Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate*, it became about points. For a while, a 90 score was like winning the lottery. Now it usually takes a 95+ to have the same effect. In the interim the phenomenon of the Internet has entered all of our lives. If you want to know something about the wine you just tasted at a party all you have to do is to google it. You can find more than you ever wanted to know. Much of the information comes from the wine chat rooms where anyone can post just about anything. Wineries' grape sources and techniques are often put under the microscope. Arguments can and often do rage about things that most consumers had never even thought of! If you want to make wine and have questions about techniques, the internet is full of information, some good and some dubious, that can make you an instant “expert” without having to get a degree, go to seminars, or visit countless winegrowers asking questions. And in addition to the technical stuff, newly released wines are tasted and reported on minutes after release. For those who have chosen not to provide wine to professional wine journalists, this can be a bit unnerving! It is a real democratization of wine tasting and opinion. And, while it has both its good and bad points, it is with us to stay. We can't put the genie back in the bottle. Consumers, not a handful of journalists and important retailers, now have the power. It is not only the biggest change I have seen in my nearly 30 years of winemaking, it is arguably the best.

Rod Berglund



## NEW RELEASES

### 2006 PINOT GRIS TRENTON STATION

I have always been a fan of pinot gris but the more I drink, the bigger fan I become. Genetically identical to pinot noir, it is differentiated by the pigmentation in the skin (noir means black, gris means grey. By grey the French mean halfway between black and white grapes). With a few odd-ball rosé exceptions, it is almost always made using traditional white winemaking

techniques. In our case that means whole cluster pressing with the juice fermented in older, neutral French oak barrels. However, making pinot noir in the same way, despite the identical genetics, yields a completely different wine. I have never seen an answer for why. In fact I wonder if the question has come up? In any event, viva la difference!

The aromatics of the '06 are quite similar to those of the '05: ripe white peach, quince and honeysuckle with a hint of stone and petrol. The flavors are of bright citrus and minerals. In the mouth it is leaner and crisper than the '05 but still gives the impression of very slight sweetness (both are dry). A very versatile food wine that is also delicious by itself. 98 cases bottled.

### 2006 PINOT NOIR CUVÉE DE TROIS

When we first bottled this wine, from the 1999 vintage, I never expected it to be much more than very tiny part of our production. With the 2006 vintage it became 20%. Part of it is the price. It is hard to find really good pinot noir at this price. However, a lot has to do with the fact that it is a very good wine. Although it is a blend, we put every bit as much care and effort into making this wine as we do with our other pinot noirs. In fact it includes all of our vineyard designated pinot noirs, including our Estate. Each year, in early August, I taste through all of our pinot noir barrels and rate them on a five point scale (++ , + , 0 , - , --). Anything less than 0 (which is not bad, simply not a wowser) is kicked out. I then put together trial blends of each of the vineyard lots. Just because a barrel gets 2+'s doesn't mean it automatically goes into the vineyard blend. Often times some 0's, which are often subtle and nuanced, are needed to produce a wine of distinction that also exhibits the terroir of the vineyard. Once I have come up with the proposed vineyard lots, I then try a trial blend of what is left. Usually I need to do some horse-trading with the potential vineyard lots to make the Cuvée de Trois work. Does it have a little too much oak? Does it need a little more spice (from the Estate), could it use a little more structure and tannin (from the Great Oak)? It is not easy but it is important as it is meant to represent the terroir of the Russian River Valley as a whole. And each year when I finally put the blend together I lose a lot of sleep wondering if I did the right thing.

Fortunately, we have yet to produce a loser! Hopefully the string will continue!

This year's version is definitely a reflection of the vintage. The wine is a little lighter in color but has wonderful, pretty aromatics of red berries, cherries, and spice with a very slight hint of mint and cinnamon. In the mouth it is quite bright but the acidity plays a supporting role to the freshness of the fruit. Quite delightful now, it should drink well over the next 3-4 years. 2004 cases bottled

### 2005 PINOT NOIR TRENTON ESTATE

The Estate is always our flagship wine. It is not because we own the vineyard. It simply *is* the vineyard.

As I have mentioned before, I love the 2005 vintage for pinot noir. While most of them offer a lot on release, it is clear that the best will handsomely reward aging. This one certainly will. It is fairly dark, very dense, with a powerful nose of deep cherry, forest floor, wild violets, black walnut, and raw stone (I am not just making this up! Really!) In the mouth the first impression is of dark fruit, earthy spice, and fresh wild cherry pie. Both the tannin and acidity are in perfect balance, framing the lush fruit and giving it weight and length. If you intend to drink it within the next few years we suggest decanting, or, at least drinking it over several hours, or perhaps even a day or two. 235 cases bottled.

### 2005 PINOT NOIR GREAT OAK

Our friends Jim Jordan and Sandra Poysa really embarked on a labor of love when they planted this vineyard, which is fortunate for us. When you grow grapes in this beautifully rugged location you have to do it for love because the economics of doing it are abysmal. Production has hovered around 1 ton per acre and the cost to farm it are far and above what it costs in many valley floor vineyards. We have been working with them to try to ratchet up production to at least the break-even point but progress has been slow. However, the quality of the wines is pretty amazing!

The pinot noir grapes are planted in five different blocks that are all harvested and vinified separately. Putting together the blend each year is a challenge because the largest block typically produces a wine of such deep color with so much tannin and richness it is very syrah like. A couple of

the smaller blocks produce wines that are amazingly aromatic, complex, and exotic. Too much of the one block and all of the character of the others is lost. For this reason we have only bottled a few barrels for the vineyard blend and the rest has given strength and character to the Cuvée de Trois. The '05 is all about dark fruit. Black raspberry, black cherry, dark plum, licorice and maybe even a hint of cassis. There is also something very wild there; even so it is quite elegant. I have a very difficult time describing this wine as it is rich and powerful yet has a grace to it as well. It should cellar well for quite a few years. 140 cases bottled.

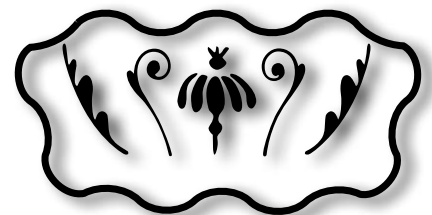
### 2004 SYRAH GREAT OAK VINEYARD

Like the pinot noir from this vineyard, the syrah vines yield very little fruit but it is amazingly concentrated.

Our California broker, Paul Bullard, described it as "tremendous syrah. Bowling ball in the mouth with deep black fruits, cedar shavings, and earth. Very powerful and dense on the back palate. An ager again." I would add that it has a lot of the classic syrah deep violet and English saddle leather aromas. 53 cases bottled.

### 2005 TANNAT MATHEW'S STATION

From another of Rich and Saralee's Kunde's amazing properties. Tannat is a relatively obscure varietal responsible for Madiran, a red wine from France's southwest corner, near the Pyrenees. Described by English wine writer Jancis Robinson as possessing aromas of fresh crushed black raspberries and being fiercely tannic, it is also supposed to benefit from very long bottle aging. Ours is not fiercely tannic and I am not sure why. In the fermenter it was nearly undrinkable (sort of like biting into a quince). However much of the tannin dissipated early on and we ended up with a very surprising, spicy, berry fruited (yes, black raspberry) wine of unique character and distinction. Unfortunately we made very little of this first effort and don't expect it to hang around long. 22.5 cases bottled.



Joseph Swan Vineyards  
2916 Laguna Rd  
Forestville, CA 95436

PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT #470  
SANTA ROSA, CA

Return Service Requested

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Weekends in February and March (excepting barrel tasting weekends): Tasting of new releases

Russian River Wine Road Barrel Tasting: First and Second Weekends in March, Friday, Saturday & Sunday (February 29-March 1, 2, March 7, 8, 9). We will be open 11-4 these six days. This is no longer a free event. A \$20 fee per weekend will be charged. This gets you a wristband, glass and access to over 100 Northern Sonoma County wineries pouring barrel samples. We will be pouring 2006 Zinfandels and Syrahs and perhaps a surprise! See if you can figure out who was the male model for this year's poster. No prizes offered and no wine drinkers were harmed in its production. For a complete list of participating wineries or to purchase tickets, go to [www.wineroad.com](http://www.wineroad.com)

Futures Offering: We will be offering futures of the wines poured during barrel tasting through the end of March. If you cannot attend and would like to purchase futures, contact us at [joe@swanwinery.com](mailto:joe@swanwinery.com).

Crab and Fennel Fest: Saturday March 1st at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds. This sells out quickly each year. For information or tickets go to [www.rrwr.org](http://www.rrwr.org)

Florida in Late March: We will be in Florida in the latter part of March and may be doing some winemaker dinners. The details have not been finalized but if interested, let us know and we will keep you abreast.

Texas in May: See above

Next Release Date: Tentatively Memorial Day Weekend!

Rod & Lynn & Pappy Berglund, Karen Guenther & Cody Sapieka

# JOSEPH SWAN VINEYARDS

2916 Laguna Rd., Forestville, CA 95436

Fax 707.575.1605 Ph. 707.573.3747 www.swanwinery.com

We are open 11 to 4:30 Saturday & Sunday for tasting & sales and Monday & Friday by apointment.

## Spring 2008 New Release Order Form

	Btl.	Qt.	
2006 Pinot Gris Trenton Station Vineyard	_____	\$20.00	_____
2006 Pinot Noir Cuvée de Trois	_____	\$28.00	_____
2005 Pinot Noir Trenton Estate Vineyard	_____	\$52.00	_____
2005 Pinot Noir Great Oak Vineyard	_____	\$38.00	_____
2004 Syrah Great Oak Vineyard	_____	\$38.00	_____
2005 Tannat Mathew's Station Vineyard	_____	\$25.00	_____
Total from above			_____
10% Case (12 btls or more) Discount			( _____ )
Sub Total			_____
**Sales Tax 7.75%			_____
Shipping			_____
Grand Total			_____

Delivery address, Residence \_\_\_\_\_ Business \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 C/o \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Check enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check# \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please charge my Visa \_\_\_\_\_ MC \_\_\_\_\_ AE \_\_\_\_\_  
 Account # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**All orders must have a daytime phone number & e-mail address**

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

SHIPPING GROUND:	3 btls,	6 btls,	12 btls,
CA, OR, NV	\$19.00	\$23.00	\$31.00
AZ, CO, ID, NM, WA, WY	19.00	24.00	34.00
IA, MO, MN, MT, NE, SD, TX	21.00	28.00	41.00
CT, DC, FL, GA, IL, KY, ME, MI,	22.00	30.00	45.00
NC, NJ, OH, RI, SC, TN, VA, WI, WV			

AK, HI Air only - for second day air and other locations please call.

**If at all possible please ship to a commercial business address. Someone 21 or older must sign for shipment.**

Winery use only
Order received date _____
Entered date _____
Packed date _____
Shipped date _____
Hold for pickup _____
Comments _____

\*\* (Out of state residents paying for shipment out of state, to the above states, at the time of ordering, can omit sales tax).