

Joseph Swan Vineyards

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June 2003

SUMMER 2003 NEWSLETTER

I have frequently admitted to having suffered from writer's block. However, I haven't copped to my worst affliction: having hit the wall when it comes to writing wine tasting notes or even being able to verbalize them. At one time I prided myself on my wine tasting notes. I could taste a wine and write notes that even years later I could return to and be confident that they not only reflected what I thought of the wine on that occasion, but accurately predicted what I thought that the wine would do over time. At some point I tired of writing notes (and later trying to decipher them) and began to rely more on my memory. When asked about a wine I had tasted, I would often be able to give a good accounting. I was never able, as our good friend the infamous Michael Ripley-Lotee is, to not only remember the wines I had tasted but also to remember everyone else who had tasted it in my presence, but I did have a pretty good taste memory. The problem when writing tasting notes is that they are very personal. When I comment that a wine has too much oak, not enough acidity, or lacks elegance, it is against my background of tasting and my expectations. It really doesn't have lot to do with what other people expect. When writing a newsletter you have to tread a very fine line. You need to express yourself honestly while trying to convey a sense of excitement about the wines, and to communicate in a way that the reader, with very different expectations, will understand. The master of this in my opinion is the importer Kermit Lynch. I must confess to having bought wines from Kermit that never met my expectations but, when I went back and re-read his notes, realized that the only problem was that my expectations were different than his. He rarely talks directly about the wine, but, rather about what the wine represents. He speaks of terroir, of personality, of history, tradition, and the character of the vintage. When he does talk about flavors, aromas, and textures of the wine, he couches it in terms that few who don't have his experience will

understand. What he does give you is a sense of the wines' personality, its reasons for being, and connects you with those who grew it. If for no other reason (and there are plenty of others) I have bought and enjoyed countless KLWM wines over the years.

Our friend, Becky Wasserman, is one of the most respected wine personalities anywhere. For over 25 years she has represented some of the best domaines in Burgundy. During this time she has just about seen it all. When I visit with Becky and her husband Russell and their good friend Clive Coates, MW, the conversation is always interesting. A mutual friend forwarded a small missive that Becky had written about tasting notes. I am reprinting it here with her permission.

"I detest wine scoring. Therefore I am condemned to both read and write tasting notes and after twenty-five years in the wine trade I must confess to both depression and desperation regarding the current language of wine (including my own). In 1919 a fellow named Strunk published a small book about writing called 'The Elements of Style'. He was concerned about the takeover of advertising language, and when we read today's appalling descriptions of various wines, it is evident that Strunk saw far into the future, and alas, he was not wrong. As an exporter with close to a hundred small estates in the portfolio and over a thousand references, I quake when asked for descriptors and am thinking seriously of tinkering with the blurbs found on the back label of a bestseller and sending them off to our customers. For instance: 'this wine has a sense of gravitas and intelligence utterly beyond lesser winemakers in the appellation....this is a wholly satisfying wine which cleverly subverts tradition and expectation... and you will certainly rush to buy the next vintage'. 'a genuine masterpiece, the first great Burgundy of the twenty-first century...' '...a major wine....a major winemaker....a big, beautiful wine.....' So much

better than gobs and oodles of cherryberry fruit, roasted stones, and sweaty saddle leather. It is very hard to describe fine wines, particularly those of Burgundy where the two grape varieties are what I call interpreter grapes with no taste of their own and the responsibility of showing off the various 'terroirs'. Aromas are at best fleeting and exceedingly complex, the colours display a palette worthy of a gemmologist's trained eye. It is easier to tackle the body of a fine Burgundy, to note tannins when they are present, to talk of lightness or heaviness (although any reference to delicacy and finesse is almost a guarantee that such bottles will gather dust on a retailer's shelf). The subject is of great importance because the potential customer believes in the written word and is puzzled, disappointed, and downright cross when he or she has carefully read a case card or a review only to find that the wine, as it is served, possesses few of the characteristics of its publicity other than the visible fact of being white or red. I recently read a book, 'Wine-Tasters' Logic, Thinking About Wine and Enjoying It', by Pat Simon. The short chapter on 'Wine Words' is well worth the price of admission. He enters a plea for precision: if one would like to use the word 'steely', put a piece of ordinary steel into one's mouth and note the sensations. (He also advises courtesy and patience when listening to someone else's jargon). Therefore, I enter a plea for more sober, less fanciful 'communicators' dosed with a small measure of originality. A language that embraces Mr. Simon's 'sérieux' but does not dismiss the thought that a crisp Chablis might be compared to Fred Astaire."

Becky Wasserman Hone
Burgundy, March 12th, 2003

It is with Becky's words in mind that I set myself to the task of writing yet another set of notes. I am hopeful that they are brutally honest yet interesting enough to entice you to buy at least a few bottles of our wines. If not, I guess I will have to simply resort to points the next time or perhaps vintage of the century comments and regale you with stories of finishes that seem to last forever and their ratings on the modified hedonistic scale. Until then, drink well and more importantly, drink often! (Only in moderation of course).

**DRINK WINE
OFTEN!**



NEW RELEASES

2002 Gewürztraminer Saralee's Vineyard

A lot of wines are like the latest pop star or Hollywood starlet. Lots of makeup and flash can make up for a lack of substance and real beauty. However, once in awhile you run across one that is a natural beauty. They are like those lucky people that even first thing in the morning, with a bathrobe on and before their first cup of coffee, are still beautiful because it is a natural beauty. Maybe not a "wow" at first glance but then you realize that this is real beauty. No make up, no PhotoShop retouching, no special lighting—just basic beauty the way nature intended. This wine is like that. No malo-lactic, no oak, no residual sugar. Just loads of varietal character, perfume, elegance and flavor. Bone dry. Refreshing. Delicious. I had to struggle with selling this one. Part of the problem was trying to figure out how much of it I could drink over the next year. Another part of the problem was trying to find out how much a liver transplant would cost if I actually drank that much. In the interests of good health I have decided to sell a bit of it. The price is too low but we may make up for it if we make it again this year.

Tasting Notes:

Very pale straw color. Nose of lychee, ruby grapefruit and spice. In the mouth quite rich but definitely not sweet. A strong mineral component. Long finish, good but not excessive acidity. Not a hint of bitterness that often mars dry gewürztraminer. (Totally dry, 0% residual sugar). 42 cases bottled

2001 Pinot Noir Cuvée de Trois

I am sure that all of you have heard about the two-buck-Chuck phenomenon by now. While lots of people may enjoy drinking Central Valley bulk wine livened up with a little bit of oak sawdust that is bottled and delivered to Trader Joe's less than a week after bottling, it doesn't ring my bell. However I am glad that people are drinking it. At least they are drinking wine! However, an article in the San Francisco Chronicle that equated it with \$20 wine sort of got to me. It is nowhere as good as **this** \$20 bottle of wine. No way. Not even close.

Tasting Notes:

Medium deep ruby color. Aromas of red and black cherries/berries/plums with a hint of forest floor. In the mouth medium deep with flavors echoing the aromas. Moderate acidity, medium tannin, long finish.

Much more structured and a bit more serious than its predecessors. Did I mention that this was only a \$20 wine? In case I didn't, it is only \$20! (Did I pass Marketing 101 yet?) 974 cases bottled.

2000 Syrah Trenton Estate

While I think it is a mistake often committed by winemakers, I have to admit that when making syrah I always think of the syrahs that are benchmarks for me: Jean-Louis Chave's Hermitage Rouge and Thierry Allemand's Cornas. They produce, in my opinion, if not the finest examples of syrah, then at least wines that should be on any list of the world's great syrahs. While I very much enjoy some New World syrahs I still gravitate toward the style of these two benchmark winemakers. In both cases their wines not only respect their terroir, they exemplify it. Both are brilliant winemakers who realize that the strength of their wines is their single-minded dedication to producing the finest wines that their vineyards can produce. (They are also very fortunate that they happen to have great vineyards). While I respect a number of new world producers as well as many of their old world counterparts, I have become a little alarmed by the trend toward the "new world" style of winemaking with syrah. I really believe that wine should reflect its origins. The current emphasis on power and the excessive use of new oak makes me very sad. That being said, I am still trying to dial in our vineyard. It is still fairly young. It is also in a cool climate for syrah. Is it best picked early while the fruit is bright or later with much more richness? Does, as I expect, the use of new oak totally obscure its character? Should it be bottled relatively early to capture its youthful fruit or does longer barrel aging allow for the development of that wild, animal side of syrah that I personally love. Many questions, still few answers. This wine is simply one of many on our road of discovery. Fortunately, I like it.

Tasting Notes:

Initially a bit reduced but with air opens into a elegant, plummy wine with slight hints of animal and violets. Medium body. It should develop additional nuances with time. 136 cases bottled.

2000 Mourvedre Russian River Valley

This little patch of old vines always produces a very unique wine. Grown in an area that would normally be considered too cool to ripen mourvedre, it still manages to achieve full flavor maturity each year with very little difficulty. Perhaps it is due to the vine's

moderate crop level, perhaps due to its unique genetic makeup. Whatever the reason, it is always a thrill to be able to make a little wine from this very important Southern Rhone variety.

Tasting Notes:

Typical liquid black pepper over creamy black plum fruit. Good balance, nice flavors, intriguing complexity. I won't use the word delicate (see Becky Wasserman's notes above) but it does show elegance and finesse. Not as intense as the '99 but may develop some weight over time. In the meantime, it is quite complex and flavorful. 157 cases bottled.

2000 Zinfandel Zeigler Vineyard

Last year when we offered futures on this wine at the March Barrel Tasting, I was slightly underwhelmed. Well, as Joe Swan once remarked to me (when he ranked a wine of his last in a blind tasting and commented that the winemaker didn't have a clue!) "You can't legislate intelligence". (Joe's wine was the near unanimous first place wine in the tasting).

Tasting notes:

Deep berry/plum fruit overlain with very intense black pepper. The aroma is so captivating I almost forgot to taste it. In the mouth it is quite rich but its lower alcohol (14.4%) allows it to retain a sense of elegance. Good but moderate acidity keeps the fruit bright. This wine shows why I insist on using only a minimal amount of new oak on zinfandel. With fruit this good it would be a mistake to tart it up. 222 cases bottled.

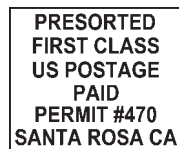
2000 Zinfandel Mancini Ranch

Sometimes it is hard for me to believe that Zeigler and Mancini, both vineyards planted in the 1920's, are across the street from each other. We farm both, harvest using the same criteria, and essentially make the wines the same, yet they are so different. Somehow these differences make sense in Burgundy, France, but are still puzzling here.

Tasting notes:

If the Zeigler is the Anthony Hopkins of zin, this is the Arnold Schwarzenegger. There is absolutely nothing subtle about this wine. Deep ruby color, dense, intense berry fruit in the nose, mouthfilling and lush with a palate that echoes the aromas, and a finish to match. Almost 2% alcohol higher than the Zeigler. It hides it well, giving the impression of sweetness rather than heat. 210 cases bottled.

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Return Service Requested

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

A busy summer is in store for you. There are almost too many events to mention but here are some of the more important ones.

June: New releases will be poured at Joseph Swan Vineyards this month. Check them out. We are open 11:00 to 4:30 Saturdays, Sundays and most holidays.

June 21: Sonoma Odyssey- Swing Time in the Vineyard. A fundraiser for the Sonoma County Wine Library. A fun tasting and auction at Richard's Grove and Saralee's Vineyard. We will be pouring. For information call 707.837.2816.

July 10-13: Kapalua Wine Symposium, Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii. This is a great event if you just happen to find yourself in Maui in July. We will be participating and Rod will be speaking on two panels about Russian River Valley. Information: (808) 669-0244.

July 26: ZAP days in Northern Sonoma County. A special Appellation tasting and panel discussion at Gallo of Sonoma. Rod will be on the Russian River Panel. Information: ZAP 530.274.4904.

August 15-17: Grape to Glass. The pre-eminent Wine Event. Fun, frivolity, but most importantly the opportunity

to meet the growers and winemakers and hear why their vineyards/wines are the best and why their way of doing things is the only way. OK, there really won't be anyone as strident as that, but there will be plenty of opinions (including my own) offered on some really great tours and programs at various venues. It kicks off Friday with an optional canoe trip down the river or bicycle ride, followed by a Salmon bake. Saturday is education day followed by a Russian River style B-B-Q at Saralee's Vineyard cooked by the vignerons themselves. Sunday morning is a farmer's market brunch with a talk by famed chef John Ash. Info: www.rvfw.org or 707.521.2534.

August 21: Winemaker dinner at Sea Ranch Lodge. The winemaker dinner series here is legendary. When asked, we jumped at the chance. The chef will be visiting us in late July or early August to taste the wines and plan the menu. We had lunch there a couple of months ago. The food was memorable but even more memorable was the opportunity to observe a pod of killer whales rounding up their food just off-shore. Grey whales are common here, killer whales extremely rare. While we can't promise any whales, the chance of a great sunset to complement the food and wine is very possible. Info: 707.785.2371 or 800.732.7262x156

September: Another harvest, another release, and for those who bought futures of the 2001 zinfandels, your wines will be available.



NEW RELEASE ORDER FORM



Joseph Swan Vineyards, 2916 Laguna Rd. , Forestville, CA 95436
Fax 707.575.1605 Ph. 707.573.3747 June 2003

of Bottles

_____ 2002 Gewürztraminer, Saralee's Vineyard - Russian River Valley	\$14.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2001 Pinot Noir, Cuvée de Trois - Russian River Valley	\$20.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2000 Syrah, Trenton Estate - Russian River Valley	\$15.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2000 Mourvedre - Russian River Valley	\$16.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2000 Zinfandel, Zeigler Vineyard - Russian River Valley	\$25.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2000 Zinfandel, Mancini Ranch - Russian River Valley	\$25.00 bottle	_____

Ship _____ Date _____

Wine must be picked up/shipped within 6 months or a storage charge will be applied.

Delivery address, Residence _____ Business _____

Name _____

C/O _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Check enclosed \$ _____

Please charge my Visa _____ MC _____ AE _____

Account # _____

Expiration date _____

Signature _____

All orders must have a daytime phone number.

SHIPPING :	3 btls,	6 btls,	12 btls,
UPS-CA	\$12.00	\$15.00	\$20.00
UPS-OR	13.00	16.00	23.00
UPS-CO, ID, NM, WA	14.00	17.00	25.00
UPS-MO, IA,	14.00	20.00	33.00
UPS-IL, WI,	15.00	23.00	36.00
Air only, GA,MN, WV	23.00	32.00	49.00
WY	17.00	25.00	42.00
AK, HI	26.00	36.00	62.00

Total from above	_____
10% Case Discount	_____
Sub Total	_____
**Sales Tax 7.50%	_____
Shipping	_____
Grand Total	_____

At this time we can only ship to California and the reciprocal states. However, if you are not in a reciprocal state and wish to arrange shipping, please contact us. We may be able to put you in touch with a company that will ship on your behalf. Because the sale takes place in California and title to the wine passes to you here at the winery, sales tax is due on all wine except wine shipped to the authorized, reciprocal states, when shipping is paid for at time of order.

Add \$3.50 for home or home business delivery for all air shipments.

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