

Joseph Swan Vineyards

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February 2003

Harvest Fall 2002 Update

When I last wrote about the harvest, we had brought in all of the pinot noir, a little bin of zin, and several other lots. What at that time looked to be a fast and furious harvest slowed down considerably. In fact, it was as long and drawn out a harvest as I can ever recall. We didn't finish bringing in the last of the Mancini Ranch zin and the Estate cabernet sauvignon until the first week of November. We didn't finish pressing until the first week of December!

What happened? Well, the spate of warm weather that pushed those earlier vineyards to ripeness seemed to cause a number of our vineyards, especially in the Piner/Olivet area (where Zeigler and Mancini are), to shut down. That is, the vines, in order to prevent dehydration, closed off the pores on the bottom of the leaves. This also stopped photosynthesis, which brought the ripening to a complete stop. Different vines began to ripen again at different times, without rhyme or reason. Our crew went through these vineyards numerous times, examining each vine and picking only those that were fully ripe. This process, while expensive and time consuming, allowed us to harvest these vineyards at optimum flavor maturity. The harvest, which began in a hurry in September, finally finished in the first week of November, just before some significant rain. The last fermenters were not pressed until early December, nearly 3 full months after the first grapes were harvested.

In The News.....

In case any of you have missed the news the last few months, there is plenty of concern about the health of the wine industry worldwide. After several years of amazing prosperity in the United States and many other wine producing countries, hard times have set in. A stagnating economy, the dot com melt down,

terrorism and worry about war have all taken their toll. This, combined with a world wide grape glut, has resulted in more wine being produced than is being consumed. The good news is that much of that is lower quality wine produced in marginal areas. Inferior vineyards in areas that are not appropriate for growing high quality wine are being removed. Other areas are replanting vast acreage with better grapes and doing a better job of growing them. Wine quality continues to improve and choices for the consumer seem to continue to increase, although many of the labels you might see are actually owned by a handful of large companies that continue to buy up existing brands or create new ones to gain more market share.

Countries such as Australia, with a small population relative to the amount of wine they produce, are redoubling their efforts to gain foreign market share. And, although wine consumption in this country has actually increased (from what is still a relatively small base) much of that increase has been in wines from places such as Australia, which in itself is not a bad thing. What that means though, is that the fruit from the vast new acreage planted in California the last few years that is just coming into production may not find a home. A recent article quoted Christian Miller, director of research at MKF Research, a St. Helena wine-consulting firm, as saying "sales of luxury cabernets, priced at more than \$30 a bottle, are declining as budget-minded consumers switch to lower priced wines. By 2005, there could be a surplus of 2 million cases of luxury North Coast cabs. Clearly, some of that will have to sell at under \$30 a bottle." The article went on to say that the amount of pinot noir grapes harvested in California has doubled since 1998 and that on the North Coast, 36 percent of the state's cabernet vineyards and 40 percent of the pinot noir vineyards

have not yet begun to produce grapes. Clearly there is going to be some tough times for some growers and producers for the next couple of years, especially those who bought in at the height of the boom and are now trying to make payments on their debt. It is sort of like the stock market boom. Those who bought in at the top of the market, in many cases, saw their investments virtually disappear overnight. However, like the stock market, the wine industry is resilient. There have always been and probably always be cycles in this business.

However, it is not all gloom and doom. The last couple of vintages have been wonderful. And, while the news seems to be filled with stories of mega-mergers resulting in the creation of international wine behemoths whose wines are only distinguished by the label, new producers continue to emerge, many with interesting wines that speak more of place than of marketing. And, best of all, thanks to all of you, we are still here producing our own unique wines from some very special vineyards with the help of some very talented growers.

Thanks to you all!

Barrel Tasting Weekend

March 1-2 (official) and Friday February 28 (for us and a few other die-hards) Its time for craziness once again! Come join a few thousand of your fellow wine lovers in enjoying what may very well be the last of the great free wine events! Once again we will be pouring zinfandels from the barrel (2001 vintage) and offering futures on them as well. We will be tasting the Stellwagen, Lone Redwood, Zeigler, Mancini, and, if I am feeling particularly nuts that weekend, the Frati as well. We will be open from 10-5 all weekend. As has been the case the last few years, due to the large numbers of people and the inability of wineries to wash glasses fast enough, you will either need to bring your own favorite tasting glass or purchase a glass for \$5. It will be the same glass as last year, which was a very nice glass. One small plea—our parking is limited and turnaround space small so please, no buses, RV's, limos or Humvee's. For a full listing of participating wineries and what they are pouring, go to www.wine-road.com.

If you cannot make it to barrel tasting but would like to avail yourself of the futures offering, please let us know via phone, fax or e-mail as quickly as possible. We will be offering futures via this avenue for a very limited time.

New Releases

2001 Pinot Gris, Saralee's Vineyard Russian River Valley

We have been making a very small amount of this wine for several years now. As they say, practice makes perfect, and, while it is still not a "perfect" wine (there really is no such thing), I feel that it has gotten better with each vintage. Part of it is the vine's age, and part of it is getting to know the vineyard, deciding on the right moment to pick, and then fine tuning the winemaking. We aren't doing anything radically different than the first vintage. We have experimented with both indigenous and cultured yeast (with very little perceptible difference in the wines) and tried both clones that are planted in the vineyard (again very little difference), but have stuck with barrel fermentation in neutral barrels, allowed it to go through a complete malolactic fermentation and bottled it un-fined and un-filtered.

Tasting Notes:

A less than brilliant appearance due to the lack of fining or filtration. This year's release shows all of the usual lush tropical fruit, hibiscus blossom, peach and honey character with a bit of spice. It is quite lush in the mouth with good balancing acidity. As usual it is very much in the French Alsatian style, and, like most Alsatian wines gives the impression of sweetness although this wine is totally dry. A lovely accompaniment to dishes that scream rich white wine but that don't do well with the massive oak that most chardonnays come with. For those of you who don't do white wine, you might want to give this one a try. 75 cases bottled

2001 Côtes du Rosa Russian River Valley

We have been making this wine for over a decade now and it is still one of the most fun to make. After

picking, the grapes are brought to the winery and then dumped whole into an open top fermenter without any de-stemming or crushing. The fruit is then “treaded”. The French term for this is *méthode ancienne*. After a two-week fermentation with *pigeage* (treading) several time per day, the must is pressed and the wine transferred to older barrels for several months of aging. The resultant wine is often a little rustic but always very flavorful. This year’s version is a little different than past vintages. Perhaps it is the small percentage of old vine white grapes that were included for the first time or it might be due to the fact that the initial *pigeage* was done by a group of women—from the ranch where are horses live and from Lynn’s dance class at her health club. For whatever reason, it is much more “feminine” and polished than past years!

Tasting Notes:

Bright black plum/berry fruit with a hint of its usual “animal” character but in an almost floral way. Very silky, polished mouth feel with little evident tannin. There is enough acidity to keep it bright and fresh. It is drinking beautifully now but should show well for at least 2-3 more years. A sudden temperature drop in the storage area resulted in a precipitation of tartrates in some bottles which does not affect the wine in any way. 188 cases bottled.

**2000 Pinot Noir, Trenton Estate
Russian River Valley**

For most people this wine needs no introduction. It comes from the oldest vines on the Estate, which represent some of the oldest pinot noir vines in the Russian River Valley as well as some of the lowest yielding. In 2000 the crop came in at less than 1.5 tons per acre. The winemaking was consistent with the last several vintages. Twenty percent of the fruit went directly into the fermenters as whole clusters with the balance de-stemmed with minimal crushing. Fermentation was with indigenous yeast and lasted for nearly 4 weeks. After pressing, the wine was settled briefly then racked to French Oak Burgundy barrels (2/3 new) for 15 months of aging on the light lies. During this time it was topped but not racked. It was bottled unfiltered and unfiltered.

Tasting Notes:

Stylistically it reminds me of the '96 (one of my favorites of the decade) in its upfront, forward fruit,

lush mouthfeel and overall immediate appeal. However, like the '96 it has great structure and should continue to improve for at least several more years, eventually becoming an even finer wine than the '96 has become.

Currently it shows a medley of bright red and black berry fruits with loads of spice on the nose. In the mouth it is very full and lush with flavors echoing the aromas, moderate supple ripe tannins and good but not tart acidity. A bottle tasted 4 days after opening showed no signs of fading! 275 cases bottled.

**2000 Zinfandel, Laguna Ridge
Russian River Valley**

From ancient vines (planted the century before last). The only downside to this wine is the very tiny quantity that we were able to produce.

Tasting Notes:

Typical wild sage, cranberry, lavender and red berry fruits in a very intense, almost overwhelming way erupt from the glass. In the mouth it explodes with flavor. It gives the impression of sweetness (technically dry) and tartness at the same time. The finish is very long but not tannic. If past vintages are any indication it should age very, very well. I am not sure what you would pair it with but a classic cassoulet might be a good bet. 32 cases bottled.

**2000 Zinfandel, Late Picked
Sonoma County**

We are not in the habit of producing late harvest wines but the fruit for this wine seemed destined for it. Flavor maturity did not occur until the grapes had achieved very high sugar levels. Fermentation was difficult and after awhile it became apparent that to force it to go dry would be a mistake, so we left a little bit of residual and voila! A late harvest!

Tasting notes:

Very ripe boysenberry/blackberry with a bit of pepper spice. Although the fruit is very black there is no hint of raisin. The brightness of the fruit, the sugar level being just above threshold and the great acidity make it a wine than can go both ways—with rich stews, game and other foods that need both richness and acidity in a wine, or with deserts such as berry cobbler or even chocolate. 142 cases bottled.

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Futures Pickup

The deadline for pickup or shipment of the 2000 zinfandel futures without incurring storage charges has passed. However, for some reason we have a larger than usual number of people who have not managed to pick up their wine this year, so we are extending the deadline until the end of February. After this date all futures remaining will incur a charge for storage to cover the in/out and storage charges our warehouse imposes on us. We will not have futures available for pickup during barrel tasting weekend with the exception of those folks who are traveling from a non-reciprocal state where we cannot ship. In this case only we will have your wine here for pickup provided that you notify us in advance so that we can pull it from the warehouse, pack it and label it. Because most of the people that help us that weekend are here only for that weekend, the chance for confusion and errors is far too great for us to deal with other futures pickups on that weekend. Thanks for your understanding.

E-Mail Newsletter Update

We are still trying to figure out how to generate an e-mail version of this newsletter and get it to you. We had hoped to have the bugs worked out by now but haven't been totally successful. We are continuing to work on it. If you haven't provided us with your e-mail address and would like to be able to receive the newsletter in this fashion, please forward it to us. You can send it to rod@swanwinery.com.

We will be pouring our new releases up until March 30, 2003 (except for barrel tasting weekend). We are open Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00 to 4:30. Thank you, Rod & Lynn Berglund.



New Release Order Form



Joseph Swan Vineyards, 2916 Laguna Rd. , Forestville, CA 95436

Fax 707.575.1605 Ph. 707.573.3747 February 2003

of Bottles

_____ 2000 Pinot Noir, Trenton Estate-Russian River Valley	\$42.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2001 Pinot Gris, Saralee's Vineyard-Russian River Valley	\$15.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2000 Zinfandel, Laguna Ridge-Russian River Valley (limit 4 bottles)	\$34.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2000 Zinfandel, Late Picked-Sonoma County	\$24.00 bottle	_____
_____ 2001 Côtes du Rosa- Russian River Valley	\$14.00 bottle	_____

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

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 :

UPS-CA 3 btls, \$12.00, 6 btls, \$15.00, 12 btls, \$21.00.
 UPS-OR, 3 btls, \$13.00, 6 btls, \$16.00, 12 btls, \$23.00.
 UPS-CO, ID, NM, WA, 3 btls, \$14.00, 6 btls \$17.00, 12 btls \$26.00.
 UPS-MO, IA, NE, 3 btls, \$14.00, 6 btls \$20.00, 12 btls \$33.00.
 UPS-IL, WI, 3 btls, \$16.00, 6 btls \$23.00, 12 btls \$37.00.

Air only-, MN, WV, HI, WY, 3 btls, \$23.00, 6 btls \$32.00, 12 btls \$49.00.

Add \$3 for home or home business delivery.

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



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.

