

# *New World Wines*

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## *Newsletter*

**September 2004**

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As you may remember from previous newsletters September is a busy month for me. Wines must be ordered and shipping organized for October delivery to Bermuda. Apart from re-ordering from existing producers new wines must be evaluated both in terms of their quality and marketability. There is also the process of perusing the wine press for stories or reviews on producers I represent. In this regard, I subscribe to the Wine Advocate (Robert Parker), Decanter, the Wine Spectator, Burghound (a burgundy specialist) and The Vine (Clive Coates' monthly report). While reviews are, of course, subjective you can often get a consensus on which producers are considered the best in their area. As an example all of the above publications agree that *Didier Dagueneau* is the best producer of sauvignon blanc in the Loire. I bring in his Pouilly Fume "Pur Sang" (2002 vintage rated 96 points in the Wine Spectator). Next door in Sancerre my producer is *Alphonse Mellot* recently rated by Michel Bettane (Robert Parker's idol) as the top producer in Sancerre. I bring in several of his wines including Cuvee Edmond (2000 vintage rated 92 points in the Wine Spectator).

I do not buy wines solely based on reviews (when I went to Sancerre I had no idea who Mellot was, his wines just stood out in a comparative tasting) but they often lead you in the right direction.

This summer's travels took me to California, Oregon and London (among other places). In California I was pleased to see the continuing progress of *Deerfield Ranch's* new winery project. I also visited the following:

### ***Whitehall Lane***

I met with Tom Leonardini II and tasted through his range.

#### Merlot 2001

Full of fruit and luscious but with considerable structure. Lovely to drink now and over the next few years.

#### Cabernet Sauvignon 2001

A huge mouthful of fruit but backed by soft tannins. Napa cabernet doesn't get any more delicious than this at the price point.

#### Cabernet Sauvignon (Reserve) 2001

Take the regular cabernet and double the intensity. Destined to be a classic.

### Sauvignon Blanc 2003

Done in the lighter style. Very refreshing and easy drinking with no oak nuances.

### ***ZD Wines***

Brett DeLeuze was away but his brother Robert, the winemaker, took me through the range of current and future releases. I currently carry the cabernet sauvignon from the highly rated 1999 vintage but the 2001 and 2002's are also really good. Other barrel samples of Pinot Noir also showed great promise. Later Robert and his sister Julie (ZD is a real family business) took me to lunch at the Rutherford Diner. Wonderful food, great service.

### ***Merry Edwards***

One of the perks of the wine business is that you often get a chance to meet the winemakers in a social setting. Merry and her partner Ken, invited me to dinner one evening and poured a number of their wines for tasting. I have in stock the Sonoma Coast 2001 and Olivet Lane 2001 bottlings of Pinot Noir and we tasted these and the latest version of her Sauvignon Blanc, the 2003. I had previously tasted the 2002 Sauvignon Blanc and was blown away by the quality. The 2003 was slightly different, rounder with slightly less acidity – the result of two vineyards (both Russian River Valley) being blended in that year. The result, however, was a beautiful seamless wine with no rough edges. It is certainly the best California Sauvignon Blanc I have tasted and stands comparison with the best in the world. I managed to procure 14 cases and it will sell for \$27 a bottle after discount.

### ***Landmark Vineyards***

I met with Mike Colhoun to taste through their range of Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Syrah. I enjoyed the Chardonnay Overlook 2002 and the Damaris 2001 was a step up in quality, really lovely. The highlight however was the Lorenzo 2002. 2002 has already been hyped as a super vintage for Chardonnay (the Wine Spectator rated the vintage 99 points) and the Lorenzo bottling was exquisite. Soft and feminine but with loads of subtle fruit and acidity it is a gorgeous wine. I have previously been unable to acquire any of this but for some reason (the begging and pleading obviously worked) they agreed to sell me 30 cases (out of a production of about 600). While not inexpensive (about \$39 a bottle after discount) it more than justifies its price tag.

### ***Oregon***

My trip to Oregon was to attend the International Pinot Noir Celebration. It is held every year in McMinnville and bring Pinotphiles (as they call themselves) from all over the world. Apart from some interesting seminars there are tastings and wine dinners plus a chance to meet winemakers and other wine personalities. Unfortunately the Celebration coincided with a heat wave with temperatures both days over 100°F – not conducive to drinking wine. I carry ***Patricia Green Cellars*** and ***Beaux Freres*** from Oregon and may add one further winery from the region in the next few months.

Speaking of Chardonnay the 2002's from Burgundy will also be arriving in October. This was a very good vintage and most of the wines are ready to be drunk now and over the next few years. Apart from a range of premier crus from Girardin I will be featuring a

couple of Meursault's from Michel Bouzereau, the St. Aubin's from Hubert Lamy (his Clos de la Chatenierie just received 92 points in the Wine Spectator) and the Pouilly Fuisses from Saumaize Michelin. In addition I have procured a good stock of a lovely unoaked St. Veran "Les Rochats" from Domaine de la Croix Senaillet which should retail at around \$19.

Other new arrivals will include a Beaujolais Morgon 'Cote du Puy' 2002 from Jean-Marc Burgaud which should change most people's mind about Beaujolais (it did mine), some wines from Languedoc, a new selection of Bordeaux and new vintages of old favourites.

In terms of events I am looking at another series of winter wine dinners. Venues are currently being finalized, but at least one will showcase the very top wines from Bordeaux. A bulletin providing dates and information will follow shortly.

Finally Bistro J is putting on a wine dinner on 9th October featuring the wines of BIRDinHAND winery from Australia. A representative from the winery will be on hand to talk about the wines over dinner. Reservations can be made through Jana or Neil at Bistro J - telephone: 296 8546 or email: [bistroj@logic.bm](mailto:bistroj@logic.bm) Further information is contained in the attachment.

Once all the new wines arrive I plan to have an open house so that you will get a chance to try some.

***John M. Sharpe***

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