



West Side Wine Club

July 2008

2008 Calendar

January 16th

Plan for the year

February 20th

Wine Faults and Flaws

March 19th

Bordeaux tasting

April 16th

Other Reds tasting

May 8th

Barney Watson at Chemeketa

May 10th

Chemeketa Tour

May 21st

Rick Mafit of Mystic Wines

June 18th

Michael Brown from Sokol Blosser

July 13th

Sokol Blosser Tour

July 20th

WSWC Annual Picnic!

August 20th

Other Whites

September 19th

Awards Gala!

October 15th

Pinot Noir tasting

November 19th

Pinot Gris / Viognier

December 17th

Speaker?

January 2009

Holiday Party

Next Meeting: Picnic! Sunday, July 20th, 2008 at 1 p.m.

Place: Oak Knoll Winery by Marj's house

Website: <http://www.westsidewineclub.com/>

Message Board: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Westsidewineclub/>

Reminder - No Wednesday meeting in July. Tour and picnic instead.

(Picnic details page 4)

June Meeting Notes

President Don Robinson opened the meeting and we discussed the picnic briefly. The tasting room will be open that day to the public, so we will be located on the lawn by Marj' house.

Michael Brown, Direct Sales Manager for Sokol Blosser, was introduced, and spoke to us on sustainability and how Sokol Blosser is achieving their goals. When SB went organic some years ago, it was a shock to the vineyard for the first few years. The conventional way of growing crops is to use chemicals, which feed the vines and kill the biodiversity. When the chemicals are withdrawn it stresses the vines, and they have to relearn how to access nutrients. The sustainable and organic method is to feed the soil by encouraging biodiversity and tilling in the cover crops grown between the rows. Birds and beneficial insects are also encouraged, as well as composting, recycling and using less energy.

Michael shared some delightful Sokol Blosser Pinot Noir with us, and invites us to email him at Michael@sokolblosser.com with questions so that he will have answers at our tour on July 13.

Sokol Blosser Wine Tour

Sunday July 13th at 11:00 AM

We will be touring the vineyard and winery and tasting wine. Cost to members is \$10. Please RSVP to Mary Schaer at marycschaer@verizon.net

They have a huge deck, picnic areas and a lot of room to enjoy the view. There are gourmet meats and cheeses available for picnicking, and you're welcome to bring your own picnic basket and relax for awhile.





Wine Competitions

The Washington County Fair Wine Competition

Bring your entries to the picnic on Sunday, July 20th. Miriam Schnepf will have entry forms there at Oak Knoll, and will deliver the wines to the fair in Hillsboro at 2-3 pm by closing time. She needs two volunteers to help take entries at the fair on either Saturday or Sunday, the 19th and 20th.

The Washington County Fair awards First, Second, and Third place ribbons (and cash) and a Best-in-Show from the First Place wines. Entries must be received by Saturday, July 19, (between 3pm and 7pm) or Sunday, July 20 (between 10am and 2pm). Wines are displayed during the fair's run.

After the fair on July 27th, Miriam will pick up the wine, money and judge's comments and hold them for the next meeting. People are also free to pick up and drop off their entries on their own.

More information can be found at
<http://www.faircomplex.com/wcf2008/competition.html>

Willamette Valley Grape Growers Group

Meetings are open to everyone who finds it useful. There are no official memberships or dues. They meet the first Tuesday night of the month for a no-host dinner at 6pm, with a speaker at 7pm. Meetings are held at MiNas Restaurant at McNary Golf Course
155 McNary Estates Drive,
Keizer, OR
503-393-4111

For more information contact Growers Groups Program Director Betty O'Brien at eltonvines@yahoo.com

Oregon State Fair Amateur Wine Competition

By 10 am Monday morning, there were already five cases of wine delivered to the Hart of the Garden Building at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem. Four of the five cases were entries from the West Side Wine Club.

Wine Competition Coordinator Elaine Lisle, who commutes from Portland to Salem, is there to check the entries. The amateur and professional wine competitions at the Oregon State Fair are held in this air-conditioned building, and the procedure is identical for both. The wines are tasted blind in flights with quiet concentration, then scored. The only difference is in the makeup of the two judging panels.

The professional wines are judged by people working in the industry. The amateur wines are judged by professional winemakers. Elizabeth Clark of Airlie Winery, Forrest Klaffke of Willamette Valley Vineyards, Jason Bull of David Hill Winery, John Platt of Helvetia Vineyards, and Trudy Kramer of Kramer Vineyards are on the amateur judging panel this year.

By the end of today, Wednesday July 2, 2008, all the entries will be submitted. The wine judging takes place the end of July, and winners are announced shortly before the fair opens on August 22. Best of Show awards are presented at Celebration Oregon! a food and wine extravaganza held in the beautiful Hart of the Gardens that evening. Tickets are now on sale for the celebration August 22, from the fair offices or through Tickets West. Go to <http://www.oregonstatefair.org/things-to-do/or-wine-celebration> for more information.

Amateur winemakers who entered the 2008 wine competition will be invited to attend a private event the end of July, where all the professional entries are available for tasting.

Natural Winemaking

By Dana Blizzard



The topics of “Natural” and “Organic” are hot subjects these days, and after applying them to other parts of my lifestyle I sought out how to apply them to winemaking. A Portland Indie Wine Festival Seminar titled “Natural Winemaking in the Age of Technology” sounded like a good place to start. It was a spirited discussion between 5 panelist, 4 winemakers and a wine journalist, designed to shape the emerging area of Natural Winemaking.

The discussion between Natural and Organic was very interesting*. The two have always been paired so closely, but in winemaking seem to be as different as Pinot Noir and Pinot Grigio. The USDA organic certification requirements are so straight forward that there is little argument for what is organic and what is not. There are two organic wine labels in the US,: (a) “Organic Wine” which has no added sulfites and cannot have more than 10 ppm natural occurring sulfites and (b) Wine “Made with Organic Grapes” which may have added sulfites but total sulfites not to exceed 100 parts per million. Both must be made from grapes that are 100% certified organic.

However “Natural” brings up all sorts of well developed opinions. The panel started with Alice Feiring, a New York Wine Journalist who is so passionate about traditional wine that she wrote the book “The Battle for Wine and Love or How I saved the World from Parkerization”. Needless to say there was some Robert Parker bashing whenever the chance arrived, which I enjoyed. Next on the panel were 2 natural winemakers from Oregon, Doug Tunnell of Brick House wines, and Aaron Leiberman of Cottonwood Winery. Both make and sell wine “made from organic grapes”, but admit that they cannot go to “organic” wine because of the risk of spoilage without adding sulfites.

Agreeing with the risk of spoilage in sulfite free wine was Amy Lillard of La Gramiere, a small winery in southern France. I found her techniques inspiring, and her Grenache the best wine of the night. She ferments her wine naturally, using only the yeast on the grapes and not adding any additional yeasts or nutrients, in large cement vats that used to be part of an old French dairy. She admits that while she would always choose natural fermentations, part of her natural winemaking is forced by the high cost of winemaking equipment and natural winemaking is cheaper and keeps her on her toes.

And finally Clark Smith of Winesmith, who is the greatest juxtaposition of natural winemaking I have ever seen. He has been a winemaker for 30 plus years and now runs his small winery, Winesmith, but also owns Vinovation, a company that will fix problem wines using reverse osmosis, micro oxygenation and anything else that science has to offer. The reverse osmosis allows Clark to take alcohol and water out of wine. He proudly passes out a folder of information about his wine fixing business. One article mentions his display of a bottle of Cabernet Sauvignon that is crystal clear because it is just the alcohol and water that have been taken out through reverse osmosis. He will then add the water and alcohol back to the rest of the colored wine to achieve the desired alcohol level. The ironic part is that in the US it is illegal for commercial wineries to add water to wine to lower the alcohol level and smooth out the wine, but there are no regulations against reverse osmosis, taking the water or the alcohol out of wine, and then adding it back in. Clark estimates that 45% of Californian premium wines are alcohol adjusted.

And then to add to the paradox, Smith’s winery, Winesmith, produces naturally made organic wines, without added sulfites. He has 3 labels: Winesmith, which is his premium wine, Cheapskate and Penny Farthing, his two more affordable wines. We tried his affordable sulfite free wines and several people at my table and I got the smell and taste of spoiled wine. When asked if his premium label, which can produce fewer than 100 cases per varietal, was susceptible to spoilage he said we’d have to spend the \$100 and find out for ourselves.

People are interested in natural winemaking for many reasons, some for the environment, some for health, some for tradition, and some for the exclusivity of terroir. As an amateur I take to heart what Rick Mafit of Mystic Wine said at the May meeting about being conscience of why I do what I do to my wines. If I understand the reasoning behind the adjustment or the method then I can make a great wine naturally.

*There are no regulations for labeling vegan wine, so most people have to contact the winery directly to ask. There are a few websites that list wine they know to be vegan.

West Side Wine Club Annual picnic 1pm Sunday July 20th at Oak Knoll



Willamette Valley Amateur Winemaking Society

Several West Side Wine Club members attended a recent meeting of the WVAWS at Eola Hills Winery. We enjoyed tasting wines, a potluck lunch, and the speaker, Eola Hills winemaker Steve Anderson.

WSWC President Don Robinson spoke to the group about the possibility of sharing a workshop this harvest season with Barney Watson.

WVAWS meetings are usually the 3rd Saturday of the month, and the location varies. For more information, go to the website at <http://www.wvaws.org/>

(Below- Eola Hills Winemaker Steve Anderson)



Oak Knoll



Picnic Details *By Mindy Bush*

Cost: \$5 per member or member couple, guests: \$10
Please come to the sign-in table to pay, sign a waiver, and get your nametag.

Bring your own dishes, glasses and lawn chairs.
Food will need to come already prepared.
Designated drivers are always a good idea.

We need volunteers to prepare and bring proteins (paid for by the club) such as:
Fish
Turkey
Beef
Lamb
Vegetarian dish
Water and ice
(These entrées are negotiable, if someone has a particular favorite they like to prepare that will work as well)

For the potluck (everybody included)
A-J bring salads
K-Q bring side dishes
R-Z desserts

We will also need a handful of folks to stick around and help clean up. I think Craig, myself and the board can handle getting things set up

Please email Mindy Bush at mbush@nortom.com if interested in helping.

For the protection of all WSWC members, a waiver will be signed by everyone attending the picnic. All current and future members will also be requested to sign a waiver as part of the membership requirements. If you have questions, please contact WSWC President Don Robinson at don_robinson_pdx@yahoo.com



President's Musings

Hello WSWC Members!

The warm weather is finally here! Most grape clusters are blooming, but they're still three to four weeks late. Grape growers tell me all harvests in the Willamette Valley will be no earlier than October with some slipping into November! Hmmm, I wonder if a pumpkin-grape wine blend would go well with the turkey?

Michael Brown, the new Director of Sustainability at Sokol Blosser winery, led a fascinating lecture at our June monthly meeting on the green practices used by sustainability pioneer Susan Sokol Blosser. I was unaware that sustainability has become such a broad concept of 'Good to the Earth Practices' where every aspect of the winery/vineyard operations is carefully scrutinized. As one might expect, they organically build the soil through composting the grape pomace with straw and manure and use 'safe' sprays on the plants and berries. But the carbon footprint of the business is closely considered as well. They use biodiesel in their tractors and have a 24 kilowatt solar array to supply 30% of their energy needs. They also changed their glass wine bottles to smaller punts. Being lighter, they saved significant shipping costs as well as decreased health claims by those who move the boxes to pallets.

As leaders in the Green Revolution, perhaps the wine industry will lead the world to a better place. I'll drink to that!

Friday, June 13th was my 'lucky day,' as I turned the ripe young age of 50! Or was I so lucky? Let me see, as a male, I may have only 26 more vintages (on average) to perfect the craft. Will my back hold out? I don't have any kids, so when I age, who is going to help me haul the grapes down the stairs to my cellar? Yes, who'll help me hoist those hefty carboys and unwieldy barrels?

Besides, is life fair? Wine gets better with age, yet humans whine when we age. I'm still trying to figure out when a complaint becomes a review, but I guess I still have a few years to figure that one out.

With no monthly meeting planned in July, I will see you next at the Sokol Blosser tour/tasting on Sunday, 7/13 and a then week later on 7/20 for our Summer Picnic at Oak Knoll!

Happy summer,

Don Robinson
President, Westside Wine Club
971-219-1553

(At left- Don Robinson addresses the Willamette Valley Amateur Winemakers Society)

GrapeRadio is a radio program discussing wine related topics that is broadcast over the Internet using audio & video podcast technology. Take a listen at <http://www.graperadio.com>

Newsletter Submissions

If you have a piece you wrote and would like to share in the newsletter, please send it to:
Luna Hauser
WSWC Secretary
HauserWine@comcast.net



Westside Winemakers Club

Leadership Team – 2008

President: **Don Robinson** don_robinson_pdx@yahoo.com 971-219-1553

- o Set agenda for the year
- o Establish leadership team
- o Assure that objectives for the year are met
- o Set up and run meetings

Treasurer: **Bill Spiller** nrac@msn.com

- o Collect dues and fees
- o Pay bills

Webmaster: **David Ladd**

Web Content Editor: **Rick Kipper**

Secretary: **Luna Hauser** Hauserwine@comcast.net

- o Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
- o Monthly newsletter
- o Keep updated list of members

Chairs of Group Purchases

The chairperson makes the arrangements to purchase, collect, and distribute.

- o Chandler Reach Vineyard – **Mike Fredd** Split_cane@netzero.net
- o Del Rio Vineyard – **Craig Bush** pnoir1@verizon.net **CANCELLED**
- o Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution

Chairwoman of Competitions: **Miriam Schnepf**

- o Work with Washington County Fair staff
- o Encourage club participation in County Fair
- o President will be the contact for the Oregon State Fair.

Chairperson of Education: **Don Robinson** don_robinson_pdx@yahoo.com

- o Arranges for speakers for our meetings

Chairs for Tastings: **Craig Bush** pnoir1@verizon.net
and **Jim Merdink** james_merdink@yahoo.com

- o Conduct club tastings
- o Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chairs of Winery Tours: **Mike Smolak** SmolakM@DimensionResources.com and **Mary Schaer**

- o Select wineries to visit
- o Arrange tours
- o Cover logistics (food and money)
- o Winery Tour 1 – **Chemeketa**
- o Winery Tour 2 – **Sokol Blosser**

Chairs for Social Events: **Open**

- o Summer picnic – Oak Knoll
- o Awards Gala – **Craig and Mindy Bush** pnoir1@verizon.net
- o Holiday Party – **Open**