



# West Side Wine Club

## October 2010

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, October 20 at 7:00 p.m.**

**Place: Oak Knoll Winery**

**Agenda: Pinot Noir**

**Snacks: Barb Thompson, thanks**

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

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

A few reminders:

- 1.) Please bring a wine to share and a two glasses from which to taste.
- 2.) For all our protection, all members must sign a waiver every year. You can also pay 2010 dues at this time.
- 3.) Meetings begin at 7pm and end by 9pm. If you can get there a little early to help set up, please do and help to put away chairs and tables at the end.

Note: Waiver and score sheets can be obtained from our web site (above) under "Current News".

### September Meeting Minutes

Some members arrived late due to traffic problems so Jon opened the meeting at 7:15. Sixteen members were present.

Information and a vineyard block map for Courting Hill Vineyards were passed out.

Jon reminded everyone that Howard Mozeico – Et Fille Wines at August Cellars has Burgundy bottles available this Saturday – September 18 for \$6.25 a case. (Note: Sold out as of 18 September)

Terry Swan also has new Claret style bottles available for \$5 per case. Contact Terry at [terryswan@hotmail.com](mailto:terryswan@hotmail.com) to reserve yours.

Jon mentioned that Eastern Washington is a week to 10 days behind and the Willamette Valley is 2-3 weeks behind.

Jon would like to have a Columbia Gorge tour/tasting sometime this next spring.

A reminder that the crush is rapidly approaching and you should make arrangements for grapes as soon as possible. The first grape pick up through Sammy will probably the end of September with Merlot & Viognier. Jon will notify people who have ordered Viognier through Lonesome Ranch Vineyard.

Jon thought that we could possibly get Robert Brittan, the winemaker from Brittan Winery, to talk about Pinot Noir in February. Also, at a future meeting, winemaker Steve Anderson of Eola Hills Winery to talk about Sulfites.

In the absence of Craig Bush, Don Robinson and Jon Kahrs conducted the wine tasting. Ten wines were tasted. Results in order of tasting were:

- #1 - Zinfandel - Ken Stinger - bronze
- #2 - Dolcetto - Jon Kahrs - silver
- #3 - Sangiovese -Rick Kipper - bronze
- #4 - Syrah - Rick Kipper - no medal
- #5 - Syrah - Barb Thompson - bronze
- #6 - Syrah - Ted Brunner - no medal
- #7 - Syrah - John Hooson - gold
- #8 - Syrah - John Hooson - silver
- #9 - Syrah - Scott Nelson - gold
- #10-Syrah - Terry Swan - gold

It was noted that several of the Syrah wines were made containing 5-10% Viognier.

### **Scheduled Meetings**

**January 8, 2010**

Holiday Party/Awards Gala

**January 20, 2010**

Plan for the year

**February 17, 2010**

Bordeaux tasting

**March 17 2010**

Flaws & Faults & barrel samples, Trudy Kramer

**April 21, 2010**

Speaker; Karl Dinger, Terra Vina Winery

**April 24<sup>th</sup> 2010**

SakéOne tour

**May Winery Tours**

**May 19, 2010**

Speaker; Devin Stinger, Adamant Cellars

**June 16, 2010**

Other whites / Fruit Wine / Mead

**July 18, 2010**

Annual Picnic at Oak Knoll

**August 18, 2010**

Chardonnay Tasting

**September 15, 2010**

Other Reds Tasting

**October 20, 2010**

Pinot Noir tasting

**November 17, 2010**

Pinot Gris/Viognier Tasting

**December ?, 2010**

Elections /Crush Talk



## Websites of Interest

We now have a local guy, Wayne, doing a good Vaynerchuck impression. He rates wines, has a gig called the wine wizard, conducts winery tours in his purple bus and interviews Willamette Valley winemakers (which may be of more interest to WSWC members). The only kicker is he rates wines he also sells at his Alder Street wine shop. His mantra is "tasting the world one glass at a time" catch him at [wineuptv.com](http://wineuptv.com)

The latest issue of Winemaker magazine has a link to an article talking about creative ways to use your grape pomace. Grappa anyone? Check it out at <http://winemakermag.com/component/resource/article/678>

Here is another amateur wine completion you might want to consider entering.

The Cellarmasters Home Winemaking Club 37<sup>th</sup> annual competition. Entries must be received between October 15 and November 12. For rules and entry form go to <http://www.cellarmastersla.org/judging.htm>

There is an interesting article in the October issue of Portland "Mix" magazine. "Drinking with the Garagistes" The Les Garagistes are a cooperative of currently about 20 people who have been making wine in a member's basement (Matt Giraud) since 1994. Read it at <http://www.oregonlive.com/mix/index.ssf/mix-magazine-current-issue.html> when they post the October issue.

WSWC member Francois Serrou was featured in an article in the October issue of Oregon Wine Press in the wine 101 column titled "It Takes A Village". In fact, a photo of him and his winery make up the front cover. Inside he is also mentioned along with two more photos plus his label. If you don't receive the paper, read it at <http://www.oregonwinepress.com/> go to Food/wine then wine 101.

## President's Musings



Winemaking is a hobby of rhythm and theatre. Our pulses liven at the thought of fall. Even our views of the weather are viewed through the eyes of a winemaker. Our most recent warm weather has been a glorious kick for the Eastern Washington/Oregon grapes. Brix have surged and crush has started. Merlot, Syrah and Chardonnay are being harvested as I write this muse. The cool weather of our spring, summer, and fall is leading to greater acidity for Eastern Washington grapes. Even as we worry about the Willamette Valley grapes only being useful for low brix sparkling wine, this same weather adds structure to the veritable "fruit bombs" of the Columbia Valley. While the Willamette Valley grapes struggle to gain brix, perhaps Eastern Washington/Oregon may be in for a vintage that ages well and maintains acid. One type of weather can be bad for one AVA may not be bad for another...

I received a note from Mark at Borgo Pass Vineyards (I recently heard that the vineyard's name also graces a pass in the Carpathian mountains which leads to "Dracula's castle" in Bram Stoker's "Dracula"). Mark noted a brix of 19-20 on the last day of September. It is going to take weeks to get the brix up to 22 much less 23. Sunnyside is estimating a harvest on October 20<sup>th</sup>. So the quality of our pinot harvest may vary quite a bit. It will be a long battle for winemakers. I used to really despise 2007 pinots when they first flooded the market. Now they are some of my favorites. The structure and fruit shines through unlike other years that have aged in a big way. There is a refreshing quality to wines made in that year. So we can be hopeful that what looks like a poor year may yet be saved. But like all pinot, it is the vineyard managers who determine if they want to let the grapes sit outside and hope for a few extra brix that might make a difference.

After our last tasting of "Other Reds" I have been kept awake at night. Why doesn't anyone make Southern Rhone style wines? In our club, most people make Syrah derived Rhone mixes. This is typical of the Northern Rhone region in such famous viticulture areas as Cote Rotie and Hermitage. As I tasted the wines I became curious about to what extent we are actually reflecting the Rhone origins of the grapes. I am a pinot person so this is a new and interesting question for me. It seems like our club members avoid some of the mixes that are classic with Côtes du Rhône and Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Of course most Southern Rhone wines would be incomplete without Grenache. In fact, this grape is the cornerstone of French Southern Rhone and Spanish wines, where it is known as "Grenacha". So I decided to order some Grenache and see what I can come up with. Having had my curiosity peaked I looked into what a typical Southern Rhone might be like and decided on a mix: 40% Grenache, 17% Mourvedre, 17% Syrah, and about 5% Viognier. I think the mixing of white wines into Rhone reds is a fairly unique mark of a Southern Rhone although they often use Roussanne and Marsanne instead. There are a lot of interesting areas that our club has yet to fully explore whether it is Rhone reds, Spanish whites or sparkling wines. As we develop our tours for next year, hopefully we will provide a variety of interesting experiences that will enliven and refresh your enthusiasm for new wines and new frontiers in wines.

Whatever wine you decide to make this fall, have fun making it and enjoy it with friends.

Jon Kahrs, President  
WSWC

## Rethinking American vs. French oak

Most of the world's fine wines are aged in wooden casks or barrels. While there are other determinants of a wine's quality, such as the vineyard and the skill of the winemaker, the period of up to several years in wooden "cooperage" or barrels has a significant influence on the ultimate character of the wine.

Wine is aged in wooden barrels, as opposed to stainless steel tanks, to enhance the flavor, aroma and complexity of the wine through the extraction of substances from the wood into the wine, and to allow air (oxygen) to come in contact with the wine to allow a slow, gradual oxidation process. The influence of barrel aging on the character of a wine varies based on several factors, including the type of wood used, the age of the barrel, the techniques used to make the barrel, barrel size, thickness of the staves (the individual strips of wood which form the barrel), cellar humidity and the length of aging.

### Why Oak?

Historically, the type of wood the winemaker chose was a question of tradition, wine variety, economics and personal taste. Redwood was commonly used in the construction of puncheons or uprights many times larger than the traditional 60-gallon oak barrel. But it is no longer used because it is too rigid to allow bending of the staves and it imparts a yellow tint to the wine. Chestnut, although high in tannin, is too porous and must be coated with paraffin to prevent excessive wine loss through evaporation. Oak, on the other hand, due to its strength, workability and lack of undesirable flavor or color extractives, is used almost exclusively in the barrel aging of fine wines. Oak has a relatively tight grain which permits a more gradual extraction of wood flavors and minimizes wine loss through evaporation. It also is resilient, enabling staves to be bent without breaking and unlike other hardwoods such as apple or cherry, has a neutral wood smell. Oak is high in tannin, which in proper amounts is an important flavor component as well as allowing red wines to age by gobbling up oxygen, which would otherwise spoil the wine.

### The Cost Factor

Coopers demand higher quality and pay higher prices for oak than do furniture manufacturers. As a result, oak barrels are expensive. The world's great wines command a high enough price and have sufficient aging potential to justify the expense of oak barrels. However, they are not necessarily appropriate for all grape varieties. Less expensive and lighter, more delicate wines such as Riesling, Chenin Blanc, Gewurztraminer, some Sauvignon Blanc and certain red grape varieties such as Gamay (Beaujolais) are bottled and intended to be consumed when still young and fruity. Oak would mask their fruit aromas and would certainly not be justified in terms of cost. Instead, these wines are aged in stainless steel tanks under cool temperatures for a few months to preserve their varietal character.

### French vs. American Oak

There is a difference of opinion between the majority of winemakers who insist on French oak and the growing minority using American oak. In the United States, white oak, grown in Virginia, Missouri, Kentucky, Oregon, and Ohio, is the species used for barrels. It is preferred over red and black oak due to its tighter grain which minimizes evaporation of wine from the barrel and its resistance to shrinkage after wine is removed, an important feature in preventing wine from leaking out of a newly-filled barrel, and its high tannin content.

French white oak is harvested from several different forests in France. The most common forests are Limousin, Alliers, Vosges, Tronçais and Nevers, each producing oak that imparts slightly different nuances of flavor to the wine. The tightness of the grain, which determines the rate of extraction of these flavors, also varies among forests. Winemakers typically use a blend of barrels from different forests to take advantage of the unique characteristics of each. This notion of regional character does not exist with American oak. Winemakers using American oak are more concerned with the reputation of the cooper than in exactly which state the oak was grown. Beyond the variation among forests, the character of oak can vary among trees within a given forest due to factors such as growth conditions and age. The traditional 60-gallon oak barrel contains approximately 31 staves from a variety of trees. A cooper's reputation is established on the basis of his ability to make a uniform product from year to year. While

winemakers expect variation in grape quality from vintage to vintage, consistency in the new barrels they purchase from one year to the next is critical. As wineries have sought to lower production costs, the demand for American oak has increased dramatically. More winemakers have substituted American oak barrels costing considerably less than French oak. This trend has prompted renewed scrutiny of the differences between American and French oak. While both American and French oak contribute tannin and aroma, French oak contains more tannins and flavor components and has a less obviously “oaky” flavor and smell than American oak. American oak has a more aggressive mouth feel and immediately apparent aroma. American oak contains more vanillin (vanilla aroma) and more odorous compounds. It was thought American oak’s somewhat harsh, raw character ruled out its use for white wine and made it desirable for aging powerful, robust red wines such as Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Petite Syrah. But coopers in California have been successful in reducing the undesirable characteristics of American oak by applying production techniques traditionally used by French coopers. For example, the newly cut stave wood is stacked outside to air-dry for a minimum of 18 months instead of the more expedient kiln or oven drying. Air-drying exposes the wood to periods of rain and drying which leach out excessive harshness while retaining desirable components such as vanillin, 70% of which is lost during artificial drying. And “toasting” of the barrels is carried out more slowly over a lower heat, allowing a deeper penetration of the flame. In the past, American oak barrels were flash-fired, resulting in a heavy char suitable for aging bourbon.

### **Differences of Opinion**

Despite the progress in making American oak barrels more appealing, some winemakers remain adamantly opposed to its use in any form, particularly for white wines. “I wouldn’t let an American oak barrel near my Chardonnay. I am trying to make a more delicate, refined style of Chardonnay and I feel American oak would overpower the nuances that I want to achieve,” comments Bill Hunter, winemaker at Hunter Cellars in Sebastopol.

Robert deLeuze, winemaker at ZD Winery in Napa, who uses 100% American oak in his Chardonnay remarks, “In cooking, you use different spices depending on what you are making and what spices you like. The same is true of oak in winemaking. For the rich, powerful style of Chardonnay we’re making. American oak gives us what we want. If American oak has gotten a bad rap it could be because the low price makes people think it is low quality before even trying it. In fact, American barrels in the past may not have been suited to wine. They were originally air-dried for one year and given a heavy char to age whiskey in. As such, they were inappropriate for wine storage.”

Dick Steltzner of Steltzner Vineyards in Napa defends his use of French oak in terms of its role in aging. “American oak flavors are flashier and more up front and fade after a few years instead of developing like French oak.” Referring to the new developments in American oak production Steltzner feels that air-drying may leach out excessive tannins, but does not change the nature of the extract.

While the majority of winemakers side with Steltzner, several producers including Silver Oak, Ridge and Beaulieu Vineyard (Georges de Latour) use 100% American oak for aging their red wines. The late Justin Meyer, the former owner and winemaker of Silver Oak Vineyards said, “Originally, we experimented by putting our wine in different oaks and tasted the results blind. We preferred the American oak. Every winemaker looks for something different. If you conducted an experiment and five winemakers tasted the results, you would get five different responses. There is no right or wrong.”

Paul Draper, Winemaker at Ridge Vineyards in Cupertino, uses 100% American oak for aging his Zinfandel, Petite Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon (with the exception of his Montebello Cabernet Sauvignon, which is 50% American oak). “When we started making wine in 1969 we were California chauvinists, we didn’t want to make a California Burgundy or California Bordeaux. We liked the wines we made with American oak. At that time a French oak barrel cost \$59 versus \$35 for an American oak barrel so the economic motivation to use American oak wasn’t as great as it is today.”

The debate over French versus American oak is a lively one; it would be an oversimplification, however, to limit the oak question to the choice between American and French oak. Other factors such as the cooper, toast levels, wood grain, cellar conditions and length of aging all have an important influence on the wine.

(Supplemental)

## **Wine Barrel Sizes**

From years of experience throughout history, the optimal size of a wine barrel has evolved to be between fifty and sixty gallons. It has been found that wine barrels of smaller (or even larger) sizes than the 'standard' wine barrel do not make wines of as high quality.

The ratio of the surface area to volume for a barrel is dependant on the size of the barrel. It has been found (mostly by experimentation over the years) that a fifty to sixty gallon barrel contains the optimal ratio of surface area to volume for making wine.

Due to the large surface area to volume ratio of smaller wine barrels (say five gallons) - the rate at which the wine absorbs the oak 'flavor' is much greater than the rate in a fifty to sixty gallon barrels. As a result, wine aged in smaller wine barrels may become too 'oaky' tasting if left in the barrel too long.

### **The optimal surface area to volume ratio for wine barrels**

Doing the math shows that:

An approximation of the ratio of barrel surface Area / barrel Volume =  $2 / \text{mean radius}^*$

Comparing this relationship for three sizes of wine barrels:

A five gallon wine barrel has a radius of about 6 inches, ratio = 0.33

A fifteen gallon wine barrel has a radius of about 8 inches, ratio = 0.25

A sixty gallon wine barrel has a radius of about 12 inches, ratio = 0.17

Applying the formula shows that a sixty gallon wine barrel has an area to volume ratio of about half that of a five gallon oak barrel thus half as much wood per unit of volume.

\*Radius used: using [(end radius) - (center radius)] / 2 + (end Radius) is an approximation.

## **Varietal of the month**

**Grenache** (pronounced *gren-ash*) (in Spanish, **Garnacha**.) is one of the most widely planted red wine grape varieties in the world. It ripens late, so needs hot, dry conditions such as those found in Spain, the south of France, and California's San Joaquin Valley. It is generally spicy, berry-flavored and soft on the palate with a relatively high alcohol content, but it needs careful control of yields for best results. It tends to lack acid, tannin and color, and is usually blended with other varieties such as Syrah, Carignan and Cinsaut.

Grenache is the dominant variety in most Southern Rhône wines, especially in Châteauneuf-du-Pape where it is typically over 80% of the blend. In Australia it is typically blended in "GSM" blends with Syrah and Mourvèdre. Grenache is also used to make rosé wines in France and Spain, notably those of the Tavel district in the Côtes du Rhône. And the high sugar levels of Grenache have led to extensive use in fortified wines, including the red vins doux naturels of Roussillon such as Banyuls, and as the basis of most Australian fortified wine. The French vermouth industry uses Grenache blended with Muscat to make its world-famous dry vermouth wines.

Evidence suggests that Grenache is most likely of Spanish origins, with the northern region of Aragon being its likely home. A competing theory has the Italian island of Sardinia (where the grape is known as Cannonau) as the possible originating source with the vine being introduced to Spain sometime in the 14th or 15th century when Sardinia was under Aragon rule. Grenache, under its Spanish synonym Garnacha, was already well established on both sides of the Pyrenees when the Roussillon region was annexed by France. From there the vine made its way through the Languedoc and to the Southern Rhone region where it was well established by the 19th century.

California wine growers prized the vine's ability to produce high yields and withstand heat and drought conditions. The grape was extensively planted throughout the hot San Joaquin Valley where it was mainly used as a blending component for pale, sweet jug wines. In the late 20th century, the Rhone Rangers movement brought attention to the production of premium varietal Grenache and Rhone style blends modeled after the Grenache dominate wines of Châteauneuf-du-Pape. In the early 20th century, Grenache was one of the first *Vitis vinifera* grapes to be successfully vinified in during the early development of the Washington wine industry with a 1966 Yakima Valley.

Grenache is often used as a blending component, adding body and sweet fruitiness to a wine. The grape can be troublesome for the winemaker due to tendency to oxidize easily and lose color. To compensate for the grape's naturally low tannins and phenolic compounds, some producers will use excessively harsh pressing and hot fermentation with stems to extract the maximal amount of color and phenols from the skins. This can backfire to produce green, herbaceous grape's characteristic vibrant fruitiness. To maintain a long, slow fermentation at cooler temperatures against oxidation, the wine should be racked as little as with retaining color and preventing oxidation but too of Grenache.



# West Side Wine Club Leadership Team – 2010

President: **Jon Kahrs** [jekahrs@aol.com](mailto:jekahrs@aol.com)

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

Treasurer: **Bill Spiller** [nrac@msn.com](mailto:nrac@msn.com)

- Collect dues and fees, update membership list with secretary
- Pay bills

Secretary: **Ken and Barb Stinger** [kbstinger@frontier.com](mailto:kbstinger@frontier.com)

- Communicate regularly about club activities and issues
- Monthly newsletter on first Wednesday
- Prepare meeting agenda
- Keep updated list of members, nametags and other data
- Club message board invitations

Chairperson of Education: **Craig Bush** [pnoir1@verizon.net](mailto:pnoir1@verizon.net)

- Arrange speakers for our meetings

Chairs for Tastings: **Craig Bush** [pnoir1@verizon.net](mailto:pnoir1@verizon.net)

- Conduct club tastings
- Review and improve club tasting procedures

Chairs of Winery Tours: **Mike Smolak** [SmolakM@DimensionResources.com](mailto:SmolakM@DimensionResources.com)

- Select wineries to visit
- Arrange tours
- Cover logistics (food and money)
- Winery Tour 1
- Winery Tour 2

Web Content Editor: **Rick Kipper** [kips@lycos.com](mailto:kips@lycos.com), [rckipper@bpa.gov](mailto:rckipper@bpa.gov)

Webmaster: **David Ladd**

Chairs of Group Purchases **Sammy Nachimuthu** [murugasamy\\_nachimuthu@yahoo.com](mailto:murugasamy_nachimuthu@yahoo.com)

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

- Chandler Reach Vineyard – **Sammy Nachimuthu** [murugasamy\\_nachimuthu@yahoo.com](mailto:murugasamy_nachimuthu@yahoo.com)
- Del Rio Vineyard – **Craig Bush** [pnoir1@verizon.net](mailto:pnoir1@verizon.net)
- Supplies – These should be passed to the President for distribution

Chairwoman of Competitions: **Miriam Schnepf** [mowntnwmn@mac.com](mailto:mowntnwmn@mac.com)

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

Chairs for Social Events: **Barbara Stinger and Sammy Nachimuthu**

- Awards Gala/Holiday Party