

L'AVENTURE NEWSLETTER

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>2004 Harvest Notes</i>	2
<i>Syrah, west side star</i>	2
<i>Meet Dagny!</i>	2
<i>2002 Estate Wines</i>	3
<i>Wine Advocate reviews</i>	4
<i>Tractor Dave!</i>	5
	6

Special points of interest:

- 2002 L'Aventure Syrah still in supply
- L'Aventure at :

Wine Experience in Chicago, November 4, 5, 6

San Diego Bay Food Festival, November 11, 12, 13

With **The Westside Grand Crew:**

In Bakersfield November 5, in Fresno November 6 and in San Diego November 10

For more detail check our Website:

aventurewine.com

2004 HARVEST NOTES— IN HIS OWN WORDS

While taking notes on the harvest from Stephan today, he dictated in such a flow that his words are passed on here verbatim. Envision him pacing in the barrel room as he begins. "I was expecting a "classical" vintage in 2004. Everything leading -up to harvest- the numbers, excellent ph/ acidity, low brix,- were signs of a " classic" vintage. Then, 2,3 days before, and as harvest began, temperatures shot -up to over 100 degrees for 5, maybe 6 days. And with 80 degree nights. (Templeton Gap Influence clearly AWOL). This transformed my expectations, and the characteristics of the vintage radically. And, while it is still too early to be definitive, by the numbers, it looks now like we are back to another big, "California" style year."

He walks now up to a rack of barrels and, resting his hand against one, continues with an anecdote from the vintage. " If somewhere I was not disappointed, but surprised by the change in the vintage, 2004 brought me a sort of intellectual excitement. I have been dreaming these 24 years- that is how long I have been making wine- I should say, I have had a fantasy ,that one day I would make the vinification in the same tank, at the same stage of maturation, for each of the varieties in the blend. In Bordeaux, this was impossible, with 2 weeks between the ripening of the Cabernet and the Merlot. Here in Paso also we have different maturation cycles for



Stephan in the barrel room

Cabernet, Syrah, and Petit Verdot, that is, until this year. In 2004, I realized my dream in the estate vineyard. Selecting from different blocks, I cofermented in tank #5 a kind of "Estate Cuvée blend" of 57% cabernet, 27% Syrah, and 16% Petit Verdot. I can already say to you that, while the blend will not be the final, final blend for Estate Cuvée, the partial blend is already tasting beautiful, gorgeous! My intellectual thinking proved to be right, because, when we can, exceptionally, and this might mean once in a lifetime, blend together everything at once, the earlier you can blend, the better is the marriage of everything."

Stephan reaches into his cigar box, and comes up with a Partagas Black Label, as he remarks on some key varieties. "Syrah came in like 2003, big, rich. At press, we are still waiting for our

excellent Rimrock Vineyard fruit from Arroyo Grande. Our prized 8 barrels of the 2003 Rimrock Syrah will be bottled as a vineyard designate, and the 2004 is on the same tack. In order to get the quality that we need to make L'Aventure, this year we dropped- are you ready- over 50% of our estate fruit on the ground. That's around 3 tons per acre. And, from our cabernet, which again looks great, we got only 1.6 tons per acre! " He lights his cigar and repeats emphatically" 1.6 tons per acre! Maybe I went too far, and I dropped too much this time. Maybe, but you will see when the wine is done, it will be good, like 2002. In fact, maybe better." He pauses. "You have enough blah- blah- blah now? Allez, I go."



"In 1990, Syrah was planted. By the end of the decade, the region's potential was realized".

-Decanter Magazine

SYRAH, OUR WEST SIDE STAR

Syrah could well be said to be the star here on our west side of Paso Robles. While some 45% of plantings in the



AAAAHHH Syrah!

AVA are to Cabernet Sauvignon, most hail from larger producers on the east side, which in fact sell 60% of this fruit to wineries outside of Paso. Syrah, in contrast, is increasingly to be found in the hands of smaller growers on the west side, where it produces diverse styles of wine. Justin Smith at Saxum, Austin Hope, Matt Garretson, and Stephan each produce wines ranging from powerful and fruit forward, to subtle and complex. Tablas Creek and Linne Calodo craft their own "Paso blends" utilizing Syrah as a key component, as does Stephan in our Estate Cuvée and Optimus. With the Estate

Syrah nearly gone, the 2002 L'Aventure Syrah is waiting in the wings to impress. While the Wine Advocate scored this wine 89, I will remind readers that the 2001 Optimus, awarded 94, began life also at 89. A Brilliant purple wine, with hints of pepper, leather, and "viande" in the nose, it truly possesses "garrigue", that haunting presence in the aroma of wildflowers and herbs, characteristic of the Syrah wines of Provence. On the palate, this wine has what Gary Eberle, who pioneered Syrah plantings in Paso in the 70's, calls "blueberries and blood"making it, of course, a bloody good wine!

DAGNY SPEAKS SOFTLY, CARRIES A BIG CLUB!

Odds are that if you ring up the winery to join our wine club, or to check on your shipment, somewhere along the line you will end up speaking with Dagny Peterson. Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Dagny moved to Paso with hubby Joel (Joel was an indispensable hand during the 2003 crush at L'Aventure) a couple of years ago to escape 10 years in LA, and pursue her dream of country living and enjoy the wine country lifestyle. Her background in Accounting Management has put L'Aventure in the black, as regards organizational help in the front office. For about a year now, Dagny has been working side by side with Beatrice who has taught Dagny the "ins and outs" of the business here at L'Aventure, with French coming along just a bit more slowly than the rest.! Dagny wears many "chapeaux" around the winery. Office manager, financial director, personal assistant to Stephan,

and harvest hand on the "table de tri"- sorting table- are but a few of her duties. Increasingly, she finds herself attending to the needs of our growing wine club, which has doubled this year, as the good word on Stephan's wines continues to spread. Club management includes database maintenance, invoicing orders, contributing to shipment design, and most importantly,

making sure that Club L'Aventure members are happy. To this point, we would love to hear from you as to anything that we can do administratively to make your club membership easier, more interesting, etc.



Dagny Peterson



2002 ESTATE WINES GOING, GOING...

I'm glad to say that, way back in May, as we planned the 2002 estate wine release, Beatrice had the foresight to suggest holding back the Estate Syrah and Estate Cabernet for this fall wine club shipment. Had she not, I'm certain that these wines would have gone the way of our Côte à Côte, that is to say, been relegated to the mean stocks to be found in Stephan's library! As we send these wines to you in this current shipment, we thank you for bringing them into your home for the holidays, or into your cellar for future enjoyment. We also want you to be aware that we now have stocks of roughly 50 cases each of Estate Cuvée, Estate Syrah, and Estate Cabernet, for sale at the winery or to Club L'Aventure members only. If you enjoy one of these for Thanksgiving, and want another for New Years, please contact us as soon as the after-taste of your first sip fades (this could take some time...these wines don't linger on the palate, rather, they loiter!), so that we can assure delivery to you before they are out of stock altogether. The 2003 estate wines will not be available until June of 2005. The good news is that, as Dave's new plantings begin bearing, we will be producing more of these unique wines, of which Stephan made some 250- 300 six -packs each in 2002.

L'Aventure estate wines are the fullest expression of Stephan's intellectual idea of a "Paso blend", which emphasizes varieties that are best suited to our west side terroir, chiefly Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon, and, increasingly, Petit Verdot and Grenache. These are the wines that fully demonstrate the radical, low yield viticulture that is derived from our high -density, 2,100 vines per acre, two tons per acre producing vineyards, and that personify Stephan's quest to make "great, blended red wines" here in California.

Because of Stephan's passion for bringing fruit to it's fullest conceivable state of maturity, while still maintaining it's highest degree of varietal character, L'Aventure estate wines are both big, well structured wines for laying down, and rich, silky wines for immediate drinking. The abundance of soft tannin in company with rich, concentrated fruit, makes for an opulent, long, velvety palate that does not disappoint when the wines are young. That being said, each of the estate wines- Estate Cuvée, Estate Syrah, Estate Cabernet, and Côte à Côte- will improve over the next decade, providing increased pleasure as they reach their peaks.

It is a happy accident of sorts that we have this collection of estate



Hands -off the Côte à Côte!

wines at all. Originally, Stephan had sought to make but one wine, his "great wine" (Grand Vin), followed by his "second", in the manner of a Bordeaux château. Market trends in the US, however, which favor varietal wines over blends, encouraged him to release 100% Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah wines from the estate. Côte à Côte followed, as we have seen from the first that Rhône varieties thrive here on the west side. This delicious blend, which was 60% Grenache and 40% Syrah in 2002, will be 33% each Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvedre from the 2003 vintage offering.

Whichever estate wine is your favorite, **this is last call**. These wines are going, going...



**The
WINE
ADVOCATE.**

WINE ADVOCATE RATES 2002 VINTAGE

As all of you know, being wine aficionados, there are thousands of fine wines to choose from "out there", in the retail environment. Wines from France, Chile, Australia, Italy, Spain, and Argentina compete fiercely with our California wines, at every price point. Within California, the wines of Napa, Sonoma, and the Santa Ynez Valley are everywhere competing with our Paso Robles labels for the consum-

ers attention.

Amid the din of such a competitive market, it's nice to receive recognition for ones efforts. The August issue of the Wine Advocate carried reviews of many California "Rhône Rangers", including the following scores for Stephan's estate wines. These scores are all the more impressive, considering that the wines were tasted after only 5 weeks in bottle!

Estate Cuvée 2002—**94**

Estate Syrah 2002—**94**

Côte à Côte 2002—**93**

Estate Cabernet 2002—**91**

Optimus 2001—**94**

Mr. Parker's comments on the 2002 Estate Cab follow. "Maybe the finest Cabernet I have tasted from the Paso Robles area... It is good to see Cabernet Sauvignon with this kind of freshness as well as concentration emerge from this area".

"...this impressive winery is doing everything right."

-Robert Parker,

Wine Advocate

Stephan Vineyards

L'Aventure Winery
2815 Live Oak Road
Paso Robles, California
93446

Phone: 805-227-1588
Fax: 805-227-6988
Email: stephanwines@tcsn.net

Harvest 2004



Guillaume, our French Intern



The good Pickers!



Estate Grapes



Vinification

IN THE VINEYARD WITH DAVE DEBUSK

For the last year plus, Dave has been Stephan's right hand around the winery. As vineyard manager and associate wine-maker, Dave moves adroitly from atop barrel racks, or inside a tank, to the seat of a tractor. He recently jumped off of the tractor to chat with me to summarize the following, in order to keep club members abreast of what's going on in the vineyards at L'Aventure.

The highlight of the year for us has been to finish planting the estate vineyards. Following new planting in July, L'Aventure now has the following acreage planted to these varieties; 16.5 acres to Cabernet Sauvignon (28%), 20 acres to Syrah(35%), 10.5 acres to Petit Verdot (18%), 4.5 acres to Grenache (8%), 3.5 acres to Mourvedre (6%), 2 acres to Roussanne(3.5%)and 0.8 acre of Viognier(1.5%). This planting, which takes us close to our maximum plantation capacity, represents a giant step in the direction of our realizing Stephan's original goal of producing 100% estate grown wines. After all, it's the unique and quality -driven 2,100 vine per acre plantation density, and our 2 ton per acre or less yields, that result in our 8 cluster per vine, or, 1 (one) bottle per vine yields that makes L'Aventure wines so distinctive in style. With nearly 60 acres in the ground, we should see roughly 8,000 cases of 100% estate produced wines available from the 2008 or 2009 vintage. Same total production than today but 100% estate. The 2004 vintage was again a very good one at L'Aventure, and, again, very distinct from previous ones. When the dust in the vineyard settled as we finished picking the estate

grapes on September 20 (compare this to 2003, when we began harvesting on September 15, and finished on October 31!), our average yield per acre turned out to be 1.6 tons! Stephan and Dave steered us to such miniscule yields by green harvesting-dropping - 75% of the crop before and during veraison, the stage of the grape's development at which it turns color, from white to black. Contrast this to 2002, when a rainy spring and berry shatter from the heat that followed left us with our benchmark two tons per acre without having to drop a cluster! Back to 2004, one can see that the cost of quality is high. Apart from thinning the fruit, Dave also directs leaf -pulling, cane- thinning, and the hedging of our VSP (vertical shoot position) canopy, all operations that require time,



Dave...time for a tractor break?

money, and not a little expertise. By pruning our bilateral cordon vines to set four spurs per cordon, one shoot per spur, and one cluster per shoot, Dave tactically manages the conditions that Mother Nature sets out differently each year, in order to deliver Stephan top quality fruit for his most unique, artisan wines. Managing our VSP canopy effectively is what allows us to produce fully mature fruit, which is Stephan's primary passion as a vigneron.

This year, Stephan and Dave introduced the utilization of cover crops (barley) for the first time. Cover crops planted between rows help to reduce nitrogen content in the soil, and to increase soil tryability, which is a sort of natural composting, an adding back of nutrients to the soil, if you like. This has already shown positive result in increased vigor and yield for Petit Verdot.

Another innovation aimed at greater sustainability in the vineyards was the experiment with a new, natural application called P-4, which Dave undertook in a 1.2 acre parcel in the back of the estate that we call "the banana", given it's shape. This unique, all natural extract, designed by Bob and Charlotte Breeze of USAgri-Tech, was originally prepared to suppress powdery mildew, but it turns out that it eradicated leaf hoppers and spider mites as well. Charlotte, a Paso Robles native, is discovering that the natural application may, in future, provide growers with a single application product for an entire season. Having successfully demonstrated their product on "the banana", USAgri-Tech will apply P-4 to 1/3 of our L'Aventure vineyards in 2005, as

well as install soil and leaf moisture sensors to better identify and govern irrigation and application needs. These innovations move us closer to a sustainable farming style.

Dave says he'd like to talk more, but he needs to get back out to the lower 40. I don't know if he was going out to count vines, to water, or what, but I'll tell you this; Dave spends a heck of a lot of time on that tractor!