

L'AVENTURE NEWSLETTER

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Club L'Aventure, 2003

- 2003 Club L'Aventure format change
- Call us with your Club format preference
- Members -only 2002 Estate Cuvée futures option; June 1-30, 2003
- 2003- more wine, fewer shipments, that's the bottom line.

THE LAS VEGAS "EXPERIENCE"

The 2002 California Wine Experience took place in Las Vegas, Nevada, amidst the splendor of the tastefully decadent Venetian Hotel and Casino. Where better to celebrate the event's twenty-first year! As always, the "Grand Tastings" provided attendees the best opportunity in the world to sample the very best wines California has to offer. The high point for many, however, was the Friday seminar and tasting lineup, which commenced at 9:15 AM with the "Hot California Wines" panel, featuring eight of California's hottest winemakers, including our own Stephan Asseo. Chardonnays by David Ramey and John Kongsgaard piqued the audience's appetite, while Twomey winemaker Daniel Baron and Lokoya's Chris Carpenter presented their Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon, respectively. Moderator James Laube introduced Stephan as the man who was a bridge between French and American styling, and Optimus, as a wine that brought together the Bor-



Stephan Asseo and Justin Smith

deaux varietals and the wonderful Syrahs to follow (from Justin Smith at Saxum, and Carol Meredith of Lagier Meredith in Napa). I found it fascinating that, of the eight winemakers, all but two referenced France as their model and inspiration. And, sitting squarely in the midst of them, was Stephan, the genuine

article. His "first hand" seventeen years wine making experience in his native France, and seasoned eloquence caught the rapt attention of all on the panel, as well as the 1,000 "strong throng" in attendance. To a person, all acclaimed the experience *Optimus!*.

ESTATE CUVEE DEBUT

This May, we will release for the first time our 2001 Estate Cuvée, made exclusively from estate grown grapes. With half of the production going to European markets, a scant 250 cases is available in the US. Wine club members will want to take advantage of

being the first to be offered this unique wine. A blend of 50% cabernet sauvignon, 30% petit verdot and 20% syrah, the Estate Cuvée is the most intensely rich wine from L'Aventure to date. Yields averaging 2 tons per acre from our densely planted

vineyard result in a silky, unctuous wine, complex in aromas and flavor. (Please see attached tech sheet). To purchase the 2001 Estate Cuvée, please see the attached form that will be used in 2003 for both Club L'Aventure and additional wine orders.

CLUB L'AVENTURE, 2003



As you enjoy this last Club L'Aventure parcel of 2002, all of us at L'Aventure want to thank you for your membership over the past year. Entering the New Year, we would like to explore an option that many of our members have requested; two annual shipments instead of three. This cuts down on shipping costs for club members, and will net you more wine, as we will send 12 bottle lots.

As always, we want to be sure that you are satisfied with club parameters, so please review the attached "Club L'Aventure 2003 Options" sheet enclosed, and let us

know how you would like to receive your wine club shipments next year. We will happily work with the shipping schedule that you prefer. *Please try to get your response back to us by January 31*, so that we can gear up for Spring.

During the coming year, as was the case in 2002, we will look forward to seeing you at the Winery for our open house events. These events will coincide with the PRVGA Spring and Fall Tours, in May and October, as well as the March Zinfandel Festival. We also hope to see you around the Hospice du Rhone event held annually over the traditional

Memorial Day weekend. We plan to hold dinners during these busy weekends, pairing Stephan's creations with the inspired menus of our best local chefs.

During the upcoming year, we will continue to offer Club L'Aventure members a 20% discount on all wine purchases. In addition, please consider the option of purchasing futures of our 2002 Estate Cuvée (as described below). Club L'Aventure futures buyers will enjoy the first offering and best price for our best effort in 2002, as demand grows for this limited edition wine.

Club L'Aventure members will save 30% by purchasing Estate Cuvée futures.

2002 FUTURES OFFERING

The 2002 vintage was our third vintage for L'Aventure Estate Cuvée. This 100% estate-produced wine will be available for the first time through a futures option. Here's how the future's price advantage breaks down. The retail price of \$75.00 per bottle is reduced to \$60.00 for club members. The futures

price, however, is \$52.50, reflecting a discount of 30%. Futures orders may be placed between June 1 and June 30, 2003, for delivery in May 2004. Club members will receive winemakers notes on the wine and a reminder in May 2003. There will be a limit of one six pack case per member. Terms are check or

credit card at the time of purchase.

A long standing tradition in Bordeaux, purchasing futures is the best way to guarantee that you are able to snap up your share of this limited production wine. At this collectors price, it's time to start your collection of L'Aventure Estate Cuvée!

BUT YOU CAN'T TASTE THE WOOD!



"I make wine to support the barrel, to carry what the barrel has" says Stephan. "Everything comes into play, the fruit, the winemaking, the making of the barrel. Everything is related, and must be in balance". Starting with the high plantation density of 2,100 vines per acre, the dense vertical canopy and resulting low yield, highly concentrated fruit, everything Stephan does is motivated by

his passion for quality. The ripe, mature fruit is rich in polyphenols, the soft tannins that give L'Aventure wines their characteristic silky quality on the palate. This unique fruit is the ultimate foil for Stephan's classical treatment of his wines in oak. Following micro-oxygenation, and with very low SO₂ levels, our red wines will finish their malolactic fermentation in new French oak, where they will

rest for some 15-16 months, until bottling. The barriques themselves come from Centre de France where the finest grain oak is toasted over a long, low fire to reach optimum integration and complexity, and a perfect balance between extracted qualities, and those of torrefaction, produced by the flame. Ironically, such harmony and balance make the flavors of the supremely wrought barrel almost undetectable!

BUONA TAVOLA

Buona Tavola is a warm, welcoming restaurant, both in spirit, and design. A painting within a painting, it's long, elegantly appointed dining room is framed by rich brown banquettes and arcaded walls, reminiscent of a Tuscan gallery. Floating on a carpet of muted rose petal designs, the room is anchored handsomely by a burnished copper hood surmounting the open kitchen, which acts as a vanishing point for owner Antonio Varia's masterpiece - "Buona Tavola".

Chef Varia is gregariously passionate about food, and came to his profession as

naturally as one can, as a child, cooking in his mother's kitchen. Disabled by a weak heart, she would sit and instruct him in the preparation of the family's meals. And, as his brothers and sisters liked his cooking better than theirs, he got the job! A native of Armeno, in the Piemonte region of Italy, it's no surprise that Antonio, like his father and uncle, made their careers as chefs. "Everyone is a chef in Armeno" he laughs. A chef, or a waiter! It's a city where you go to find chefs." Wine was always on the table at home, so asking Antonio about his food



Antonio

and wine philosophy drew a blank look. "They go together. With Italian food, you drink wine. It's natural." You're going to like this place! Call 805-237-0600 for reservations.

FROM BUONA TAVOLA TO YOUR TAVOLA

Antonio Varia makes no bones about which is his favorite dish from Buona Tavola's kitchen. "Risotto". He barely gets the word out of his mouth, for the immense grin that accompanies it. Many risotto dishes are discussed, but his risotto al radicchio is both seasonal and the epitome of his straight forward,

"closer to nature the better" approach to his art and menu. Perhaps his philosophy concerning food and wine is best summed up in this Italian phrase, with which he concluded our chat. "Il riso nasce nell' acqua, ma va mangiato e ol vino". His recipe is enclosed.

As a side note, please contact

Buona Tavola or L'Aventure for specific information on a dinner that will pair the culinary talents of chef Varia with the wines of Stephan Asseo, to take place at the winery in January. Chef promises a hearty winter menu to match up to Stephan's Optimus, syrah, zinfandel, and our Estate Cuvee. Buon appetite!

*"Il Riso Nasce Nell'
Acqua, Ma Va
Mangiato E Ol Vino"*



GRAND CRU GOES TO TOWN

Archie MacLaren, Director of the West Side Paso Robles Grand Cru, recently presented the Crew's best wines to 13 of San Francisco's most discerning sommeliers. The goal of the luncheon was to create awareness about the unique terroir of our west side. Present were such notable wine gurus as Larry Stone (Rubicon), Rajat Parr (Aqua Group), Mickey Clevenger (Fleur de Lys), and Christie

Dufault (Restaurant Gary Danko). To present these outstanding wines to such a food erudite group, Aqua Restaurant was chosen as the venue for the tasting and luncheon. Our Grand Cru partners joined L'Aventure in an assault on the palates of the 13. Comments were very favorable, especially for the syrah and cabernet-based wines. Optimus was paired with



Sommeliers Larry Stone and Rajat Parr, with Archie MacLaren.

the Roast Rack of Lamb with Classic Risotto in Natural Juice. MMM... lucky lamb!

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Le Bateau De L'Aventure, by Chloé



DANS LE VIGNOUBLE: 2003 HARVEST



Unsteady spring weather produced uneven flowering in our vines, resulting in some of the lowest yields ever taken at L'Aventure. Coupled with a very warm summer and early harvest, these conditions produced a small crop of massive character, destined to make true "California style" wines, as Stephan likes to say. The capricious spring left us with no petit verdot or viognier to harvest, and with cabernet from the estate coming in at 2 tons per acre, without having dropped a cluster! Our best growers, also without thinning any grapes, brought in yields at 3 tons per acre. Syrah, due to a poor set and the dropping of fruit at veraison, produced 1.8 to 2.5 tons per acre. These grapes will result in some of the finest, most intensely styled Optimus and Estate Cuvée blends to date, the Estate Cuvee' blend being reevaluated in the wake



Harvest Crew at L'Aventure

of our loss of petit verdot this vintage. Happily, despite the scarce yields, we will have more syrah available to our club members and trade customers, due to new grower contracts that turned out some excellent syrah for us in 2002, most notably Blair Zajak's at "Ma Vigne au Soleil" vineyard in Templeton, California, which also provided us

with enough exquisite roussanne to make four barrels. Zinfandel was a real beneficiary of the year, coming in at peak maturity and 25 degrees of sugar. Stephan describes it as maybe his best yet, dis-

playing an elegant, European style. Lastly, 2002 marked our first harvest of estate grown grenache and mourvedre, which, in all probability, will be blended with syrah to make a few hundred cases of a southern Rhone-style wine. No chardonnay was produced. Total production was 7,000 cases.