

L'AVENTURE NEWSLETTER

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Special points of interest:

- Estate Cuvée and Syrah now available to Club L'Aventure members only!
- Fall Harvest Festival Dinner places going, going....
- Next Wine Club shipment November 15
- Call for Saturday Tasting by Appointment with Colin

PASO WESTSIDE GANG *TERROIRIZES* KCBX SEMINAR

As a feature of this years KCBX Central Coast Wine Classic, the Paso Robles Westside Grand Crew hosted a panel discussion on the area's *terroir*. As you know, *terroir* is that special combination of soil, climate, and topography that combine to produce unique and beneficial growing conditions for wine grapes. In the case of Paso Robles Westside, our famous calcareous soils, our temperamental Templeton Gap maritime influence, and the gently rolling foothills of the Santa Lucia range make for a great place to plant Rhône and some Bordeaux varieties.

The symposium was deftly moderated by author Karen MacNeil, whose wit buoyed the panel and lifted the audience.

Marc Goldberg, owner of Windward Vineyard, the group's pinot noir pioneer, opened the discussion by hailing Paso as an erogenous zone for pinot noir and accusing the rest of having "pinot envy!" Karen and Marc worked that one over for a while. Just as things began to slip away, Marc reminded the audience that the soils on his ranch are typically Burgundian, and, moreover, in Burgundy's better vintages their climate approximates ours. Food for thought.

Justin Smith of Saxum and Austin Hope of Austin Hope Winery both spoke to their dedication to let *terroir* speak in their elegant wines. Terry Culton, Adelaide's new wine-maker, spoke to the unique situation of their Viking Vine-



West Side Grand Crew

yard, which has a gradient of 55 degrees, terribly poor soils, and an elevation of 1,700 feet. Those that have enjoyed Viking Cab understand how the low yields resulting from this harsh *terroir* produce astoundingly rich and complex wine. Justin Baldwin, instrumental in ushering Paso Robles winemaking into the modern era, pointed to his celebrated Isosceles as a labor of weaving *terroir* and blending to craft a great wine.

With Stephan away at VinExpo in Bordeaux, it fell to me to sit in and wax eloquently on the virtues of *terroir* at L'Aventure. While, listening to my esteemed colleagues, my mind kept digressing to the technical devices we use to craft our wines: yields, plantation density, the art of the blend, and our utilization of wood. I had to conclude that, in the end, L'Aventure is different. While *terroir* is critical – after all, it was this specific *climat*, or site, that drew Stephan to the AVA – it is in a sense just the starting point. With great grapes, you can make great wine. Yet, it is up to the hand of the artisan to assure that in this transformational process, the very best is added and the very best is kept. At L'Aventure, that means Stephan's vigilant eye and diligent spirit are always watching and hovering over the wine, giving technical support to his painstakingly cultivated fruit., much as Mozart's hand and spirit transformed the music that came to him from the universe. The difference, of course, is that we're not about Opus....rather, Optimus!

FALL HARVEST FETE



Fall Harvest Dinner with Chef Laurent Grangien

Friday, October 17

Chef Laurent Grangien is well known among Paso Robles epicureans for his exquisite, classic French cuisine. Bistro Laurent has become the bastion of quality in Paso Robles, a town that can rightfully claim the best restaurant scene between SF and LA.

We are very happy to announce that chef Grangien will be in the kitchen at L'Aventure on October 17, to present his Fall Harvest Tour menu to the first 50, lucky guests to reserve a place for dinner. As in the past, the banquet will be held in the winery, where one, long, cheerful table will accommodate diners, amid the tanks and barrels that devotedly hold our L'Aventure wines. Crisp white linens, flowers by Barbara, and a few words from Stephan, and the stage will be set for another gala evening of great food and wine, and the warm camaraderie that they unfailingly conjure! A parade of servers will bring you and your guests course after course of Chef's seasonal creations, inspired by the harvest season's freshest ingredients and crafted to complement Stephan's singular wines.

As Laurent wants the dinner

to be composed of the best and freshest foods available, he will not develop his menu until mid-September. However, knowing his hand — and how he might turn it to best showcase our L'Aventure reds — I can almost taste lamb and venison, wild mushrooms, and fennel. I bet that he'll work a complex fish course into the menu somehow, as well.

Chef will have some excellent wines to work with, as Stephan has set aside Estate Cuvée and Optimus, from more than one vintage, as well as our very limited 2001 Syrah. Alas, we will undoubtedly gulp down the last of our popular Roussanne 2002 as an aperitif!

The dinner will take place during the busy Fall Harvest Weekend, which is sponsored by the Paso Robles Vineyard Growers Association. An annual event, the weekend sees member wineries offering everything from dinners and receptions, to winemaking seminars, musical entertainment, and Feng Shui instruction. Consult your PRVGA Fall Harvest Tour brochure for all the details or go to www.pasowine.com for more information. This is absolutely one of the best times of year to be in Paso Robles, given the informative and entertaining

events of the weekend, and the electricity in the air that always accompanies harvest.

To reserve a place for our L'Aventure winery dinner, please call Michael or Beatrice at the winery at (805) 227-1588. The cost of the dinner is \$150.00 per person, with 50 places available. Club L'Aventure members will attend at the price of \$120.00.

With the vintage's new wine in cask, and the Indian Summer reminding us of the harvest's bounty and of winter's coming, this is truly the height of the vineyard year. Please come and share with us this special time, Laurent's special menu, and the fruit of Stephan's year-long labors. See you there. *A bientôt!*

EVENTS, EVENTS, EVENTS!

Look, look, look for L'Aventure and Stephan in your town soon! As the harvest and busy fall season draw nearer, Stephan will be doing some "double duty." While he never takes his eye off of the harvest, he will be slipping away to make a few personal appearances over the next couple of months.

Keep an eye out for wine-maker dinners in Southern California at Celestino's of

Pasadena and Zax in Brentwood (in September) and at San Ysidro Ranch in Santa Barbara and The Regency Club in Beverly Hills (in October). October 17 marks the date of our Fall Harvest Tour dinner at the winery, with Chef Laurent Grangien.

If you're a resident of Chicago, look for L'Aventure to take part in a "Westside Grand Crew" tasting there during the first or second

week of November. From there, Stephan and I are planning to "barnstorm" through Little Rock, Charlotte, New Orleans, Cincinnati, and Washington D.C., to meet our customers at a series of L'Aventure receptions. It's a casual and informative way to get to know Stephan and his wines better. Call the winery for more details, and keep a light on for us!



Look for Stephan in your town!

THIS BLACK CAT HAS TEETH!

The Black Cat Bistro sits midway between Cambria's East and West Villages, aloof, perfectly in character with its feline image. Inside, white table clothes stand out against soft, Tuscan yellow walls, anchored by a solid wood floor. This is a dining room in which one can stay comfortably for some time. As diners peruse chef/owner Shawn Washburn's eclectic menu, "ooohs" and "aaahs" are discernable, as it reads as well as any. The creative menu selections encourage parties to *partager* (share plates) in order to explore Chef's diverse offerings and culinary styles.

Guests' every wish are attended to by a courteous and efficient staff, presided over by owner Deborah Scarborough. Deborah, along with Steinlen's "Chat Noir," keeps a watchful eye on the fourteen tables in the front room, and is particularly knowledgeable as regards local Paso Robles wines and how they work with the Black Cat's changing menu. Her accommodating, attentive and personal style, coupled with her sincere warmth, bring a unique, cottage feeling to the dining room, something glaringly absent from most restaurants, especially those

found in seaside resorts. Deborah knows her regular customers well and most who come in, by name. As she moves through the dining room – yes, with the grace of a black cat! – she brings her warm smile and analytical eye to each table, making sure that her guests feel at home and comfortable in asking for whatever they may want. When dining at the Black Cat, it is truly a pleasure to watch her work and feel the attention of a professional restaurateur. The Black Cat is not only Cambria's finest establishment, but one of the top restaurants in the entire Central Coast. Don't miss dinner at the Black Cat!

Wine, and especially the wine of Paso Robles and the Central Coast, is central to the Black Cat's culinary. "We buy wines that we love, that are unique, things that we like to drink," remarks Deborah, with a gleam in her eye, as she pulls the cork from a bottle of 2000 Op-timus. We are sitting at the Black Cat's wine bar – which runs along the kitchen and opens onto a small deck – a wonderful place to enjoy a



glass of wine on a warm afternoon. The wine bar accommodates seven to eight and is a lively social scene for those wanting a glass of wine before or after dinner or who prefer to dine a bit more casually. L'Aventure, Linne Calodo, and Alban Vineyards are among the most popular local wines served, but one can also find wines from around California and the world on the small but well-chosen wine list.

The Black Cat Bistro is open for dinner Thursday through Monday nights. Call (805) 927-1600 to reserve your place at Deborah's and Chef Shawn's table, and enjoy an unparalleled Central Coast dining experience. Cheers!

"The fog comes

On little cat feet.

It sits looking

*Over the harbor and
city"*

Carl Sandburg

CHEF SHAWN GOES GLOBAL

Having apprenticed his trade in such kitchens as Cervino's in Mammoth and the Ritz-Carlton at Laguna Niguel, Black Cat Bistro chef/owner Shawn Washburn is no stranger to the classical culinary regime. In the year 2002, after working his way arduously up the culinary ladder, and, having armed himself with a culinary education, Shawn teamed up with Deborah Scarborough to cre-

ate the Black Cat Bistro. Chef Shawn brought an innovative flair to Cambria's food scene that has consistently kept the Black Cat at the top of the Central Coast restaurant scene. The Black Cat is Shawn's showcase for what he calls global cuisine. "I pull in some flavors from Asia, some from the Mediterranean, a little of everything," he notes. "It's a global approach, progressive American,

but it's also comfort food!" Indeed, Pot Roast in Red Wine and Heirloom Tomato Salad conjure memories of home and hearth, while his Duck Breast in Port Reduction Sauce is classically inspired. Dishes such as Alaskan Crab Cakes and Shrimp, with Mango Salsa, and Asian-accented Ahi, capture his eclectic vision. "I'm into harmony, not counterpoint, when it comes to creating balance." Well said. Can we eat now?



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DANS LE VIGNOBLE: 2002 VINTAGE A BEAUTY . . . IN THE VINEYARD, IN THE BARREL

The 2002 harvest, as reported previously in this publication, was characterized by a cool, uneven flowering, which resulted in naturally low yields and very high quality at L'Aventure. Cabernet Sauvignon came in to us at 2 tons per acre, without our dropping fruit, and Syrah required just a little encouragement — we dropped maybe 30% of the clusters versus our “normal” 50% to 60% — to get it down to similar yield levels. You could see on the *table de tri* (sorting table) that the grapes were destined to make a great vintage, their color and juice rich, their size small, the aroma filling the winery sharp and deep. Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah excelled in 2002.

It is unfortunate that Petit Verdot and Viognier did not share the same fate. For the very same quirk of nature that rendered the Cab almost perfect, and the syrah outstanding, deprived us of our coveted Petit Verdot and Viognier. The uneven flowering was simply unkind to these varieties. So, with an all-in—all terrific harvest in 2002, what to expect from the cellar?

As you might expect, Optimus and the Estate Cuvée are showing very, very well in barrel. (By the way...come by and taste them with Stephan and me as you have a chance.) The Optimus is blessed in 2002 with the best Cabernet ever produced at L'Aventure, blended with Syrah to kill for! As always, the blend that was selected from the 25 trials by our expert tasting panel included a dash of Zinfandel. Why is this? We have no idea how 5% of this genetically mixed-up grape can have such an impact on the blend. But it does! Winemaker tasting notes to follow in the November newsletter.

The 2002 Estate Cuvée is another story. Our best ever? Maybe. But given that the 2000 and 2001 Estate Cuvée blends relied heavily on Petit Verdot, the 2002 will present a somewhat different character. With only 5% Petit Verdot, versus 30% in the previous vintages, Estate Cuvée 2002 will be a richer, if less racy *cepage*.

The same can be expected from the 2003 vintage, as we watch it take shape.

I mentioned Viognier? Yes, our prima donna of whites just didn't make the cut in 2002. However, 2003 looks to be a year in which both Viognier and Roussanne will excel, and, perhaps, find themselves together in a white Rhône blend.

To the point of a Rhône blend, we are excited to say that we did produce in 2002 a limited amount of a new *mé-lange* of 60% Grenache and 40% Syrah. It's a bright, delicious wine, that will be the perfect compliment to fowl and game. Problem is, we don't know what to call it! If any of you Club L'Aventure members have an aptitude for naming names, please help us out. In fact, we're prepared to pay a bounty of 1 double magnum of this new blend to the member that brings in the right name. It could be a reference to the Rhône, whence this wine found it's inspiration, or to our noble *terroir*. Latin works. Anything that sounds right, we'll listen! Call or write or e-mail us with your idea by October 1, and we'll announce the winner in the November newsletter. Let the name games begin!

As you might have guessed, given the year's favoring of Cabernet, Stephan has, for the first time, crafted a 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from our finest estate-grown fruit. The 2002 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon will

Open up a new, adventurous chapter for L'Aventure drinkers to explore. Specific to Stephan's big, “Paso” style, the 2002 Cab is deep and dark in color, with tremendous depth of aroma and flavor. “I swore I wouldn't do it, when I came here,” says Stephan, referring to his creation of a monovariety Cabernet, “but I couldn't help it, the fruit came in almost perfect!” Only 300 cases were produced, so look for a “members only” offering as it is released in May 2004. Syrah, the workhorse of the L'Aventure line, will be in good supply for the first time. 1.000 cases were produced, up from 300 from each of the two previous vintages. That's more good news, from a great vintage!



Wine resting in barrels