

L'AVENTURE NEWSLETTER

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Special points of interest:

- Summer visitors welcome in the **salon** Thursday-Sunday, 11:00– 4:00.
- October **Fall Harvest Tour**...see www.pasowine.com for details.
- Paso Robles **Wine University** 2005. Enroll for September event at: www.pasowine.com!

It's a girl!

Dagny Peterson, our office manager is the happy Mom of

Kalista Ruth Peterson

Born on May 21, 2005



WINEMAKER NOTES ON THE 2003 ESTATE WINE RELEASES

Many of you will be receiving bottles of our 2003 estate wine collection with this June wine club shipment.

.WARNING: Don't open a bottle before 6 months !

Winemaker notes are available on our website at www.aventurewine.com. To access them, just go to Boutique, then click on the wine in question and, voila, notes on your favorite L'Aventure wine. Above and beyond these soft impressions, I wanted to recap in Stephan's words his own observations as to how the vintage has changed, from his first impressions, through barrel and into bottle. I ask you to note the way in which as practiced a winemaker as Stephan (25 vintages, and counting) has come to alter his opinion of the vintage through studying the wine, and to let it encourage us all to follow the details of the vintage, and not to fall victim to generalization.

"As the 2003 vintage progressed, it looked as if we had another big, California style vintage, reminiscent of the monstrous 1999. Slowly, as the vintage aged in barrel, and was blended, it began to turn towards a more elegant style. At bottling, after 15 months in new French oak, the wines demonstrated a finesse and elegance to compliment their still huge density." Such evolution in barrel, this "turn in elegance", calls for even the most seasoned of winemakers to remain vigilant as their wines age. And, clearly, this sort of dramatic turn can take place



L'Aventure 2003 Estate Collection

only in wines that are rich in the vital components of the grape, aged on healthy lees, made in the artisan tradition, still vital in barrel.

The two estate wines currently being released are the 2003 Estate Cuvée, and everyone's darling, the 2003 Côte à Côte, both representative of Stephan's passion for blends. The 2003 Estate Cuvée remains his classic Paso blend, at 66% Cabernet, 28% Syrah, the balance Petit Verdot. Tight and long on the palate, it is the epitome of Stephan's notes on the vintage; piercing aromas of leather and dark fruit, with a hugely dense palate presence, made long and elegant through excellent acid/ ph balance and meticulous structure. This wine will lay down nicely.

The Côte à Côte from the 2003 vintage might be called

Côte à Côte à Côte, as it has taken Mourvedre into the mix. At 1/3 each Grenache, Syrah, and Mourvedre, Côte à Côte continues to be an exuberant mouthful of wine, but has gained a measure of austerity and refinement on the palate due to the Mourvedre component. A product of miniscule yields (less than 1 ton per acre for Mourvedre and Grenache), this archetypal southern Rhône blend offers complex and explosive fruit notes, from black to red, and, as does the Estate Cuvée, lingers long with an elegant finish complimenting the rich, complex fruit. Both wines truly exhibit the typicity of our unique, west side terroir, as well as our unique L'Aventure fruit. Look for the 2003 Estate Syrah, Estate Cab and Syrah Rim Rock Vineyard this fall.



JULIEN CONQUERS CEASARS, LAS VEGAS!



You will remember that we profiled Stephan and Béatrice's son Julien a few issues back, as he was entering the Lycée Hotelier de Talence.



Julien Asséo

Well, Julien is through year 2, and headed back to the US for the summer. He won't quite make it to Paso, though, as he will be settling in Las Vegas over the summer as an intern at Bradley Ogden's famed restaurant at Caesar's Palace, in Las Vegas. From July 5 to August 29, Julien will try his hand at "virtually every station in the kitchen", as Brian Ogden puts it. "He will receive produce deliveries, to see how fresh it is as it comes in to us from our artisan producers. He'll prep during the day, and spend some time working as garde manger, as well as at the dessert station, sauté', poisson....you name it!"

What is Julien's take on a summer in Las Vegas? "I'm pretty excited", he says, through a broad smile. Dad's a bit more reserved, being no stranger to the town himself. "I'm not too scared, even if Julien has big eyes for Las Vegas", Stephan says, "because I know that even in Las Vegas, you have to be 21 to drink beer and wine- legally! Still, he is not so far away, so I will go and visit him, to help him". Help him what? Is this a good thing?

*"His father said to
"treat him like an
intern, not like my
son".....so, we're going to
work the hell out of
him."*

-Brian Ogden



Bradley Ogden and son Brian

BRADLEY OGDEN'S, CAESARS PALACE LAS VEGAS

Since his early successes at The American Restaurant in Kansas City, Bradley Ogden has been a pioneer in the restoration of "American cuisine" at the highest level. From Campton Place Hotel in San Francisco, to his famed Lark Creek Inn in Larkspur, California, his "Contemporary American" table has been praised as everything from "comfort food" to brilliant and inspired. At Bradley Ogden's in Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, he joins many of the country's greatest chefs "on the strip", where one can now find more great restaurants in a two mile drive, than exist in many states! Classic, in an open and western, casual way, Bradley Ogden's continues this chef's tradition of presenting the best food that the season can offer. Executive Sous Chef Brian Ogden puts it best when he describes the cuisine as a "spontaneous menu created daily, based on the days fresh-est ingredients."

As Stephan and Julien, his 18 year old son, were recently in town to toast Julien's upcoming internship at Bradley Ogden's, they enjoyed what Stephan described as "a royal meal", with Roasted Palmex Foie Gras, Florida Frog Legs, and Maytag Blue Soufflé leading the dégustation parade. The menu is always changing, with such dishes as Seared Hawaiian Marlin with Shitake Mushrooms, Baby Bok Choy in Lemon Grass Broth, or Wood Fired Eden Farms Pork Loin with Papaya Slaw and Pineapple Tapioca Rapini coming and going with the seasons. An "All- American" wine list (99% American, with a nod to Champagne and Bordeaux), with an emphasis on California, begs the diners attention. Brian, who doubles as Wine Director, will gladly select your wine from the small 500 bottle cellar currently behind the bar. He is presently overseeing the construction of a 5,000 bottle cellar in the lounge, presumably to accommodate more treasures from L'Aventure!

Two private dining rooms, including "The chef's Room," where it is not unusual to encounter celebrity parties, will accommodate guests special occasion needs. Service is politely friendly, and impeccable, and, as is the case with the food and wine experience, will leave a lasting impression on diners. Among the myriad high profile operators on the strip in Las Vegas, the authentic spirit and attention to detail at Bradley Ogden's makes it a standout in an excellent field. For reservations, call 702-731-7410.



SUMMER EVENTS ON THE ROAD

As you are careering along the back roads of summer, keep an eye out for L'Aventure. We may be at a wine event much closer to you than you think!



- **June 19– 24;** VINEXPO, Bordeaux, France; look for Stephan at the booth of Ballande & Meneret, Negociants in Bordeaux.
- **July 14– 17;** Central Coast Wine Classic, The Cliffs Resort at Shell Beach; barrel tastings,

winemaker dinners, seminars, and the Sunday Grand tasting at the beach make this a favorite summer event. Info at www.wineclassic.org

- **July 23-26;** Sun Valley Wine auction, Sun Valley, Idaho; join in for a gala auction and wine tasting “under the big tent”, as well as for winemaker dinners, picnics, etc. Dave DeBusk, our vineyard manager and associate winemaker will be going back to his old stomping grounds to do this event for us. Look



for him....he'll be the guy on the tractor!



- **August 11-15;** Aloha Tour! Stephan and Béatrice will make a whirlwind tour of Oahu, Big Island, and Maui as they join our distributor in Hawaii (Fine Wine Imports) for both trade and consumer tastings on each island. Aloha!

TANNINS

Whether in the Salon at the winery, presenting our wines in the marketplace, or while sharing them with friends, we often hear tasters remark that L'Aventure wines are “so big, but so soft!” Many people are perplexed at the apparent contradiction of such voluminous wines having such a long, soft, and opulent finish. And, while the answer to this query is somewhat complex, in that it resides in many different operations both in the vineyards and in the winemaking, they all converge around a simple word; tannin.

The source of the plush and elegant mouth feel of Stephan's wines is an abundance of soft tannin in the grapes. The ultimate goal of Stephan's laborious viticultural regime is to produce fully mature fruit, from very low yields, with ripe tannin, that wholly represents the integrity of the variety, and our west side terroir. To achieve this goal, Dave and company will pass through

the vineyards up to 15 times during the season, leaf –pulling, cluster sorting, canopy training, hedging, disking and wire moving, all in the cause of producing perfectly mature fruit. In doing so, the result is a grape that has fulfilled its potential on the vine, can grow no more, has given all that it has to give. Just at the moment when it is literally “dying on the vine”, our crews will pick it, and present it to the winery, where it will begin its transformational “adventure”! “Canopy management is very important”, Stephan remarks, “as it is this acreage of foliage that develops the polyphenols in the grape (among them tannin), and renders them mature, over time”. “It is important to keep the right balance of fruit to canopy, for best results”. “Low crop, high color (due to anthocyanins, another polyphenol family member), huge tannin” he quips, as a mantra to L'Aventure quality and style. Big tannin, but soft tannin. Only through the perfect maturity of the fruit can the tannin soften,

giving the wine a long, soft, rich finish, at difference to the hard, green, abrupt finish found in many wines that have been made from fruit that has not fully matured.

To gauge readiness of the fruit for harvest, Stephan and Dave resort to their palates. “I look for thick skin, low juice content, and, as I bite into the grape, for a very dark brown seed. This tells me that it is time, especially the condition of the seeds. They start off green, and get darker and darker as the fruit matures. I follow this closely.” As the most “noble” tannin is found in the skins, a very soft crushing encourages a long fermentation (tannin is an anti – oxidant), and, given my tannin levels, I add very little SO2 to my tanks. This also allows for macro– oxygenation during fermentation, with positive effects”

*“Low crop, high color,
huge tannins....*

OOOOOMMMMM!

-Stephan

Stephan Vineyards

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Le vignoble



DANS LE VIGNOBLE

It's still spring at L'Aventure, and walking through the vineyards one will delight in the array of wildflowers that surround them, and the pungent and floral "garrigue" that emanates from this rustic bouquet, and that is the scent of spring itself. As I descended recently from the hilltop, whence I had been making these notes, I chanced upon Dave as he jumped off of his new New Holland tractor. Sure is a beauty! Four cylinder, 85 horsepower, with baby -blue body paint, and Single stick Static steering, to better negotiate steep terraces, and pesky gopher traps! Yep. The vineyard hands are getting a dollar a gopher these days, so, thousand gophers, thousand dollars. That's about where we are with varmint control. No toxins involved. Turns out that these "topos" can do real damage to vines by eating the roots clean -off, as well as by eating through irrigation lines. We're definitely seeing less of them around these days, with as many expert "toperos" on the job as we have.

The conversation turned serious as I asked Dave for some vineyard notes. He responded with the following sound bites. He looked eager to get back in the saddle.

- With so much rain in 2005, we have only had to irrigate once this spring.

- We're thinning shoots already, as the long spring and abundant water supply have really set some potentially big crops. We'll be doing a lot of shoot and cluster thinning this year in order to retain the integrity of our estate vineyard program, and get that low yield 6-8 cluster per vine cluster count.

Dave's been disking a lot to keep weeds down, in order to preserve the great moisture build -up in the soil that resulted from so much rain over

the winter and early spring.

- The Petit Verdot is coming back nicely this year after a couple of very low production years, due to the painstaking upkeep of a cover crop of barley in that block. You may recall that Stephan experimented with adding horse manure to the Petit Verdot a couple of years back, and that the nitrogen content therein resulted in shattered clusters for that variety. And I thought that slinging merde was the job of Sales & Marketing!
- Growth thus far will probably necessitate some hedging by the time this newsletter is in your hands.
- Hedging both controls leaf and canopy production, and eliminates young shoots that have a propensity for delivering unwanted hard, green tannins to the clusters. Managing canopy volume is a critical practice towards realizing Stephan's fully metabolized and mature polyphenol **content** in the fruit.



Dave's New Tractor

- The new plantation undertaken last July of 28 acres has enjoyed a 96% success rate, meaning that our goal of producing L'Aventure wines from 100% estate-grown fruit is on track for vintage 2007!
- You may remember that last year, Stephan and Dave agreed to test a new, all natural compound in the vineyards that was originally designed to

control powdery mildew. The 1.5 acre "Banana" parcel of Syrah was the designated test plot, and, as the season wore on, it was discovered that this all natural topical spray was safeguarding the vines from all parasites, obviating the need for any other insecticides or fungicides to be used in the vineyards. Given the success of last years trial, L'Aventure is now utilizing Bob and Charlottes P-4 on 33 acres, roughly half of our plantation. As P-4 has recently approved CCOF organic certification, it's clear that this is a product that will be good for everyone, from winery ownership and management, to the people working in the vineyards, to the wine consumer.

Dave finished -up by pointing to his tractor. "With 60 acres in the ground, we have too much going on for just one tractor. With two, Guillaume or Stephan can be mowing or hedging, while I'm out disking. Such committed implements maximize our labor in the fields".

Committed implements....hmmmm. Pretty fancy talk for a tractor guy!