

SCHERRER SPRING 2002 RELEASES

We are pleased to announce another spring wine release. You are invited to our annual spring **open house on the weekends of April 6 & 7 and 13 & 14, 2002 from 10AM to 5 PM**. Everything listed here will be open for tasting, whether already sold out or not. You may pick up any wines ordered now or from last August's futures offering at this event or we will schedule them for shipment, as usual.

2000 Scherrer Vineyard 'Old & Mature Vines' Zinfandel: Contrasting with the 1999 vintage, the 2000 is smoother and more forward owing to its very ripe tannins and lower acidity. Its ripeness reminds me most of the 1996 OMV at this stage. Our Zinfandels (all reds, for that matter) are treated in a similar manner as Pinot Noir in the cellar, with minimal handling and long aging on its lees. This 'reductive' winemaking calls for longer time in the barrel for full development. While a lot of other Zinfandel producers prefer to bottle after 10 to 11 months in order to capture youthful fruitiness, I find that our Zinfandels need a second winter in barrel to finish their course. Two vintages 'on the floor' at once causes cooperage congestion, but it's worth it. For the last decade, our Old & Mature Zinfandels have aged consistently and gracefully at a speed that would bore even a Sloth. This is one that the Sloth can start sipping a little sooner, for once. 1500 cases produced. **Release price: \$28 per bottle, 24 bottle limit.**

2000 Scherrer Vineyard 'Shale Terrace' Zinfandel: Once again, because of its small production, the allocation of this wine sold out on futures last August. This is one of our most focused Shale bottlings and one of my favorites. If you missed this wine on futures, the 2000 'Old & Mature' Zin above has a similar forward character valued by 'Shale' fans. 200 cases produced.

2001 Vin Gris: This is a bone-dry rosé of Pinot Noir and Zinfandel made in a southern-French style. Olives and seafood dishes with garlic and /or tomato cry out for this wine. Ignore the call if you can. Due to popular demand, we made a little more of this than last year, so there should be enough to go around. We might not let you taste any red wines at the open house without trying this first...with an olive. 380 cases were produced. **Release price: \$16 per bottle, 24 bottle limit.**

2000 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay: This is the most hedonistic version of the

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Chardonnay from Dad's vineyard. As usual, whole cluster pressing (like with sparkling wine) was stopped at very low juice yields, giving more fine elements and avoiding any coarseness from the skins. With my two manually operated 'bladder presses' (please forgive the connotation) this requires valve turning, button pushing, lever turning and scurrying about reminiscent of Dorothy and her associates' first meeting with the man behind the curtain in 'The Wizard of Oz.' This is important to making high quality Chardonnay (the taking of only the first and finest juice as opposed to the scurrying), and especially critical for grapes from the less cool areas like Alexander Valley. Professionals who have tasted through the cellar consistently remark with surprise as to the finesse, integration, complexity and 'minerality' this benchland Chardonnay possesses. Previous vintages continue to indicate how slowly and gracefully this unfinned, unfiltered style of Chardonnay ages. 550 cases were produced. **Release price: \$25 per bottle, 24 bottle limit.**

1999 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon: Experimenting with tiny lots of Cabernet Sauvignon from additional areas of my Father's vineyard recently, I have come to understand the following: Some parts of the vineyard speak uniquely of *this* vineyard while others speak more classically of the region. This has been consistent over the last three vintages. Out of respect for this, it was natural to create our first regional Cabernet Sauvignon bottling, which is somewhat more open, forward and satisfying than the vineyard designate at this point. It has nice cassis, plummy, classically varietal flavors, with enough sweet tar, earth and mystery to keep things interesting and exciting. The finish is very long, rich, serious, and mouth-watering, yet friendly and engaging. It may be a regional designate, but it is definitely in the 'House Style' and would stand up well beside our past 'Scherrer Vineyard' Cabernet Sauvignons. This should bury many wines at twice the price. (The Scherrer vineyard designate will be released in the fall.) 240 cases were produced. **Release price: \$30 per bottle, 12 bottle limit.**

2000 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir: While to many of you, I seemed to be apologetic for the 1999 Pinot Noirs at this time last year, they have developed well beyond my own expectations. They have also enjoyed the highest critical praise any of our wines have ever gotten (kind of scary). From the experimental clonal lots that yielded the 1999 'Big Brother' and 'Little Sister', I was able to take what I learned, refine it, and apply it. I was able to pick and choose from the clones trusting my sense of what the raw material would

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bring to the blend. Rather than vinifying them separately, most of the clones were blended in the fermenter, becoming a unit from *birth* (or rather, from *conception*). Overall, this 2000 RRV reminds me of the 1999 'Big Brother' with some of the pretty tones of the 1999 'Little Sister.' (You'll be happy to know I didn't even think of calling it 'Hermaphrodite'...till now.) There is just enough grip and guts to make this a serious wine that will benefit from some bottle age. Bottled in early February, it should probably be showing *really* well by Fathers' day this year and *showing off* by the fall and winter holidays. Fun to drink in the shorter term, I do expect this wine to develop well for 4 to 8 years, depending on your storage. 300 cases were produced. **Release price: \$35 per bottle, 8 bottle limit.**

Growth: Over the past year or so, the winery has grown to the point that I am unable to cover the business side effectively. Telephone calls go unanswered for many days during my really busy periods. But there is hope. Along with the demands of our two young children, I have been able to convince my wife and longtime friend, Judi, to give up her well-paying professional position with its 4:30 AM alarm clock, 1-hour-plus commute, and numerous frequent flier miles for a more civilized position with the business end of the winery (this is harder than you might imagine). She brings skills and experience I could never possess, and I am very excited about working with her, reorganizing and expanding this one-person operation, refining both wines and service. I will have more time to support the family in the vineyard, and explore some ideas I have not had time for. Most important of all, our children will benefit the most by trading two 'alternating single parents' in for two 'full-timers.' Making it to this point has been extremely hard (and only possible with amazing extended-family support), but worthwhile in the long run.

The 2001 vintage: What a season of contrasts. Early budbreak followed by Spring frosts, and a very warm early growing season (like 1981) but then abruptly changing to cool, foggy conditions in the valleys made this a uniquely challenging year. The Coastal ridge top fruit, owing to reasonable warmth, extra direct sunlight, and a good match between early and later season weather, was about a month ahead of schedule. By contrast, the Russian River Valley fruit, owing to a mismatch between the early and later seasons (hot, then cool), was about a month behind schedule. Alexander Valley was right on schedule. Net result: Practically everything was ready to harvest about the same time. After 23 years making wine, I know that this is always a possibility, and despite

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appearances, there really is a place to ferment everything at once. It wasn't pretty, but space congestion in the winery was better than compromised fruit.

Having such a strange growing season and being under severe sleep deprivation actually turned out to be rather helpful for me (Don Bliss, my faithful friend and periodic winery assistant will undoubtedly have his own opinion on this subject). Nearly in a waking dream-state for much of the later part of the harvest, it was easier to focus on the personality of the fruit (at the expense of social niceties, as those around will undoubtedly report - even the answering machine message was terse). Still, I was not at all afraid to try new things according to fit the vintage. Despite the unusual conditions, I am thrilled with the young wines. As expected, all the fruit from my Father's vineyard was stunning in 2001. The coastal Pinot Noirs contain perhaps some of the best single fermentation lots of this variety I have ever made. Like 1999, the Hirsch Pinot Noir was 'Diaphanous' in 2001. The Russian River Valley Pinot Noirs look like they will marry into a wine that should rival the 2000.

Future vintages: Just a couple of years ago, it was hard to find Pinot Noir growers willing to work with such an unknown 'garage' winery. Fortunately, we have been approached by several new growers who care as much as we do about what is in the bottle. And, that's good news for us all.

Thank you for your continued interest and support of our wine. It has made all the difference.