

2002 Scherrer Zinfandel Futures Offering & Fall 2003 Releases

We are pleased to announce the Scherrer Winery fall releases and 2002 Zinfandel futures offering at our twelfth annual **barrel tasting, August 2 & 3 from 10 to 5** at the production facility. As usual, this is not advertised to the general public. Only those on our mailing list and their guests are invited to this 'private party.' Space is as limited as ever, so if you are able to come early in the day, you will probably find more adequate elbow room. If you expect to take any bottles of our released wines home with you from the open house, please plan protection for your wine from the possibility of high temperatures. An ice chest or at least a styrofoam shipping container would be a good idea. Anyone with extra used styrofoam shippers may bring them to share.

New Vineyard: We began our label with wine produced solely from my dad's vineyard in Alexander Valley in 1991. Since the late 1990's, we have included cooler-climate loving varieties from sites in the Russian River Valley and Sonoma Coast. We are pleased to introduce you this year to our newest relationship: the Fort Ross Vineyard, first planted in the late 1990's, *right on the edge of the continent*. Due to the nearly vertical slope of the western sea-facing ridge and its elevation (around 1500 ft.), this vineyard enjoys the better aspects of this location...generally moderate temperatures during the growing season, tempered by, but above the fog. Our initial Pinot Noir and Chardonnays from this vineyard's first vintages are included in this offering.

The young 2002 wines: It was shaping up to be one of those 'perfect' years...until the September heat spikes came. While it may have robbed much of the Russian River Valley of another fantastic vintage like 1994 (where nearly all sites/producers make outstanding wines), the result is still a very good vintage. Fortunately, the grapes at dad's vineyard in Alexander Valley had an opportunity to acclimatize to the temperatures and the grapes matched the ultra-high quality of the viticulture work. The young Fort Ross Vineyard fared nearly as well, being spared the very highest temperatures due to its proximity to the ocean.

The 2002 Zinfandels personalities seem about as close to a repeat of the previous vintage as we have ever had. The Shale Terrace has that same 'stone fruit' thing, while the major difference in the Old & Mature Zinfandel this year is that the tannins are just slightly more relaxed, making it somewhat easier to enjoy the fruit flavors and to imagine the wines' future. Over the years, our Zinfandel futures program has become quite popular, and I'm pleased to be able to make these wines so affordable without having to wear our used cooperage as clothing. So, don't worry about us discontinuing the Zinfandel futures program, OK?

FUTURES

2002 Old & Mature Vines Zinfandel futures: Again, this is very similar to the 2001 vintage expression only slightly more accessible. It seemed to want a higher proportion of the Burgundy type than the Bordeaux or Cognac type of barrel than the 2001 preferred. There are flavors of blackberry, raspberry, and even blueberry along with tarry, sweet earthy undertones from the extended contact with the primary lees in barrel. Sufficient (but not wedge-like) acidity and copious juicy fruit makes for a mouth-watering middle and good continuity. All of this portends versatility on the table and long aging...if you can hide enough away from the corkscrew. About 1300 cases to be produced. *Estimated retail at release: \$28 per bottle. Futures price: \$225 per case. Released April 2004*

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2002 Shale Terrace Zinfandel futures: This is very similar to 2001 in character. The basic characteristics are red and stone fruits, approachability when young, and a surprising textural finish. Previous shale purchasers have first crack at this limited quantity. Let us know if you slipped through a crack or really want to get on the shale waiting list. About 200 cases to be produced. *Estimated retail at release in the very few stores that get some: \$24 per bottle. Futures price: \$195 per case. Released April 2004*

FALL RELEASES

2001 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay: Due to an early budbreak and spring frosts, the crop was reduced by over 50% in this vineyard, down to one single barrel. However, my experience with this vineyard has shown that it does best with about 50% new oak. So, I had to figure out how to achieve the right new oak balance without resorting to 100% new oak or a new and an older 30 gallon barrel, which would not integrate into the wine nearly as well as the ubiquitous 60 gallon capacity. During the summer, in anticipation of the small yield and during an inspired moment, I persuaded the cooper at Seguin-Moreau turn one of my older barrels and one new barrel into two 50% new barrels by exchanging half of the staves and one head each. The results were good but we would be content if this did not happen every vintage. The wine has the signature 'star-fruit' character and hint of Burgundy-like struck-match that are part of this vineyard's typical personality when young, integrating slowly over several years to give something unique and exciting (the 1998 and 1999 are just hitting their stride). The initially more generous 2000 is still continuing to develop well. I think this well-structured 2001 will need even more time, but will be worth the wait. 22 cases produced. *\$35 per bottle. Available now.*

2000 Sonoma Coast Chardonnay: The very first harvest from the Fort Ross Chardonnay Vineyard yielded a minute crop of tiny berries that produced a wine with mild earthiness, honeysuckle, great textural minerality (perhaps a signature of the site?) and perky balance uncommon in California Chardonnay. We came up 10 gallons short of two full barrels on the day of pressing. In response to this, I had a neighboring cooper 'shrink down' one of my older barrels, removing some of the staves and resizing the heads and hoops so that we could keep the wine from this site completely separate after fermentation. I held off on deciding how to label it until I could see what the vineyard personality would settle into over the next two vintages. Upon seeing how generous these successive vintages are, I decided to 'declassify' this as a regional bottling to reduce the confusion with this vineyard's more mature personality. It is currently drinking quite well and is priced to reduce any guilt associated with cork-pulling. 38 cases produced. *\$18 per bottle. Available now.*

2001 Fort Ross Vineyard Chardonnay: This is the beginning of what I think is one of the most promising vineyards on the Sonoma Coast. The loose-clustered Hyde and Wente Chardonnay selections are performing beautifully there, at least in the riper vintages we have recently experienced. They produce a wine that is both rich and complex, with minerality and seamless continuity. Like a lemon chiffon cake with a twist of tangerine/lime zest in the aroma, it is generous, but has sufficient acidity to keep it alive and refreshing. I think it will age and develop well for many years due to its concentrated material, balance, and being bottled without any fining or filtration. Fortunately, there was no need to resize any barrels to accommodate this wine. 340 cases produced. *\$28 per bottle. Available now.*

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2001 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir: This might have been bottled as another 'diaphanous' Hirsch, except that I liked it better with a small percentage of one of the parts of the young Fort Ross Pinot Noir vineyard blended in. It would be easier to market this wine as the famous Hirsch vineyard designate (and for more \$\$) but I would have always wished that I had blended it instead. It is the product of rigorous selection and brutal declassification that tends to drive growers nuts. Alas, it is also our last vintage from Hirsch for the foreseeable future. Like the 1999 Hirsch 'Diaphanous', there is the telltale sassafras, delicate mid-palate of red fruits and toasty/earthiness. Unlike our highly structured 1999 Sonoma Coast during its youth, this 2001 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir has a delicate, graceful, lingering finish which lasts surprisingly long. 360 cases produced. *\$30 per bottle, \$16 per 375 mL. Available now.*

2001 Fort Ross Vineyard Pinot Noir: This is our first of two 2001 vineyard-designate Pinot Noirs from this coastal vineyard. Of those two, it is the more suave and integrated today. It is mainly from 'Dijon clones' which, I think lends itself to sleeker, silkier Pinots in this region than some of the chunkier, wilder 'California selections' previously used in the state for decades. Similar to the 2001 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, this has aromas of sassafras, red fruits, and sweet, damp earth. Additionally, it has aromas of hibiscus flowers and a long, gently penetrating finish that unfolds the many facets of this wine. 300 cases produced. *\$38 per bottle, \$20 per 375 mL. Available now.*

2000 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon: A generous fruit set caught many growers and winemakers by surprise in 2000. From this, I can understand why an insensitive, formulaic approach to the vintage would fall short. Since flavor development was rather slow this season, it took many more days on the vine than usual to get it just right. The Cabernet vines also had to have their leaf canopies 'sculpted' in a particular way to get enough sunlight on the fruit to develop ripe flavors and textures without becoming naked to the sometimes hot, beating sun. Fortunately, the slowly changing chemical balance of the resulting fruit was still great when the flavor and tannin ripeness I was looking for finally arrived. Additionally, strict selection for blending our various Cabernet bottlings was also necessary to produce the kind of harmony and balance we value (i.e. 'Alexander Valley bottling from the spring, and Vin Rouge, below). This 2000 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is a substantial, sleek and refined wine. French coopers from the Bordeaux and Cognac regions as well as several other European and Canadian wine importers that have tasted through the cellar have consistently preferred this vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon to any other in our barrels or bottles. Many US wine merchants also share this love of this wine. It is more rounded and approachable in its youth than the past couple of vintages were at release, but it still has the stuffing to age and develop well into the future. 360 cases produced. *\$40 per bottle, \$21 per 375 mL. Available now.*

2000 Vin Rouge: Consistently brutal, rigorous selection of fermentation lots for our Cabernet Sauvignon bottlings led to the creation of this zippy, red-fruited wine. It is 100% Cabernet Sauvignon from the Scherrer Vineyard that surprisingly would have brought discord and loss of focus if blended into the Scherrer Vineyard designate, or the spring released Alexander Valley bottling. Way, way too good for the bulk market, we decided to bottle this separately and offer it at a guilt-free price for the frugal hedonist. In order to avoid confusion with the other two bottlings of Cabernet it was nominally declassified to a 'Vin Rouge' (red wine). But it is much more than just red. I see this becoming our house red this summer, during barbecue season. Like our other bottlings of this variety, this should be very interesting in a blind tasting with 'fancy' Cabernets...even in the winter. 95 cases produced. *\$18 per bottle, Available now.*

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2002 Vin Gris: I have found that leaving this kind of wine in barrel on the 'lees' (sediment) through most of the spring has brought very desirable mid-palate flavors and texture that serves it well for a couple of years' aging. Bottled in mid-May, it is the only wine we routinely filter. It is a blend of mostly Pinot Noir and Zinfandel juice bled gently from the tank before fermentation began. Showing some of the strawberry notes of the 2001, it also has some of the focus and pink grapefruit character of the 1999 and 2000 editions, making it even more food friendly. I'm thrilled at the growing acceptance this type of bone-dry rosé has gained over recent years. 270 cases produced. *\$14 per bottle, Available now.*

1997-2001 Scherrer Vineyard Zinfandel & Chardonnay mini-vertical: Since I regularly refer to past vintages, it seemed about time to share a small portion of our library to show what I'm talking about. While there is not much to go around, I think that those newest to us will find these most interesting as well as those who never can think of what to get uncle Charlie for Christmas. It might just be the excuse for a wine tasting party... 'try to guess the vintages'. It consists of a bottle each of 1997-2001 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay, 1997-2001 OMV Zinfandel, plus a bottle each of the 1997 and 1999 'Special Cuvée' Zinfandel to complete the case. Hedonism meets education. *\$345 per 12-bottle pack. Limited availability.*

Since the Shale Terrace Zinfandel is always limited wine, we must give 'first crack' to those who have been buying it in the past. This is outlined on the order form. **We will process 'first crack' orders received before July 25, 2003 and then begin filling 'wish list' requests in the order they are received as long as we can.** If we missed you in the past regarding the Shale, please let us know ASAP so we can make amends. The point of this is to be fair to our long-term Shale supporters. There is no connection to purchases of the Shale Terrace with the availability of our other wines.

The fall releases will be available for pick-up at the August open house. Shipments of the fall releases will be made sometime later, dependent on your location, cooler weather and space logistics in the winery. If you are anxious to get your wine sooner, I suggest letting us know and upgrading to Fed-Ex second day or DHL overnight to minimize exposure to extreme temperatures.

The 2002 Zinfandels will be released in the spring of 2004. We can only set up futures purchases for either: 1) pickup at our two open house weekends on April 3,4 and 10 (though not Easter) or 2) shipping to the legal or 'reciprocal states' listed on the order form. If you live in a 'shipping-challenged' state, you can have someone you trust come pick the wine up and hold it or somehow find a way to get it to you. Happily, it appears that easier interstate shipping is becoming more likely as time progresses and there may be more frugal, options available than we currently have. Prior to release, we will send out our newsletter outlining any concrete changes that have occurred.

The 2003 growing season so far: Early budbreak followed by one of the coolest, dampest springs on record caused the vines to just sit there, jaundiced and waiting. In late May and June, bloomtime occurred according to region. This will spread out the harvest between regions and allow a more measured rate of harvest work.... not a bad thing in my opinion.

Thanks for your continued support. It allows us to do what we love to do.