

## Time in a Bottle

Along with the burgeoning springtime growth, a person's thoughts turn to...our 2003 Zinfandel futures release, and other spring releases. Well, maybe not entirely. One must have priorities, I suppose.

You are invited to our annual spring **Open House on April 1-3, and 15-17 from 10 am to 5 pm each day**. We find that being available Fridays really has cut down on congestion, so we can really spend some quality time with those of you who visit. The wines 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 Zinfandel futures offering. Or we will arrange shipment for them, when the weather is mild.

**2003 Scherrer Vineyard 'Old & Mature Vines' Zinfandel:** Tasting notes on recently bottled wine: Dark red fruits like pomegranate, red cherry, maraschino cherry, slight nectarine/stone fruit, white pepper, very slightly jammy. Our reductive (opposite of 'oxidative') winemaking here really showcases the perfumes and 'verve' of this grape, so obliterated when taken to prune-like overripeness. With a nicely centered structure, it's perfectly suited to use with food like duck or pork roast to show off its texture when young. While I have enjoyed this with dinner very much right before and after bottling in mid-February, I think a minimum of 8 to 10 months bottle aging will be well rewarded, typical of our OMV Zins. I thought it showed a little awkwardly at last August's barrel tasting [I had held off racking, SO<sub>2</sub> adjustment, and blending until just days before the tasting], yet I am very happy with the wine's development as a result of that decision. 960 cases produced. **Release price: \$28 per bottle, 24 bottle limit. Half bottles (\$15) and magnums (\$58) also available.**

**2003 Scherrer Vineyard 'Shale Terrace' Zinfandel:** This started out life more like the darker-fruited OMV. At about 12 months in barrel, it settled into the 'tell-shale' nectarine/stone fruit aroma more decisively than any past vintage. While lower in acidity than the OMV, it has a mineral, nearly chalky note that seems to come only from this small vineyard area. 225 cases produced.

**2004 Vin Gris:** Bottled barely in time for this offering, we are thrilled with the reception of our pink wines over the past few years. I already like this at least as much as our 2003 version which has just hit its stride. The 2004 has the same perfumes as the 2003, and a similar mouth-watering acidity, verve and clarity that make this a wine of few peers. I have had a number of calls from other winemakers asking how we make this wine. We also made a Cabernet Sauvignon Vin Gris which will be released this summer. 400 cases produced. **\$14 per bottle, 24 bottle limit.**

**2002 Fort Ross Vineyard Reserve Chardonnay:** Some of you may remember the 2001 version of this wine. Unfortunately, we only had one barrel of that wine to sell. Due to the success of the first vintage, we made several barrels of this huge impact wine in 2002, our last vintage of Chardonnay from this vineyard. Unmistakably, this is a full-on style of barrel fermented Chardonnay that is more of a food

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than a 'food wine'. However, my good friend Don Bliss turned me on to a savory, roasted sweet potato stuffed ravioli that goes tremendously well with this wine (and our other Chardonnays for that matter). If you prefer more fruit and acidity, and less oak in your Chardonnay, you might look to the 2002 Scherrer Vineyard bottling, still available. The 2002 Fort Ross Vineyard regular bottling is somewhere in-between those two. 110 cases were produced. **Release price: \$28 per bottle. Limit 12 bottles. Half bottles (limited) also available (\$15)**

**2002 Fort Ross Vineyard 'High Slopes' Pinot Noir:** From the leanest soils, and some of the highest elevations of this coastal vineyard, the vines here struggle to become established. The berries are tiny, delivering a tightly structured wine that seemed to call for a high proportion of new barrels. Unlike the more open, 2002 Russian River Valley bottlings you may have seen at the last open houses, this powerful wine demands consumption with food and should reward time in the bottle. 210 cases were produced. **Release price: \$38 per bottle. Limit 12 bottles. Half bottles (limited) also available (\$20)**

**Recent releases worthy of note:** (Wines in bold below are still available, if you are new to us, or need to fill out a case). There has been a sharp renaissance of interest in our **2000 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$30)** in the restaurant world. In blind tastings of 2000 vintage Cabernet Sauvignons, it and our **2000 Scherrer Vineyard bottling (\$40)** have also turned many heads. Put these in a blind line-up of your own. After only a year in bottle, the **2001 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon (\$32)** is just beginning to show its stuff, especially after an hour or two in the glass. The **2001 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$42)** bottled only 9 months ago, has somewhat 'closed down', not surprising for such a dense, ageworthy wine. Its time has not yet come, but will be worth the wait. Restaurants and wine shops will not see this one for some time. The 2002 Cabs still await bottling.

The **2001 Old & Mature Zinfandel (\$28)** is enjoying its run in local restaurants and fine wine shops. We regularly receive calls from people who encountered it for the first time at dinner somewhere, and *must* find some for home. The **2002 Old & Mature Zinfandel (\$28)** has not yet been released to restaurants, but like its predecessor did, has benefited from its year in bottle. It is a bit more 'flashy' than the 2001, but it can wait its turn for the restaurant table just the same. The Shale Terrace bottlings seem to come on a little quicker, so the 2002 vintage and earlier are currently drinking quite well.

The **2001 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$35)** is at such a beautiful point right now, if you have been waiting to try one, please feel free to do so. It has hit its stride two years after bottling. Table 8 restaurant from Los Angeles selected this wine for a special dinner they prepared in New York at the James Beard House in late February. The **2002 RRV Pinot Noir (\$35)** is from an easier-to-understand vintage, but like the 2001, I would still give it more time to reach its zenith. It did, however, get reviewed last fall by the *California Grapevine* and did extremely well in a blind-tasted flight of wines, many of which were about twice the price. The **2002 'Laguna' Pinot Noir (\$35)** (which also did well in

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that review flight) has seduced so many people so far; I would forgive anyone who drank it already despite its promise for the future. Wintertime is the season that most favors consumption of the **2001 Fort Ross Reserve Pinot Noir (\$42)**. I still have only offered this to one restaurant (Boulevard) in San Francisco, as it suits their cuisine so well, and they understand how to use it. The wine is extremely complex, with sassafras, pepper, forest floor and silkiness wrapped around a fine but taut cable of structure. It was never very 'polite' like its other vineyard designate; just provocatively satisfying. The **2002 Fort Ross Vineyard Pinot Noir (\$38)** has equal interest, just a bit more polite and restrained purity of fruit at the moment. Right now, I prefer it with foods that have mushrooms in the preparation, or a bit of red fruit in the background to really set off the fruit in the wine. It, like its RRV siblings, will benefit from another year in bottle, but will probably run a longer race in the end.

We poured the 1998 and 1999 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay at the open house last November to show how unusually well these California Chardonnays age and develop. I think the 2000 vintage is in its prime right now, and should age about as gracefully as the seemingly immortal 1998. The minerality that the **2001 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay (\$25)** exhibits has been worth the wait, to me. The wine has just about hit its stride, and sings with the right food (below). It is hard to resist the juicy, seductive fruit of the **2002 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay (\$25)**, though. Eighteen months in the bottle seems to be a turning point for these Chardonnays. The 2003 vintage was bottled only last December, so that will have to wait its turn. All these wines match well with Onion Tart, Scallops in butter sauce, and Don's magical sage-touched roasted sweet potato ravioli stuffing (probably even on a cracker, or a finger), and uncle Mark's chicken mango crostini from the November open house (Mark & Tracey Berkner took time from their restaurant sabbatical to prepare the food in November, and will return one more time in April). Pearl Oyster Bar & Restaurant even paired a vertical of these wines with cooked *and* raw oysters (with sauces, of course) for a New Hampshire Slow Food benefit dinner in late February.

We will be returning to the Hospices of Sonoma Charity Barrel Auction (April 29-30). Please let us know if you are interested in attending, or call them directly (707) 829-2433. Last year, its inaugural run, some amazing half-barrel (10 case) lots of high profile went for criminally low prices. You might as well be there to scoop some of them up along with your friends before word gets out.

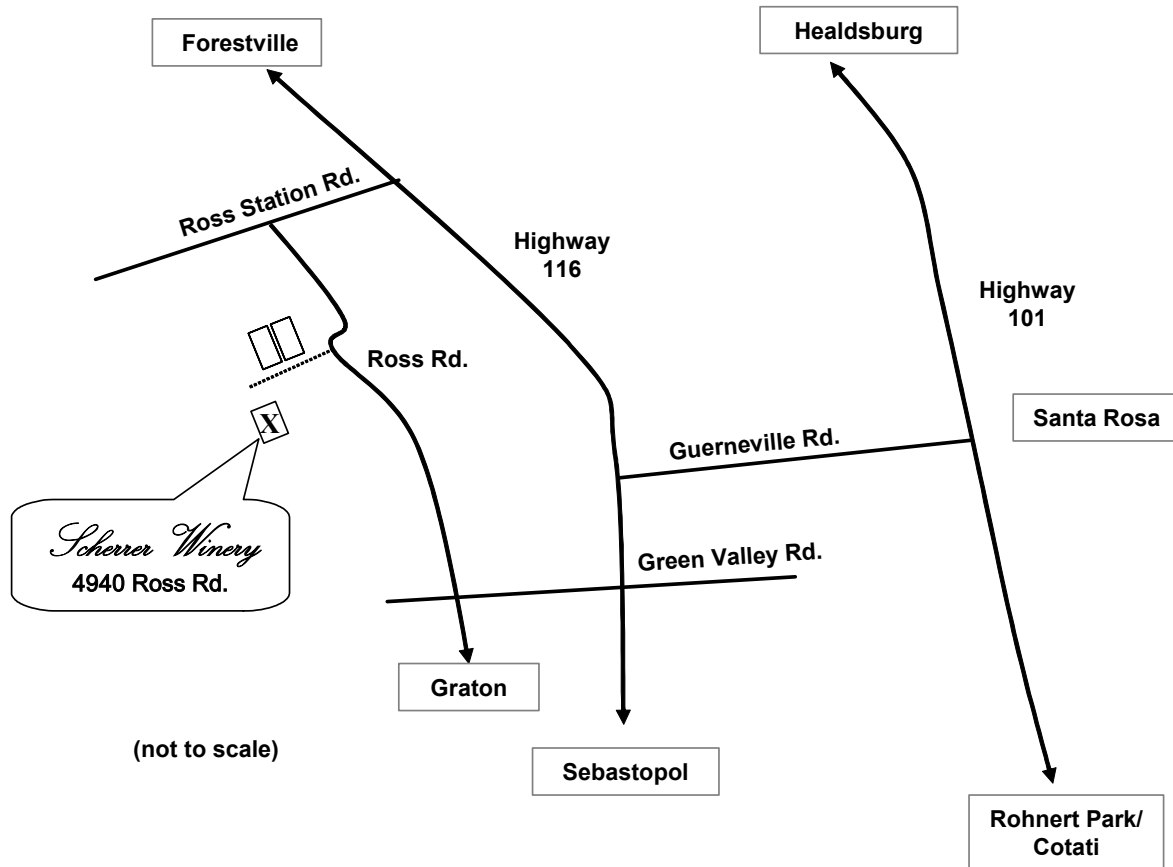
When I talk with winemakers employed by large companies, I am reminded how fortunate I am to be self-employed and able to exercise relative creative freedom despite whatever headaches come with the territory. This is only possible due to your support. Thank you.



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**Directions:** Below is a map of the area local to the winery. **The winery address is 4940 Ross Road, Sebastopol.** If you get lost, the telephone number at the building itself is (707) 824-1933.

Please drive slowly down the driveway. Children (including our own) will be playing nearby. **The new entrance is around the back on the west side of the building.** Parking on the gravel side will now be closer to the entrance, so don't hesitate to drive clockwise around to the other side of the building.



**Shipping Information. An adult signature is required upon delivery.**

	750 mL	Half Bottle	Magnum
<b>Delivery to most greater San Francisco Bay Area Residents (including Sacramento area)</b>	\$15/box (full or partial)		
<b>UPS to CA Residents</b>	\$2.50 or \$25/case	\$2/bottle	\$16/bottle
<b>UPS to CO, ID, OR, NM or WA</b>	\$3.00 or \$30/case	\$2.5/bottle	\$18/bottle
<b>UPS to IA, IL, MO, NE or WI</b>	\$4.00 or \$38/case	\$3/bottle	\$20/bottle
<b>FedEx 2-day to states above plus: GA, D.C., LA, MN, ND, NV, TX, WV, WY or VA</b>	\$5.50 or \$56/case	\$4/bottle	\$24/bottle
<b>DHL overnight to any above state. Hawaii and Alaska please call for rates</b>	\$6.25 or \$62/case	\$4.5/bottle	\$28/bottle
Delivery to an address with liquor license: All states			

Shipping update: Progress continues. Texas is now open and we have been licensed in Virginia to allow direct shipments to consumers (though it means we also need to collect sales tax). The Home Land Securities Act of 2002 did include a provision to allow on-site purchases to be shipped back home which has opened up many (but not all) non-recipiental states to UPS and Fed Ex. Unfortunately, it does mean you need to be on site to purchase your wine, and there are often severe quantity limits. So if you are making a tour of wine country, you may now arrange to have your purchases shipped without adding to your airline baggage.