

## Zinfandoodle Dandy

As a teenager in the mid-1970's I made wine at home (with the blessing of my parents, of course). My uncle Mario used to tease me about the project, calling it 'Zinfandoodle' rather than Zinfandel. He also asked me to make some 'Muscadoodle' as well because it would taste better. This from a man who makes *vinegar*?

As I began to write this, it was mid-September, and we enjoyed (or tolerated) a very cool period which delayed the onset of harvest for us. Winemakers who cut their teeth on early, hot vintages may not call this 'enjoyable' or even 'tolerable.' I thought it was just 'dandy.' Look for some stellar wines from vineyard sites that did not have bloomtime failure and that have been properly managed (thinned) during the growing season. Otherwise, you may find wines harvested too early, by the numbers, or from unevenly developed grapes. My favorite Pinot Noir and Zinfandel vintages of the past 15 years in Sonoma County (1991, 1994, 1999, and 2001) have typically been the later ones, primarily due to the lack of searing heat spells just as the grapes finish ripening. Admittedly, some of this favoritism is due to the orderly fashion that we are able to harvest and ferment under. But in the end it has everything to do with balance, depth and ageing potential of the finished wines. As the new red wines go 'dry,' we should see the real texture and balance of the 2005 vintage. So far, I am cautiously optimistic.

Hopefully, we will be done with most of the fermentations when we have our **November Open House** Friday the 18<sup>th</sup>, Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> from 10 to 5 at the winery located at 4940 Ross Road, Sebastopol (707) 824-1933. You will be able to taste the new releases (below) as well as a selection of older library wines, some of which will also be for sale. As usual, this is not open to the general public – just for those of you on our mailing list. If you need a map, please go to [www.scherrerwinery.com/map.htm](http://www.scherrerwinery.com/map.htm) or call the office and we will send you one.

### NEW RELEASES

**2003 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay:** This could end up my favorite vintage of this bottling to date. It has verve, balance, star-fruit, minerality and excitement. However, with this vineyard, its potential is only realized after several years' bottle time. We are finding that the 1998 and 1999 vintages are drinking spectacularly right now. Often mistaken for white Burgundy, this site is certainly a proper place for Chardonnay. Happily, we will receive the first fruit from ex-Pinot Noir vines grafted to more of this Chardonnay material in 2005, so it will be slightly easier to obtain in the future. 45 cases produced. \$35 per 750 mL bottle. Limit 4.

**2003 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir:** After experiencing one of the longest times in barrel we have ever given our Pinot Noir, this was bottled only last May, and has just begun to get used to living in a glass house, so to speak. I have learned to hold off on releasing the RRV bottling to restaurants and wine shops until about a year later, when the wine will be ready to begin its life of pleasure-giving the moment the cork is pulled, so you get to see it first. Similar to our RRV bottlings of the past, with a bit of that sweet, loamy earthiness and light herbal character as a counterpoint to the red fruits, this exhibits less of a cola note and more of sassafras character this vintage. I think the sassafras is expressed more in the 'banana belt' on the Sonoma Coast ridges, where the night time temperatures are typically not as low as the RRV slightly inland. In 2003, the vines must have vacationed on these ridges. 800 cases produced. \$35 per 750 mL, \$18 per 375 mL.

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**2002 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon:** Over the years, our Cabernet style has evolved to a more 'reductive' development. This means less manipulation, less pumping, less 'oxidative' upbringing...kind of like our Pinot Noir and Zinfandels. I have found that this method preserves the perfumes and texture of the wine, and should greatly increase bottle ageing potential. This method requires more time in barrel before bottling (nearly three years). One of the best aspects of this variety is the complexity that it can achieve with lengthy bottle ageing. So, I feel that it is a waste to let that potential slip away by over manipulating the wine in the winery in order to make it taste like flat soda pop upon release. When the wine is less than 7 years old, it benefits greatly from decanting before consumption in order to 'wake up.' Those of us who want current satisfaction only need to take an active role in consumption by giving an aerative splashing into a decanter awhile before serving. That said, I believe this vintage of our Cabernet to have the highest long-term potential. Bottles I have opened for recent visitors have been absolutely fantastic after 6-7 days without protection from air aside from a cork. 380 cases produced. \$42 per 750 mL, \$23 per 375 mL, \$86 per 1.5 L.

**2003 Bliss Vineyard Syrah:** This is our second vintage from this vineyard. As I mentioned in a past newsletter, Don Bliss has in fact, budded over some Pinot Noir thereby doubling the amount of this variety for the future. He has also added a selection of Syrah that I have been packing around for over a decade and a few other promising clones/selections. Somewhat riper than the previous vintage, this wine still has a meatiness (something like smoked duck from across the room), violets, plums, and the kind of texture and structure that a great northern Rhone can achieve. 30 cases produced. \$35 per 750 mL. Limit 4, people who bought 2002 vintage get 'first crack' for this before we open it up to first in line to those on the 'wish list.'

**Zinfandoodle, non-vintage:** What? No, don't look for your (reading) glasses. This is a blend of some small parts of the Scherrer Zinfandel Vineyard that did not fit perfectly into the Old & Mature Vines blends in the last two years. I took these leftovers from the 2002 and 2003 vintages, and just kept them in barrel until I found an appropriate home for them. As it turned out, mixing the two vintages together brought balance and harmony in a different register than our typical Zinfandel. Heck, if the top Champagne producers routinely do this, why not think outside the 'vintage box' with California Zinfandel?

This fun wine reminds me of an Italian Barbera-based wine aged in a good proportion of new French oak more than a CA Zinfandel. While it has a great, acidity-based structure (making it a great pizza wine), it is not intended to age forever. It is intended to be something to share liberally with good friends and food (and fun), just like uncle Mario and aunt L'Vere did for their many years together. 250 cases produced. Introductory price: \$16 per 750 mL. *Use your noodle, try the 'doodle.'*

**Thinning out the library:** Every year at this time, we take a fresh look at what we have held back for our library and retrospective tastings. We also like to pull out the magnums at this time, since the holidays are such a great time for the large format bottles as well as older gems. In order to give everyone a fair chance, and to be able to make quick updates as wines sell out, we will post a library order form on our website beginning October 20 at [www.scherrerwinery.com/library.htm](http://www.scherrerwinery.com/library.htm) or call the office and Judi can fax one to you. First come, first served (aka 'pigs to the trough' again). Quantity discounts will carry over from any wines ordered on this mailer which total 12 or more 750 mL bottle equivalents.

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

