

CHEHALEM

FALL / WINTER 2002



STRIKING A BALANCE

or Striking Out

By Harry Peterson-Nedry

Bigger is not always better, especially in wine. *Balance may be.*

Several IPNCs ago, with three Burgundian winemakers including Veronique Drouhin-Boss on a panel with me, vintage ageability arose as a topic. What is the prerequisite for ageability? Veronique and I concluded that truly ageable, timeless pinot noirs must begin in perfect balance. I still believe it, and extend it to all varieties of wine.

Great wines should have an excellent and appropriate fruit component, bright acidity, appropriate and finely structured tannin (reds), palate weight and texture, great breadth and palate length, and complexity of flavors and spices that continue to unfold.

An Argument for Balance in Wines

A well-balanced wine is one that is not obvious in any one of these components—a spherical wine, smoothly contoured, without lumps on the surface, without extremes that in their intensity mask detail. Nothing should jump out except the general excellence of the wine. You shouldn't be aware of specific wine characteristics, like acid or barrel or tannin or fruit or spice, without focusing intently—the wholeness of the wine should impress, its integration being seamless, the specifics of the wine blended well, with no deficiencies showing. Balance is like a multi-faceted gemstone—no matter which direction it is turned, it looks the same—as brilliant, as complex, and unflawed.

The 2000 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir speaks volumes to the concept of balance. It is a wine of elegance, depth, extreme length, extremely fine tannin, a firm but controlled acidity, and spice and fruit and barrel flavor complexity layers. As a counterpoint to 1999 Rion, the blockbuster dense, black, extracted masculine favorite from last year's releases, it is remarkable. Together they are the Taoist T'ai Chi—the circle divided by a curved line into light and dark, or male and female, halves that are equivalent and complementary, but could not be more different. The 1999 wins with brutish size and power, the 2000 wins with perfectly controlled and refined beauty. Which is better depends on preference and (CONTINUES NEXT PAGE)

PHOTO: HARRY PETERSON-NEDRY

(Above) Balancing Rural and Urban Land Uses: Corral Creek Road (running vertically, lower left) feeling urban expansion pressure. Corral Creek and Rex Hill Vineyards Shown

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT) is the reason volumes are written about wine.

Balance in Growing Grapes

To make balanced wines, you start with a huge dose of restraint in the vineyard. So much so that “moderation in all things” could be our motto in the vineyards. There must be great care taken to ask enough but not too much of each vine—to feed, water, protect and harvest, but never too much, lest they become overindulged and dependent, and always with a consideration for future vintages. In a cool climate vines must struggle, but a struggle develops character in grapes as well as in humans, so long as we don’t allow them to fail. There are considerations from planting on—how many vines per acre, to irrigate or not, how much crop to permit it to bear, how much to spray and what, fertilize or not and how. There are more.

The complexity and finesse we receive in fully mature vines is intricately determined by *vine balance*, that optimal point where plant, soil, canopy vigor, fruit set, moisture, amendments etc. come into equilibrium. There is great hooley made about *terroir* and yet it is fact that not all sites can achieve that equilibrium and that, when they do, the results are unique site-to-site. The greatest complexity comes from a moderately-stressed plant with mature root systems, able to access trace minerals from underlying parent rock, not overburdened with crop or vigorous leaf canopy. You best see the drive to manage balance in the precise dropping of crops to loads that yield optimal quality, variety-by-variety, block-by-block—leaving half the fruit on the ground. But balanced.

Philosophically, we—and most of Oregon—are committed to eschewing extreme agriculture, the “better living through chemistry” approach used for years in lots of crops that have been replaced by Sustainable or Organic methods. The balance here is environmental, forcing healthy respect for biodiversity and light footsteps on the land—farming practices reconsidered, whether regarding chemicals, irrigation, cultivation, fertilization or other issues.

There is an organized middle-of-the-road approach called LIVE (Low Impact Viticulture and Enology) that espouses standards used internationally to guarantee “responsible stewardship” of the land, while focusing on high

quality and economically viable grapegrowing. Oregon Tilth also certifies as *Organic* those going a step further and avoiding entirely petrochemically-based sprays as well as embracing other holistically balanced farming approaches.

Going a step further still and wrapping a religious or mystical packaging around Organic is a branch known as *Biodynamic*, based on philosophies developed by Rudolph Steiner in the 1920s (my first introduction to his philosophy was in Saul Bellow’s 1975 novel

Humboldt’s Gift) and using eyebrow-raising astrological aids and teas made from compounds buried in cow horns in the vineyard. I am committed personally to organic approaches as good for the environment, and farm Ridgecrest organically under Michael’s guidance, but find it challenging to embrace

“eye of newt” viticulture. But then, I’m older and less flexible than I used to be. Others at Chehalem have a more open mind and I respect that.

Sphere of Effluents

Benefits of balancing can, of course, extend beyond the vineyard and winery. Conservation versus development balancing acts are performed in almost all areas of the world, the most visible to us being a hovering sea of tract houses, each roof a wave lapping around the agricultural resources that we value today, and our heirs should value even more tomorrow. In Oregon we wisely have behind us decades of Land Use Planning that halted widespread engulfing of prime farmland.

However, even here we are currently fighting ongoing petitions for Urban Growth Boundary expansion, the most recent assault to extend Newberg to Corral Creek Road, which abuts the bottom of our vineyard at the winery. There has to be a balance of conservation and development, of short-term gain versus long-term loss, of personal interests and the greater good, of human good versus the rest of nature.

That said, world environmental issues underscore the precarious balance we have even more. Not to be Cassandran or pessimistic, because at heart I am an unrepentant optimist, but issues such as global warming, loss of greenspace, resource depletion, wasteful and polluting habits, and volatile “haves” versus “have nots” world politics are a bubbling cal-



Harry, who admits, “I am worse than most...” in embarrassingly personal introspection.

dron of imbalance. We, as the richest and therefore having the most to lose short-term, refuse to join the battle to understand and protect the environment, much less lead it—which we should be doing. We swagger with arrogance and forget we have *even more* to lose long-term, if we don't act to effect balance. This should be apparent, even to the most conservative.

Personal Balance

Personal balance is almost as hard to achieve.

Balance is an indicator of wine *ageability*. But perhaps it is an indicator of *age* also, since as we come to a certain point in life, pushed by the accelerating race of raising families, pursuing careers, accumulating the detritus of a life's capital purchases and experiencing the electricity of a frenetic, in-your-face, cell phone and Palm pilot and email and TV/VCR/DVD/CD/BFD existence, we begin to seek simplicity and a turning down of the volume.

Balance comes more easily at a more mature age as we ironically return to the simple wisdoms with which we were born (Wordsworth's "child is father of the man"), both in people and with vines as the metaphor—vines have reached an understanding with their environment, having explored regions of soil and years of weather; there is a building of reserves and a wisdom from history's lessons to support

future plans. Balance demands considering all aspects of life, not just those dictated by the pace. We need to slow the pace, become more introspective and less reactive, seeking the internal drumbeat more than responding to external high RPM noises.

I am worse than most in an extreme dedication, focus and drive. I have rationalized their merits under the banner of accomplishment, failing to see that the beautiful façade is a false front Hollywood set. Like complexity in wine, one or two overwhelming features can mask the richness of life. Balance, commonly called a well-rounded life, is necessary. Balance requires a heightened sensitivity, eschews force, is more feminine than masculine, is less sacrifice and more sense, is a blend of grays not black and white. 🍷

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!*

....William Wordsworth

*Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called
comforts of life are not only not indispensable,
but positive hindrances to the elevation of
mankind.... the wisest have ever lived a more
simple and meager life....*Henry David Thoreau



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

FREE SHIPPING!

The temperature has dropped and so will your shipping costs if you act soon! November is an ideal month for shipping wine and Chehalem will pick up the tab for case shipments sent FedEx ground anywhere in the US for all orders placed by October 31st. For those of you on the east coast, please let us know if you receive this newsletter a few days after the 31st and we'll honor the offer accordingly.



THANKSGIVING OPEN HOUSE

November 29–December 1. New releases: 2001 Pinot Gris Reserve, 2001 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir, and 2000 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir, which just received a 92 in *Wine Enthusiast*. 15% case discount Thanksgiving weekend only for new releases. Library wines, magnums, half bottles and custom shipping packages available. Open 11–5 Friday and Saturday, 11–3 on Sunday.

DINNER AT SHOALWATER

Friday December 6, 2002. Plan a weekend get-

away to Washington's Long Beach Peninsula and kick it off by joining us for dinner at The Shoalwater Restaurant and Shelburne Inn in Seaview. Call 360-642-4142 or visit www.shoalwater.com for reservations.

BOSTON WINE EXPO

February 1–2, 2003 at the World Trade Center Boston and Seaport Hotel. Grand tastings, chef demonstrations. Call for tickets, 1-877-946-3976. Or visit, www.wine-expos.com

CHEHALEM AND DOMAINE SERENE TEAM UP

At Georges' at the Cove in LaJolla, CA Tuesday February 11, 2003 for "The Wines of Oregon" dinner. Call 858-454-4244 or visit www.georgesatthecove for reservations.

"FINE ART OF CUISINE"

At Tyson's Corner Ritz Carlton, Washington DC, January 17–19, 2003. Chehalem will participate in the grand tasting with over 100 wineries Saturday the 18th from 11:30 to 4 p.m. Call 703-917-5499 for tickets. 🍷



NEW RELEASES

By Dan Beekley, National Marketing Manager

THINK OF A HOUSE. NOT JUST ANY OLD HOUSE. Think of your favorite house. What makes it so special? What is it about its space that is so well defined and unique?

Houses remind me a lot of wine, or a family of wines. Their structure, their form, their style, tells me about their design. Like an architect, a winemaker modulates a space and allows a subject to inhabit it. Winemakers constantly interact with their environment, immersed in a desire to make what are abstract needs and aesthetics into something physical, what is imagined into something palpable.

Consider a wine the way you would consider a house. Assess function vs. form. Evaluate its structure. Imagine inherent attributes. Discover its history. Ask how well the wine architect translated your needs into a structurally useful yet beautiful whole, rich in latent experiences and exciting environmental features. I think you'll get a new appreciation for what's "inside" every bottle.

These are my favorite new releases of the year. There is a wine for everyone, every meal, and every occasion. (A room for every person in this house!)

2001 PINOT GRIS RESERVE

Our *Pinot Gris Reserve* reminds me of a long, slow drive down a tree-lined lane. Flower blossom aromas permeate the air. The ride is smooth and slow with much to contemplate. Magnolias, orange blossoms, and honeysuckle abound. The aromatics lead to a front palate filled with citrusy sweetness and perfectly ripe Bosc pears. An assiduous amount of lees stirring gives the wine wonderful structure and a honeyed mouthfeel. Neutral barrel fermentation allows for a seamless integration of fruit. This gorgeous bottling should be a part of your Thanksgiving dinner, especially with a Pennsylvania Dutch favorite—oyster stuffing!

2001 3 VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

I love "showing" *3 Vineyard* to our customers. Many believe it's made from the grapes that don't "make the cut" for our single vineyard offerings. Not true. Grapes that don't make the cut for Chehalem wines land on the ground around mid-August during a "green" harvest. Simply put, *3 Vineyard* is the harbinger of the vintage. It is always the first pinot of the harvest and stylistically sets the table for the vineyard designated wines coming behind it. The wine says, "C'mon in, make yourself comfortable." In 2001 the wine features great ripeness, excellent balance, and graceful food friendliness. Young indeed, but precocious, this is a wine to serve with a hearty autumn dish like braised lamb shanks with root vegetables or a classic coq-au-vin.

2000 RION RESERVE PINOT NOIR

This is a classic and refined pinot noir—as good as we've crafted in years! This isn't a wine filled with pretension and artifice. It is subdued but warm, proper yet relaxed. It is a wine that is seasoned and complete. Its structure suggests masculinity with a dark, fine grain, but is also feminine in grace, palate silkiness, and perfume. Aromatics reveal an orchard of fruit trees and vines—plum, cherry, and blackberry. The unmistakable aroma of cocoa wafts in from the edges.

Although Patrice Rion doesn't share a hand in our winemaking or viticulture, his inspiration and insight for growing world class pinot noir lives here. Our reserve pinot noir might not say "Rion" forever, but Patrice's philosophies will always be alive in our wines. His wines are elegant. They

emphasize bold fruit, make judicious use of new oak, and are delicately balanced. I like to think of our "Rion" in much the same way. I would drink it after a meal with some of the fine cheeses of the Comté or Burgundy—Epoisses, Chambertin, or Emmental.

A restaurant friend distinguished for me recently that, "Chehalem makes its friends with *3 Vineyard*, but makes its reputation with *Rion Reserve*."

How true. 🍷





WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

Wine Enthusiast Magazine, October 2002 "World Series of Pinot Noir"

92 2000 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir. This is a beauty with deep, sweet aromas of black cherry, mincemeat pie, vanilla and buttered toast. The palate is full of cherry, plum and vanilla, with charred oak supplying the foundation... (Sixth highest-scoring of 400+ wines)

89 1999 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir. Some earthy, dense, terroir-driven aromas start this one off, followed by a mouthful of plum, cola, and smoked meat. The color is dark as is the overall profile of the wine; it's powerful and richly fruited. Very modern and offering more bulk, intensity and hedonism than elegance.

88 2000 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir. One of the strongest entry-level pinots in our 1999 World Series, this year's version again gives a solid performance. Smoke-tinged cherry and cranberry fruit, vanilla, tea and herb accents, and a velour-like mouthfeel provide plenty of pleasure. The long, chocolaty finish has supple tannins.

88 2000 Corral Creek Pinot Noir. Smells of black fruit, toasted wood and forest floor. Meaty on the palate, with rich, dense and layered plum and cherry fruit. The finish is smooth, with ample but balancing tannins; nicely integrated and structured.

Wine & Spirits, October-December 2002

91 2000 Ridgecrest Vineyards Pinot Noir. Full Review in December 2002 issue.

89 2000 Stoller Vineyards Pinot Noir. Oak shows first with the scent of smoked bacon and wood char. Then ripe fruit comes up, hinting at blackberries and red earth...

2000 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris. "Top 100 Values of the Year" for 2002

Wine Spectator, September/October 2002

92 2000 Stoller Vineyards Pinot Noir. A new bottling from Chehalem, which has been using fruit from this highly regarded vineyard in its regular bottlings. Ripe-flavored and open-textured, this one blossoms with currant and plum fruit shaded with cream and pepper grace notes. A harmonious, expressive Pinot that lingers effortlessly on the fine-grained finish.

90 2000 Corral Creek Pinot Noir. Ripe, open in texture, this has an inviting style that glows with berry, cherry and peppery floral flavors, which echo nicely on the fine-grained finish.

New York Times, October 2, 2002 "Between Alsace and Italy, the U.S. Pinot Gris"

Chehalem 2000 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris. Listed as one of the top four pinot gris out of 22 selected by the *NY Times* tasting panel.

Oregon Wine Report, September 2002 "Raising the Bar for Oregon Chardonnay"

A Focused Group of Winemakers are Proving that Oregon Can Produce Exceptional Chardonnay Wines. (Chehalem, Adelsheim, Argyle, Domaine Drouhin, Domaine Serene, Hamacher Wines, Ponzi) *This was a very impressive tasting. These wines are some of the finest chardonnays yet made in Oregon, and can compete with the best from...anywhere! The 1999s have matured in bottle and offer great current drinking, and likely will for many years to come. The 2000s were still tight, but with personalities waiting to burst forth*

1999 Ian's Reserve Chardonnay. Pungent aromas of freshly mown grass and cooked fruit, with a slightly smoky burnt edge...interesting contrast between up-front fruitiness and an aromatic spiciness that grows in the mouth to dominate the finish.

2000 Ian's Reserve Chardonnay. ...soft and lushly smooth in the mouth with flavors of summer grass, lime and nectarine, and a pleasing stony minerality. Finish is long and warming..

2000 Willamette Valley Chardonnay. ...light texture carries pear and apple flavors with a pleasing lavender overlay...flavors are pleasant but not focused or intense.

RECENT RIESLINGS. *Most of the Rieslings I tasted were enjoyable and well made...same few Oregon producers who have been able to regularly demonstrate that Oregon Riesling can be superb...the consistent elite are Argyle, Belle Pente, Chehalem, and Elk Cove...*

Seattle Post Intelligencier, September 11, 2002 "On Wine: Oregon's Pinot Gris Seems Destined to Become a Star" By Richard Kinssies

Oregon has an opportunity to establish itself as the preeminent producer of pinot gris outside Europe just as it did with pinot noir. It seems to have everything it needs: a unique growing region, a unique style of high-quality wines and enough production to establish itself in major markets. 🍷



IN THE VINEYARD

AS GRAPES GO TO PRESS

By Michael Davies, Chehalem Cellarmaster and Vineyard Manager

HERE WE ARE DOWN TO THE BUSINESS END OF THINGS IN THE VINEYARD AND WINERY. With me being a Commonwealthian and all, I would like to use a cricket (the sport not the insect) analogy to describe the atmosphere. With 3 overs to go, we need more than one run off each ball to win. Peterson-Nedry and Ordaz are at either end of the wicket and the Australians have brought in their devastating fast bowlers called Rain and Rot. To date, they have had very limited effect against the batting masters. The crowd has been stunned into silence by the game and their beers. The fielders are crowding the crease with 3 slips and one person at silly mid-off but Ordaz is not intimidated. With every ball delivered it is either dispatched to the boundary or it safely sails past the bails. The other big-hitters waiting in the stand, Francis and Eyres, are quietly confident of yet another victory, thereby reinforcing Oregon's and Chehalem's reputation for producing consistently good results.



BASIL CHILDERS

2002 Harvest, Plentiful and Beautiful: Pinot noir sorting by John and Greg.

Now, for those of you non cricket-literate people it suffices to say that the vineyard crew's time is being spent putting the finishing touches on another growing season. When the desired flavors have arrived in the grapes, the word is given for the picking to begin. And begin it does! An average picker can pick between one half ton and one whole ton of grapes in a 6 hour day. Fingers and snips move like lightning and the pickers run down the rows to the master bin with their 25 pound picking lugs. When we are not picking, time is spent among other things checking or installing nets and bird scarers. At Chehalem we use nets, propane cannons and electronic bird-distress calls to discourage the birds. At other vineyards in Oregon kites, reflective tape and shotguns are all employed with varying degrees of success and of course cost. Some of the last tractor work to be done before the actual harvest is that of sowing a mixed cover-crop. This cover-crop is sown to help stabilize the soil before the heavy winter rains, and to provide some green biomass which can then be ploughed back in during the spring. Got to run, grapes arriving!

AS WE GO TO PRESS: Exceptional Quality, Plus Quantity

It's not like me to call the election before the polls close, but Kelly breathing down my neck to get this newsletter to press, and ongoing dry and sunny fall weather forecasts make me bold.

With half of our fruit picked and looking great in fermentation, and the other half looking impeccable on-vine and only getting better with 70 degree sunny days and crisp nights, we can confidently say it is a very good vintage. With continuing good weather, 2002 could be as good as any vintage to-date in some vineyards and with some varieties. Pinot noirs are dark, soft and rich; whites are flavorful, with good acid.

The key difference between 2002 and some excellent vintages over the last decade is that this high quality comes in decent volumes. Warm and dry weather at bloom, followed by a warm central growing season and, then, a relatively dry harvest period (0.78 inches from mid-September thru mid-October) gave a large crop that, despite thinning, ripened plentifully. A rare vintage that will excite wine critics and accountants! —HARRY

Check out the final results on our Harvest Page 2002 at www.chehalemwines.com

Chehalem's 2002 Harvest



BASIL CHILDERS