

CHEHALEM

S P R I N G 2 0 0 4



THE 2002 VINTAGE

As Good as They Say?

By Harry Peterson-Nedry

IS 2002 A GREAT OREGON PINOT NOIR VINTAGE, OR JUST A GREAT PRESS RELEASE?

All years are not created equal. We innately look for differences to intrigue the intellectually curious, to celebrate a product that is much like art in its ability to reflect diversity and stimulate creativity, to create a high-C against the choral sameness of passing years.

Wine regions worldwide are known to pronounce greatness at the drop of a hat, either because of impressionable winemakers caught up in the excitement of a new harvest, or because of over zealous marketers staring at warehouses of new wines—and sometimes because it is a great year. The Bordelais made vintage deification an art form years ago and much of the wine world has followed in their steps, aided by publications that need to make new judgments in order to sell copies. Sometimes they're right and sometimes they're just blowing smoke!

The assessment of the 2002 vintage of Oregon Pinot noirs doesn't seem to be overly generalized or overly generous. No *caveat emptor* needed here, as this is likely the best overall vintage since 1998. Our first releases from this vintage are the blended 3 Vineyard and single vineyard Corral Creek Vineyard bottlings. We are very proud of both wines, as well as the rest of the family waiting in the wings. They all have great balance, concentration, fruit range and complexity. An almost perfect growing and ripening season gave size without losing elegance, gave richness without losing great acid structure. White wines from 2002 may be the best ever, and the weight seen there is continued in Pinot noir. The new releases show robust, friendly fruit, mouthfuls of it. But they're just babies and will refine themselves as they mature. These wines will age as well as any vintage we've seen. Classic. Mother Nature in basic black and pearls.

Mother Nature has been good to us. Although 2002 is virtually perfect, we have seen six vintages with good ripening and without the infamous harvest rains, years when either warm summer weather has pushed ripening earlier or summer has extended into Indian Summer territory.

I wouldn't suggest there is possibly (shh!) global climate change at work—we wouldn't think of disagreeing with our government lest it be seen as a breach of (CONTINUES NEXT PAGE)

Above: Corral Creek Vineyards at Harvest. New Releases include 2002 Corral Creek Vineyards Pinot Noir.

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT) homeland security or as threatening to industries and economies invested in generating greenhouse emissions, like the automotive and oil industries. We, the technologically most advanced country led by scientific wizards, wouldn't ignore irrefutable data from multiple sources, refuse to sign Kyoto accords, be so arrogant as to think concerns and rules don't apply to us just because we're the biggest user and polluter, or just because of politics and the inconvenience it might cause our businesses—we wouldn't, would we?

GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE:

It isn't a question of "if", it's a question of "how badly" our climate tomorrow will be affected by our profligacy today. Higher temperatures from increased greenhouse gases (like CO₂) and aerosol particulates from 2-10° F, depending on model and assumptions you take—are a given, and we're already seeing it. Besides fiery summers and more so warm winters, with daily temperature swings (day to night) decreasing, this upset to the earth's equilibrium brings a threat of greater extremes like flooding and drought, as different regions respond non-uniformly to resultant increased precipitation.

I don't want this to be a diatribe on climate change, although I wouldn't rule it out in a later newsletter, but it needs to be mentioned as we view vintages of the last decade. If they are a taste of what can be expected, with half rainfall and 2003's almost intolerable heat reflecting only a 1-2° F increase over the prior two years' average temperatures, I will be

looking for vineyard land on the flanks of Mt Hood or in a Canadian province.

HOW WE MEASURE SEASONAL DIFFERENCES:

Despite the stylistic influences winemakers have over vintage, Mother Nature crafts the most significant changes. Annually, the basic questions are "will we have enough heat and will the rains hold off until after harvest?" All other parameters we monitor just flesh out our view of heat and rain. Parameters such as timings of **bud break**, **flowering**, **veraison** (color change/seed hardening), and **harvest** record the rhythms of a vintage. Simple measurements of heat accumulation in **degree-days** and **total inches of rainfall** during the growing and ripening seasons generalize vintages.

Accumulated heat, in Degree Days over 50° F, show the warming trend. In the graph increased heat is apparent in years like 2003, which had the heat of a Region II growing site at 2500 degree-days or approximately 400 degree-days warmer than average, based on the old UC Davis grading system (the same Region II into which Napa, Santa Barbara and Auckland were placed).

Vintage 2002 is warmer than average by approximately 150 units also. However, the length of the ripening season is what made 2002 exquisite, with September 15-October 15 max temperatures averaging 71° F and having only a single day each above the 80s or below the 60s. Rain in this month was a mere 0.76 inches. The next two weeks even permitted late season ripening, averaging 61° F, with no rain.

BLENDING VS SINGLE VINEYARDS

Trends in wine hoopla go beyond "vintage of the century" hyperbole. Small, stylistic or technical differences in wines are also often sources of market differentiation, grabbed and given new life beyond their original significance. Sometimes they become a weave of the wine myth fabric and, sadly sometimes become the definition of a wine rather than just a variation of it, for awhile excluding other versions. Barrel fermented chardonnay is an example (read "oaky, buttery, heavy"), which became the only version a couple generations knew for chardonnay. Or, simple, sweet, unintelligibly labeled confections represented Riesling for years. These are not all these noble varieties can be.

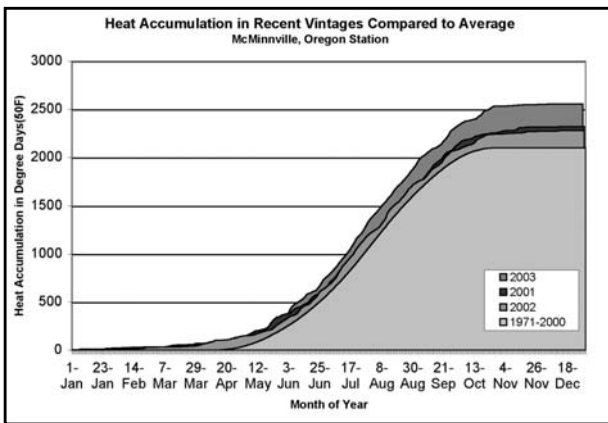
Pinot noir producers' fascination with single vineyard wines has the same potential. Prompted by Burgundy's highly variable geology, most of us have sought those unique fingerprints of our own vineyards, flying the flag of *terroir* and describing lots of differences that may or may not be there. We've even got to the point that people can magically see their *terroir* reflected in first and second harvest fruit, not even needing to let vines mature and roots explore the terra firma.

Don't read too much into single vineyard bottlings and don't disparage blended wines, is my advice.

Often, blended wines can be superior to single vineyard wines from a pure quality standpoint. In 1998, our **3 Vineyard Pinot Noir** outscored our single vineyard wines, despite the single vineyard wines being select barrels. Blended wines can create more complete, spherical wines where one vineyard's weakness is mitigated by another's strength. For example, a soft, fruity lot such as we might get from Stoller is improved when Ridgecrest's higher acid and tannin is blended in, neither one on their own being as good as the resultant blend. Vineyard attributes may be masked somewhat, but a talented winemaker can craft a greater wine with more complexity from these complementary components—Yin and Yang, making a more complete wine, more reproducible year after year—greater than the sum of the parts.

This is a topic that winemakers are taking positions on now. You can weigh in too. Our 2002 3 Vineyard is a blend of wine lots from all three estate vineyards, with 18% Corral Creek, 38% Stoller and 44% Ridgecrest. The Stoller gives an earthy, sweet red fruit and occasional herb characteristics to the blend; Corral Creek gives a firm, cherry, centered wine with white pepper and spice; Ridgecrest contributes acid, tannin and black, dusty fruit. See if you can find each contribution.

I personally have a foot in both camps, respecting the *terroir* captured by significant, mature vineyards of merit and yet thinking the highest quality wine and most reproducible, high quality, wine comes from a skilled blender.



Heat Accumulation Curves for Recent Vintages—Ripening depends on adequate warmth during the growing season. However, how much heat and when it comes is vital to the character of the vintage. Measured in Degree-Days above 50F. Region I, Cool Climate, extends to 2500 degree-days in the UC-Davis system.

(For additional graphs and charts on phenological measures and weather, see www.chehalemwines.com. Harry's nerd side would be pleased.)

This luxury is seen if you view harvest dates in 2002 being spread over an entire month, with a long 114 days from bloom to harvest.

In general, my observation is that *great vintages have in common enough warmth for full grape maturity, lack of an event that prematurely ends ripening (like rains or freezes), and a long, moderate ripening period.* Appropriate crop sizes and absence of disease are necessary, but should be givens in well managed vineyards when weather cooperates. As in 2002, when all those requirements are met, wines have size, ripe flavors, deep colors,

good tannin and acid structure and layers of complexity and spice. The spherical ideal is met, where no one wine attribute is dominant—where you see a great wine but can't attribute it to any one feature.

The Corral Creek and 3 Vineyard new releases show classic numbers for a great vintage, registering 14% alcohols, 6 g/L acids and 3.6 pHs. A classic, fully ripe but gradually ripened vintage, with no rain at the end, 2002 shows the attributes of a cool climate, giving ripeness, acidity and complexity in an elegant package. Oh, and did I say "classic"? 🍷



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

CASCADIA CULINARY ARTS CONFERENCE

May 21-23, 2004, Whidbey Island, WA. Harry will be a panelist for the seminar, "Can You Taste Terroir?" at this premier food and wine event that delivers a full weekend of engaging activities including seminars, field tours and food and wine tastings. www.cascadiaculinaryarts.com.

NEW ORLEANS WINE AND FOOD EXPERIENCE

May 26-30, 2004. Harry's headed down to this annual extravaganza that centers exclusively on fine food and drink, spotlighting the city's legendary restaurants and featuring 250 wineries. See www.nowfe.com or call (504) 529-WINE.

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND WINERY OPEN HOUSE

May 29-31, 2004. 15% case discount for New Releases: 2003 Pinot Gris, 2002 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir, 2002 Corral Creek Pinot Noir and 2002 Cerise. Get a head start on your wine tour-- We'll open one hour earlier: Saturday-Monday 10-5, normally open by appointment. \$5 fee includes new releases and hors d'œuvres by Half Moon Catering.

OREGON PINOT CAMP

June 27-29, 2004, various Willamette Valley

venues. Chehalem is one of 50 Oregon wineries that join together to bring this adventure in Oregon Pinot noir to invited members of the wine trade.

INOX RELEASE PARTY

July 10, 2004 at the winery. This may be your only opportunity to grab some of our INOX Chardonnay considering the number of pre-release orders already taken over the winter by those who tried it while still in tank. We expect the INOX frenzy to match last year's so come on out and grab a glass of INOX and listen to the band (and grab a case on your way out).

INTERNATIONAL PINOT NOIR CELEBRATION

July 23-25, 2004. McMinnville, OR. Chehalem will be one of the featured wineries at this annual event. Even if this year is sold out, you should get on the list for next year. www.ipnc.org or 800-775-4762.

RESERVE RELEASE AND ART SHOW

August 21-22, 2004. Noon- 5pm at the winery. Mark your calendars. This is our favorite event of the year where great wine, art, music and food merge in the barrel cellar. Invitations will be mailed a few weeks before the show. 🍷



NEW RELEASES

By Dan Beekley, National Marketing Manager

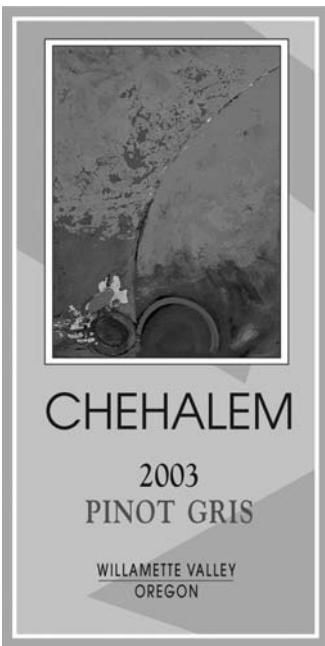
WELCOMING GOOD COMPANY

Another winter bites the dust, and this time maybe a little early. Springtime means seed planting, lawn mowing, day trips to the beach for fresh crab, cut flowers, new babies, and longer days—did I say “baby”? Yes, Elizabeth, Tess and I welcomed Ivan Daniel March 26th.

It also means there are some new wines on tap, and lots of reasons to pop a cork (or maybe twist a screw-cap?). Perhaps I'm prejudiced but here are four wines that *I wouldn't waste on bad company*:



2003 WILLAMETTE VALLEY PINOT GRIS



The readiness of this wine is our harbinger of spring. In fact, the wine reminds me of spring colors and fragrances. I love the cut flower and mock orange aromas and the bright tangerine tang. There is mouth-watering, almost nutty, sweetness to this version that interplays wonderfully with the typically vivid acids. As usual this bottle is a perfect “greet your friends with a glass at the door” wine, but pairs magically with fresh oysters or crab. 3500 cases produced and still a great bargain at \$16.

2002 3 VINEYARD PINOT NOIR

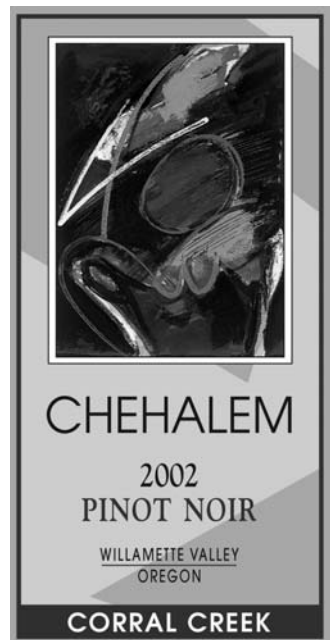
The wait is over. I've never heard so much excitement and anticipation about a vintage. Chehalem '02 pinots are probably the best collection of wines ever made at our winery—and 3 Vineyard sets the pace. I marvel at how consistently delicious 3 Vineyard is from year to year—a true winemaking feat. Harry's sensibility for a first-rate “front line” wine is second to none. This pinot combines pure, delicious, sweet fruit with a complex, earthy nose of red and black cherries and a hint of chocolate. It is a true representative blend of our three estate vineyard sites.

2002 CORRAL CREEK PINOT NOIR

While you're drinking 3 Vineyard as your house wine every night, you're probably saving a bottle or two of Corral Creek for a special occasion. From the vineyard surrounding the winery, Corral Creek generally yields fruit that is more red-fruited in nature and makes wine that is sexy and elegant. The '02 offering serves up a veritable pinot flavor wheel of aromas and taste. This is not a simple wine but, in a vintage like 2002, was easy to make. At about 250 cases, Corral Creek fruit is parsed out sparingly but the resulting wine is a limited bottling that belongs in your cellar.

2002 CERISE (GAMAY/PINOT NOIR)

Our first taste of this wine was on a cold, dreary evening in a cabin at Silver Falls State Park during Chehalem's annual retreat. It was rich and robust, nearly opaque with dark color, and warmed us on a typical Oregon winter night. Two days ago it was 75 degrees and a perfect springtime day only this time the wine was refreshing and delicious. It goes to show, great wine can please on all levels, with any company, and at any time. This beauty combines old-vine Ridgecrest Gamay noir with about 30% Pinot noir. It's like cru Beaujolais on steroids. 🍷





WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

Wine & Spirits, April 2004

In a Zagat Survey of 2,112 of America's top restaurants, Chehalem was ranked 8th on the list of "Most Popular Pinot Noirs," and was also the only Oregon winery to make the "Top 50 Restaurant Wines" list.

CHEHALEM DRY RIESLING

Rosengarten Report, February 2004, David Rosengarten, "Move over Pinot Noir: Oregon has a New Starry Grape!"

(Chehalem's 2002 Reserve Dry Riesling chosen as #1 out of nearly 100 Northwest Rieslings tasted.) I've never made secret my passion for dry and off dry white wines made from the noble Riesling grape...these are some of my favorite white wines in the world for matching with food...the dry Rieslings of Oregon are indeed better than ever, immensely better, indeed in a category that must be reckoned with on the world stage...Chehalem 2002 Reserve Dry Riesling...the greatest Riesling I've ever tasted from Oregon...The nose is lovely and ripe...but the mouthfeel is the best part: bone dry with a profusion of peach and apricot flavors followed by a slight spiciness.

Northwest Palate, March/April 2004, Cole Danehower, "Riesling to Believe."

...Right here in our own backyard, a Riesling Renaissance is underway. An important leader of this awakening is Harry Peterson-Nedry...at Chehalem...

2002 Reserve Dry Riesling: Vigorous aromas of lime, kiwi and citrus peel combine with a viscid mouthfeel to deliver deep, vibrant flavors of grapefruit, mineral, coriander and lemon zest—wonderful!

The Sunday Oregonian, November 16, 2003, Matt Kramer.

2002 Reserve Dry Riesling: One of the best dry Oregon rieslings to appear thus far. This is really a knockout and can demonstrate to any snobs at the table (every family has one, it seems) that Oregon can create superb dry riesling.

Wine Spectator, December 2003

2002 Reserve Dry Riesling: 88. Fresh and tangy with lovely aromas of spicy apples and flowers, turning tart and stony in the mouth. Give it time to develop...

CHEHALEM 2001 RION RESERVE PINOT NOIR

Wine Spectator Weekly, January 22, 2004, Harvey Steiman, *Wine Spectator*, May 15, 2004

These are the most exciting discoveries from our editors' most recent tastings, published exclusively in Wine Spectator Weekly. They are high-scoring, low-production wines from around the world that may be difficult to find, but are worth seeking out.

93 2001 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir

It's one of the best wines of a very ripe vintage, supple and nicely fleshed out with rich black cherry, rose petal and pepper flavors, an open-textured red that lets everything emerge unhampered by anything resembling obvious tannins. Beautiful stuff.

A- *Oregon Wine Report*, November 2003, issue 17, Cole Danehower

2001 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir: "Overall Best Wine" of the 2001 Vintage out of 130 pinot noirs tasted. (Tied with Elk Cove's Roosevelt.) 2001 is a strong vintage. Period. A truly silky mouthfeel carries a wonderfully harmonious blend of fresh red raspberry and cherry fruit along with a lurking dark blackberry edge...the plush texture is concurrent with intense flavors: the essentially bright fruitiness is contained by accents of lightly toasted oak and autumn leaves...(Our 1999 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir received the same accolade two years ago.)

Northwest Palate, March/April 2004

2001 Rion Reserve Pinot Noir: Recommended. Cherry fruit and light toast aromas. Elegant, with subtle, rich cherry flavors that finish on a note of spice...

OTHER CHEHALEM WINES

The Washington Post, October 8, 2003, Michael Franz

2002 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris: This wine is so much fun that it seems vaguely illegal. Juicy and ripe and remarkably pure, this retains all the immediate purity of grapes still clinging on the vine.

The Washington Post, November 19, 2003, Michael Franz

2002 INOX™ Chardonnay: Crisp and clean thanks to all-stainless vinification, this deliciously pure rendition of Chardonnay fruit is appropriately presented in a clear glass bottle. With medium-bodied fruit recalling peaches and ripe apples, it is up to the challenges of this meal in terms of substance, while offering a clean counterpoint.

Northwest Palate, March/April 2004

2002 Pinot Gris Reserve: Highly Recommended. Aromas of vanilla and toasted nuts. Good concentration of ripe pear and vanilla. Long, juicy, toasty finish; pair with crab ravioli.

2001 Ian's Reserve Chardonnay: Recommended. Apple, toast and light pear in the nose. Sweet caramel flavors balanced by apple and pear notes, with light spiced oak in the finish. Rich with a note of cinnamon spice. Serve with lobster bisque. 🍷

