

CHEHALEM

SPRING 2008



MICHAEL NEWSOME

THE CUTTING EDGE *Bleeding's Better than Bleating*

By Harry Peterson-Nedry

It's not surprising to me that one of the greatest highs many of us can achieve comes from challenging the odds and creating success when it isn't expected, embracing risk as a preferred alternative to playing it safe. Living where leading is preferable to following.

For some, like me, taking a risk or pushing the envelope relieves boredom, since beginning new things rather than maintaining seems creative and exciting. Innovation is such a strong motivator that *not* creating is a bit like dying. I am convinced at times that the greatest risk for some types is the temptation to play it safe and not to take a risk.

In a staid, predictable, rooted-in-the-earth industry like wine, how can this be important? After all, fine wine may be a luxury industry, but it's still ironically agricultural. The answer: Fancy fruit juice can only be worth more by increasingly exceeding expectations—in quality, cost, and service—by going beyond the status quo, by continually reinventing yourself to turn ordinary into extraordinary.

(READER WARNING: CONCEPTS AND WORDS BELOW MAY CAUSE DROWSINESS; DO NOT DRIVE OR OPERATE HEAVY MACHINERY WHILE READING THIS NEWSLETTER.)

NEW IS NECESSARY

When maintaining the status quo isn't enough, new is necessary. And that's where science and experimentation come in, because new can't be untried. New must be proven better.

I was raised during the era of *Watch Mr. Wizard* and Gilbert chemistry sets, so it isn't hard to believe that three out of four brothers ended up with university science degrees. Firmly rooted in the scientific method, rationality, and a conviction that with enough digging we could know all things, we were optimists and ultimately inquisitors. To experiment is to learn, not about what is already known, but what remains a mystery.

(CONTINUES NEXT PAGE)

(Above) Barrels are the basic unit for investigation and reduction of variability in Pinot Noir. Even in a small cellar like ours, 500 or more barrels are all unique, but can be systematically studied.

Many of the thin, blue biographies I read as a boy younger than ten were about curious, searching scientists such as Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Ben Franklin, Albert Michelson, the Wright brothers, Henry Ford, Marie Curie, or Louis Pasteur. They were heroes as big as the baseball stars we worshiped like Mickey Mantle, Robin Roberts, or Ted Williams. They were explorers as large as Richard Byrd, Roald Amundsen, or Jacques Cousteau, opening up continents, unexplored worlds, or the tombs of Egyptian princes.

Perspectives have changed in the public sphere since those “Better Living Through Chemistry” days, with utter trust in science and scientists unraveling a bit as we have seen space exploration’s “giant leap for mankind” trip on tile-damaged shuttle explosions, nuclear safety promises sublimate with reactor meltdowns and radioactive storage realities, genetic research elicit a distrust of cloning and GMOs (genetically modified organisms), and medical innovations lose their luster of idealism from the overspray of almighty dollar green. The reprehensible image of a once-famous heart transplant surgeon turned prostitute as a drug company shill comes to mind.

A FUTURE DEMANDING INSPIRATION AND SCIENCE

This is not a rant aimed at burying yesterday’s scientific heyday. I think science legitimately has its blemishes, yet it still should be venerated as the single most important resource we have to improve our predicament as a species. We have exited a period when leaders unarmed to understand the role of science and its importance to society disparaged it as almost an inside dirty joke. Top priorities became making money for the few, serving pseudo-scientific religious interests, and achieving world dominance. We now have our backs against the wall on several fronts, and science is vital to our rescue. Climate change, general environmental and species protection, medical improvements, and explorations into microscopic and cosmic frontiers will demand inspiration and the Herculean efforts of science.

There are economic, political, and ethical ramifications for today’s scientists. Suddenly, heretofore philosophical issues such as quality of life, with extended life spans, and implications of new capabilities such as cloning and genomics must be considered, as well as balancing the cost and benefit to individuals and society at large. Science is all about knowledge, facts, and objectivity, and must remain faithful to its Latin root *scio*, “to know.” It is not about the philosophical implications of scientific fact

or ethically how best to use and control the application of that knowledge.

SCIENTIFIC METHOD AT A WINERY

Ascertaining fact can be accidental, observational, or rigorously structured. At Chehalem, we use them all to improve the breed of what we do—reducing variability in process and product to hit higher levels of quality and relevance.

At its core, our production team is scientific in education with a tendency to take never-ending improvement to the extreme with structured experimentation and high-tech instrumentation. “That’s how it’s always been done” maintenance is necessary for control, but it’s also sleep inducing. For many of us, “new” gives us an advantage in our field and keeps us awake. Change can be unsettling and dangerous, but exhilarating if we initiate and control it.

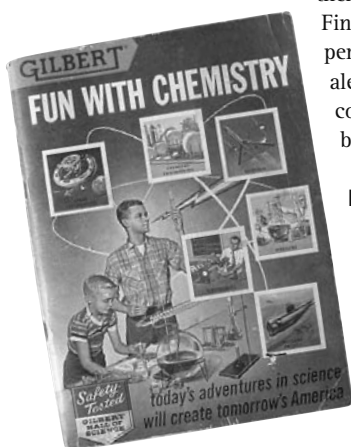
Gathering and applying knowledge to improve a process like winemaking has three basic phases: characterization, control, and optimization. Initially, you investigate and learn what drives the important steps of your process, including materials, equipment, and methods. Then, you nail down the ones that make the most difference and keep them from varying. That is control. Finally, small tweaks inch you toward perfection, depending on ongoing alertness to the process and a commitment to making each vintage better than the last. Optimization.

IN THE BEGINNING, THERE WAS SCIENCE

I began the winery this way, with six years of general characterization trials followed by fine-tuning before our first commercially released vintage.

1983–1989 Determined the steps to making great Pinot Noir, acquiring fruit the first year from Erath, none in 1984 (the worst vintage in Oregon’s history), and then from Ridgecrest beginning with its first harvest in 1985. Spent initial years hunting for the key variables that influence quality (the “Red Xs” such as yeast, ripeness level, fermentation temperature) and their appropriate levels.

1985–1987 Meticulously employed fractional factorial, statistically designed experiments. Used the same rigor as high-tech industries to see gross influences as well as more subtle interactions between variables—findings that show how one variable not only affects wine quality, but also how other variables react to it (e.g. hypothetically, whole-cluster Pinot Noir fermentations may be superior in dry years, but problematic in rainy, botrytised years). Findings from these foundational trials are still valid after 20 years, with refinements providing optimization each year.¹



¹ My outside job to earn the small fortune it took to enter the wine industry employed these statistical experimental design and process-control tools. The result was easy cross-fertilization of concepts, development of great friendships with PhD statisticians like Doug Montgomery and Russ Boyles, and reams of data. Some data sets ended up in Doug’s university text *Design and Analysis of Experiments*, published by John Wiley & Sons and now in its 7th edition.

1990 “Froze” the process based on what we learned from our previous six years of trials and made our first vintage under the Chehalem label.

“Controlled” experiments are vital to good investigation, with all factors not being intentionally varied in the experiment readily observed and, where possible, held constant. Many experimental “ah-ha” discoveries come from reducing the normal variability or “noise” of the process enough to where “signals” of importance, normally playing in the background and often drowned out, can then be heard.

For example, in an early trial of mine where several yeasts were compared in small, identical Pinot Noir ferments, one yeast had difficulty starting. After a week of waiting for it to begin, I reinoculated with another yeast. The resulting ferment was the best in the trial by a mile, being deeply colored and perfectly extracted but without harsh tannins—as good as we do today. One would assume it was the yeast that was excellent. But prior trials and later ones didn’t seem to support the superiority of that yeast. Since all batches were otherwise treated identically, we assumed the yeast HAD to be the cause.

But wait, all batches didn’t exactly get treated identically. (You probably saw this in my description much faster than it took us to discover it.) There was a time lag in beginning the fermentation between this batch and the others. The fruit sat and naturally broke down into a mush over the week to ten days it took to kick off the ferment. Knowing all else was the same in the controlled experiment, we hypothesized this waiting period might be important, replicated the trial the next year, discovered a similar result, and have continued to delay fermentation to this day. We had stumbled across what the industry calls “cold soak” or “pre-fermentation maceration”—not invented by

us, but rediscovered independently and validated as a key process step, seen because we had frozen all other “noisy” elements of the process.

We optimize processes annually at Chehalem with small production trials, fine-tuning levels of important variables such as fermentation temperatures, new ways of cooling ferments (like dry ice vs chilling tunnels vs jacketed tanks), levels of tartaric acid addition, whole-cluster percentages in ferments, enzyme use, cap dispersal methods, barrel types, and more.

INNOVATION, CREATIVITY, AND PUSHING THE ENVELOPE

Ideally, innovation is the nexus of rational, scientific, left-brain thought and right-brain thought. Innovation often provides a way to adapt to new situations or to create something fresh to keep the marketplace (or owner) interested. New products, or unique versions of what has always been made, move the game along and allow us to have fun.

Although certain cornerstones like Reserve Pinot Noir, Ian’s Reserve Chardonnay, or Stoller and Ridgecrest Vineyards Pinot Noirs provide our foundation, the product mix we had five years ago is different from what it is today or will be in another five years.

INOX™ As Chardonnay clone 108 was being phased out and Dijon clones in, we decided that the yawning marketplace needed our Chardonnay fruit, but perhaps in another version. We asked ourselves what WE preferred and what WE drank when we ordered Chardonnay



Cellarmaster Brian Irvine micropipetting in a prebottling trial. Scientific rigor is necessary both for initially hitting highest quality levels and then reproducing it vintage to vintage.



Co-winemaker Mike Eyres using NIR in the vineyard, trying to correlate water stress to spectra.

in restaurants, and it wasn't barrel-fermented Chardonnay. It was bright, steely, acid-driven, mineral-laced wine with richness and real Chardonnay flavor—the kind winemakers see in the winery, but that gets masked by the oak overlay of traditional Chardonnay. Thus, in 2002, we committed to following our palate and made INOX™, the stainless-steel fermented, no ML Chardonnay that has garnered a strong following. This year, at a time when others can't sell Chardonnay, we tripled production and still expect to run out well before the year-end. It is now a third of our total production at Chehalem.



Stubborn Riesling winemakers pushing technical boundaries at a tasting several years ago at Chehalem.

RIESLING came into Chehalem's lineup only because it was already planted at Corral Creek when we bought our winery facility in 1995. I liked Riesling well enough, but like most of the country remembered early, innocuous, sweet wines designed for quick release and cash flow, not excellence of complexity and ageability. Fortunately, I continue to mature as well as age. Riesling was my epiphany ten years or so ago, one others are beginning to share today, acknowledging its place as king of white wines. We've committed to Riesling, helping to start a winemaking group to push Oregon's technical competence, participating internationally on the board of a formative International Riesling Foundation whose role is educating consumers on the variety, and adding more acres, including a "mother block" where all the Riesling clones currently available are planted in sizeable blocks for comparison and replication. I predict Riesling will again be Oregon's largest white variety in ten to fifteen years—again, since although only 3% now, it was 23% of the state's wine production when I began in 1980.

Innovation is often necessary for adaptation to changing conditions. Examples you'll hear about later include a sparkling Riesling solution to a cool, high-acid vintage and site; a Grüner Veltliner addition to an already large white-wine lineup in anticipation of Oregon interest eventually drifting from Pinot Noir; an internally prompted green design for wine shippers that has now gone Oregon-wide to encourage thinking outside the box environmentally; and different marketing approaches to adapt to both a changing consumer demographic and short-term facilities constraints.

NEAR INFRARED (NIR)

Not every "great idea" we have succeeds. As rationalizing experimenters are wont to say, we learn as much from our failures as our

successes. Yeah, right, we learn humility. One visionary leap we took five years ago has not yet panned out, a leap we took when we saw the potential in nondestructive testing of grapes, vines, and wine to follow ripening, water availability, grape and wine chemistries, fermentation progress, development of problem compounds, and the like. As an analytical chemist by education, I was tempted to explore newer spectrophotometric tools for use in the wine industry, such as an NIR (Near InfraRed) handheld unit—to go where no man has gone, à la *Star Trek*. We purchased a unit for dedicated work, however the manufacturer's interest dried up before we could work through all the calibrations and mathematical correlations to make it useable. We see its potential but haven't yet found the time and concentration to complete development of the applications. Nice \$15,000 paperweight, Captain Kirk.

VISION

Vision is an integral part of useful creative thought, setting a context into which new ideas make sense. Some people have an intuitive sense of what the future looks like, feels like, and tastes like, i.e., they seem to live in the future as much as the present, or at least to have seamless transitions to an anticipated world as real physically to them as the life they're living. We don't have to be quite that loosely tethered to current reality to benefit from future scenarios, however. We just need to regularly ask what success might ideally look like. Then ideas have a place to land, they become a solution to a problem not yet articulated. Paradigm shifts or great ideas don't just happen because of luck or being in the right place at the right time. We position ourselves to be lucky, to be introduced to serendipity.

Right and left brain, creativity and technical rigor, bubble up and nail down, yin and yang.

Balance, as in all things. 🍷



WHAT THEY'RE SAYING

San Francisco
Chronicle
*Top 100
Wines 2007*

2005 Ridgecrest Vineyards Pinot Noir

San Francisco Chronicle, December 2, 2007, "Top 100 Wines 2007: Best of the West," Jon Bonné with Lynne Char Bennett Fierce in character, it hinges on darker notes, with dried branch hints from French oak and a slightly tannic fruit profile, filled with citrus zest and soy. (Received ★★★ in a review on November 16, 2007.)

2005 Reserve Pinot Noir

93 *Pinot Report*, February 25, 2008, Gregory S. Walter Deep, rich, cherry flavors with tea and earthy notes; sweet oak, good structure and balance...this is a rich Pinot with some time ahead.

92 *eRobertParker.com*, February 2008, Jay Miller A complex bouquet of *pain grille*, violets, roses, cherry, and raspberry...elegant, medium-bodied, silky, and altogether hedonistic.

2005 Corral Creek Vineyards Pinot Noir

92 *Wine Enthusiast*, February 2008, Paul Gregutt Fragrant and complex, this offers pleasures for both nose and palate, with scents of leaf and spice and herb, leading into a surprisingly dense and textural blend of wild berry, rhubarb, melon and mixed tropical fruits.

2006 3 Vineyard Pinot Noir

92 *Wine & Spirits*, April 2008, "Year's Best Pinot Noir" Ripe as a summer plum and showing an inky, earthy side, this wine takes a day to reveal its brighter fruit flavors, red strawberries dusted with red earth...a lacy structure gives the wine elegance and lift, with a nutskin feel to the tannins.

2005 Ian's Reserve Chardonnay

90 *eRobertParker.com*, February 2008, Jay Miller Chehalem is unusual for Willamette Valley in that over 50% of its production is white wine from Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Pinot Gris, and Chardonnay. Readers who see Chehalem's whites should try these uniformly excellent wines.

90 *Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar*, April 2008, "Oregon's White Wines," Josh Reynolds (online) Fleshy orchard fruit and melon flavors are braced by nervy minerality and complicated by candied flowers and musky peach pit. Gains sweetness on the impressively long finish but retains excellent focus.

2006 INOX™ Chardonnay

★★ *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 20, 2008, "Pacific Northwest Chardonnay," Lynne Char Bennett Overflows with tropical and citrus aromas and flavors backed with a spine of mineral and citrusy acidity. A clean, refreshing Meyer lemon zest finish...

Highly Recommended, *Northwest Palate*, September/October 2007 Spirited scents of fresh-cut citrus zest and ripe apple are immediately mouthwatering as the potent nose fairly pulls you into the glass. Which is a good place to be!...Clear, pure, fresh, juicy, rich, long...

2006 Reserve Pinot Gris

91 *Wine Spectator*, December 15, 2007, Harvey Steiman Smooth and round, this is more generous than most Pinot Gris, but still lively, with a distinct spiciness to the pear and guava flavors. The finish wraps it up well and keeps it coming.

90 *Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar*, April 2008, "Oregon's White Wines," Josh Reynolds (online) Intensely perfumed bouquet of smoky pit fruits, melon and tangerine, along with smoky minerals. Firm and dry, with chewy pear skin and citrus flavors slowly giving way to deeper peach and nectarine on the back.

2006 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris

90 *Wine & Spirits*, February 2008 Bright with an enticing scent of spiced apple-cake, this exuberant gris is ripe and creamy but doesn't feel pushed. The flavors deepen on the palate to juicy pear and apple, ample yet elegant.

2006 Reserve Dry Riesling

90 *Wine Spectator*, December 15, 2007, Harvey Steiman A dry style, reminiscent of Alsace, offering vivid green apple, lime and mayflower aromas and flavors on a lean, lithe frame, balanced with refreshing acidity.

2005 Reserve Dry Riesling

Wine Spectator, October 15, 2007 In Oregon...it's Riesling that really performs. Not long ago, I found myself exclaiming over the austere, Savile Row-tailored severity of the savory 2005 Dry Riesling Reserve from Chehalem winery, with its delicate floral and mineral notes.

 For more reviews of our wines, visit www.chehalemwines.com.



NEW RELEASES

2007 Willamette Valley Pinot Gris Brilliant, white gold color, with all things white in the aroma, from white spring flowers to hard Christmas candy, white peach, crisp pear, and white tea. Austere river rock, bright acidity, apricot, ginger, and golden plum complexity on the palate.

2007 INOX™ A platinum wine that immediately shares a profusion of floral aromas and bright fruit, especially pear, green apple, honeydew melon, and Meyer lemon. Spice and other aromatic accents include confectioners' sugar, vanilla bean, and ginger. There is a knife-edged brightness and minerality due to incredibly snappy acidity, making it tartly succulent and mouthwatering.

2005 Ian's Reserve Chardonnay One of the top Chardonnays we've made. There are complex, fascinating Chablis-like herbal and mineral aromatics, spread with honey, citrus, biscuit, and spice, that continue to be refreshed and amped up by the wine's bright acidity. The palate is creamy and broad, showing the same honey, citrus, and, especially, mineral notes. I couldn't be more pleased.

2006 Cerise Forceful red and black fruit aromatics, laced heavily with blue fruit components of plum, huckleberry, and blueberry. A more complex Cerise™ than normal, with peppercorns, spice, red and black licorice, forest floor, and exotic notes layered atop the strongly acid-structured frame.

2006 Corral Creek Pinot Noir Lovely, spicy, barrel-accented, red-fruited aromas, carrying hints of caramel-covered cherries, toasted brioche, and raspberries. On the palate, thickness and a soft broadness spread widely but thinly, ending with interesting flavors of red fruit overlain with a spicy, woody, forest floor, dusty patina. A light, spicy, and red-fruited Pinot that dances.

2005 Reserve Pinot Noir An ager from a cooler vintage, with great balance, seamless integration of fruit, and fine tannin and acid. The aromas are lifted cherries, spice, dried herbs and flowers, and earth with floral and savory characteristics. Fleshy red cherry, currant, and raspberry fruits on the palate, with touches of brown spice and chocolate. Finish and overall impressions are of a long-distance runner, not a courtesan. 🍷 – HARRY

🔗 For more complete versions of Harry's tasting notes, visit www.chehalemwines.com.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

FREE SHIPPING! Buy a case and we'll cover FedEx ground shipping anywhere in the U.S. until May 31st. Stock up now for summer.

DOWNTOWN NEWBERG TASTING ROOM
COMING SOON! We are currently renovating a new tasting room at 106 South Center Street in downtown Newberg. Check out our progress Memorial Weekend. Saturday–Monday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. \$5 fee to taste 3 wines; FREE for Tasting Panel members.

NEW ADDITIONS Welcome Sales & Marketing Team Member Daniel Somerfield, National Sales Manager John House, and Viticulturist & Vineyard Manager Molly Williams Hodgins.

NEW WEBLOG To continue reaching out to those we care about and who want to know more, we've begun a formal weblog. Start blogging at <http://chehalem.wordpress.com>.

BEST BARREL DAY *May 17, 2008.*

Taste and purchase futures from each best barrel of 2007 single-vineyard Pinot Noir and Stoller Chardonnay. For an invitation, call the winery.

MEMORIAL WEEKEND OPEN HOUSE

May 24–26, 2008. Taste '07 INOX™, '07 WV Pinot Gris, '06 Cerise, and '06 Corral Creek Pinot Noir. Saturday–Monday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. \$10 fee to taste 4 wines; FREE for Tasting Panel members.

ANNUAL TASTING PANEL DAY

July 19, 2008. Mark your calendars and watch the mail for your invitation. For details, e-mail Caroline at caroliner@chehalemwines.com.

CHEHALEM CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS

August 23 & 24, 2008. Our most popular summer event! For an invitation, call the winery. 🍷



Stop by our new Tasting Room in downtown Newberg! We'll be open for the first time Memorial Weekend. You can always visit us at the winery, too, where we'll also be open on Memorial Weekend and daily by appointment.