

Subject: Wine at Orangewood Consulting 40, August 27th, 2003

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To Our Wine Aficionados,

Introduction

It has been a while since the last newsletter and we have lots of excuses. The good news is that we won't bore you with them. July and August are slow months for wine sales. Restaurants sell down their inventory and re-order only when they have a critical need. Nevertheless on a year over year basis, we are substantially ahead.

Box Score

New restaurants - none
New sales people - minus one
New Wineries visited - six

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Event Feedback

Red Kangaroo, Scottsdale - July 25, with Steve Krum

On this Friday Dyane got her first go at being THE Orangewood representative at an event. Pouring Marina Park wines and RustRidge Zinfandel to the sounds of Steve Krum, she did great. Steve does a fine job too. He plays well known as well as his own songs and together with his outgoing personality adds substantially to the ambience. Thank you to Dyane, Steve and to all those who showed up.

Red Kangaroo, Chandler - August 8/9

With the weather hanging in the low 110 degrees, Dick and I took a day each to pour Marinda Park and Noceto wines with Roger the owner of this Red Kangaroo. This event is more of an entertainment while stopping by for a bottle or two of wine, so the place doesn't fill up. However, Roger is planning to get some beer on tap...

Wine Concepts, Phoenix - July 11 and 18

Davina signed up Wine Concepts feature Noceto wines on one Friday and Chateau Benoit wines the following Friday. The place is set up more as a restaurant, so rather than people stopping by a pouring station, the pourer must go to each table to pour and describe the wines. It is fun but hard work.

Sales Staff Change

Davina, who started with us less than two months ago, has decided that she would really prefer to have a job with a little more income. She worked very hard for the two months and left us with a bunch of leads and several new accounts. The summer is not the best time to get a significant amount of wine sold in Phoenix.

This has reinforced our notion of what we are looking for in a sales person. First, they must be enthusiastic about our wines. Second, they must be in a position so that the income is not critical.

Visit to Westberg Cellars

Last week I climbed into our trusty 1994 Celica and headed west to California, the land of no gas lines. I was headed to Paso Robles to meet Tom and Peggy Westberg. As I was driving alone I needed a simple route, so I went along Interstate 10 until the middle of Los Angeles when it becomes Route 101. Heading North through Hollywood, I looked in vain for the sign on the side of the hill. Route 101 leads through Santa Barbara to Paso Robles. Not only is the navigation easier, but the scenery is wonderful. Turning off the 101 at Paso Robles, I drove past Peachy Canyon (where Tom used to work) and several other wineries on the way to Westberg Cellars. They are on the top of a steep hill - the vineyard is terraced. I was met by Lily, Peggy's granddaughter, who introduced me to the 5 cats (organic gopher control) and 2 dogs (burglar hospitality patrol). Peggy came out and showed me the miniature de-stemmer that they have. This is a small operation - producing less than 50 cases of each of the wines they make. Tom arrived back from his job as winemaker at Echelon wines. He told me more about the operation including "soil". He told me how the shale is almost like rock - he showed me some. It had fossils on it. Tom said that to plant the vines originally - 12 years ago, he and a friend used an augur on a long pole for leverage. Even given the pole, when the auger hit a serious rock, he and his friend started spinning counterclockwise around the augur. Not the best day in his life he told me. One of the things I am learning about winemakers is that they are first and foremost farmers: take care of the grapes as they grow and they will take care of you in the winemaking process. We ate at the Bistro Laurent - where the wine list seemed to feature wines from Paso Robles only. The fine meal and conversation took me past my bedtime so I was delighted to find the quaint Paso Robles Inn nearby. What a great place to visit.

Rambling man

After wandering around Paso Robles for a while, I continued on Route 101 towards San Francisco. For miles and miles there are grapes planted. Twenty years ago, Peggy had told me, there were none. Hmm, glut? Route 101 takes you right into the heart of San Francisco, but kind of leaves you there. You have to drive through 93 traffic lights to get to the Golden Gate Bridge. The clouds were low or the fog was high because all I could see of the bridge were the towers looming above me as I crossed. With the power of cell phones I met up with my son-in-law, Mike, to make a couple of winery visits. This is a business trip. In between he asks if a greasy hamburger would suffice for lunch. It will. He takes me to a cattle auction near Santa Rosa, where Mike's Burgers is located. We ordered guacamole burgers by saying "Go Jets". Mike must be from New York. We got cutlery in exchange for comments about our wimpy nature. The staff must be from New York too! Good grub, good fun. I noticed a website address www.mikesburgers.com. Check it out. (Mark can also check out www.mikesburger.com for the sliders.)

Visit to RustRidge Ranch

On my way to RustRidge I stopped for lunch in Davis. The home of UC Davis, which to my mind has been a major factor in quality of today's US wineries. It used to be an aggie college, however, so we might expect quality food of other types too. I stumbled across Murder Burger (a.k.a. Red Rum Burger). It's not far west of Interstate 5. I wanted to compare their products with those of Mike. One plus was their insistence that cheese belongs on everything - I pretty much agree - but limit the scope to foodstuffs. But I digress...

At RustRidge Susan and Jim (the owners) welcomed me and introduced me to two of their Bed and Breakfast guests. Alex and Barbara are from Virginia and have been visiting RustRidge for 7 years. Alex offered me a Boddington's Ale and told me he was born in Bristol in England. Strolling through the 48 acre ranch, I was guided by Tosca a 3 year old Labrador. She led me by the Thoroughbred horses that Jim breeds and trains. Two of the horses are yearlings and very personable; they canter over to greet me and enjoy getting their withers squeezed wouldn't you? At the end of the stroll is the winery. When Dick Kirkpatrick arrives, Susan and Jim show us the winery and give us a taste of the upcoming vintages. I'm particularly glad to tell you that the 2000 Zinfandel is as awesome as the 1999. It is still not clear when exactly we will have the latest vintages in Arizona. When they do arrive they will have the new labels on them featuring a picture of War Admiral - a great race horse from the 1920's. Dick and I have been invited to stay at the ranch for the night. There is a barbeque for dinner and the family style dining room together with a the 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon and 1999 Zinfandel facilitate and evening of conversation. Jim stories about racing horses in Arizona suggest we should plan an event around the next one. The loyal return visitors to the ranch reflect the high opinion that I am forming about RustRidge as a place to hang out for a while. Thank you Susan and Jim for your hospitality.

Rambling Men

Following a continental breakfast at RustRidge - we saw the full breakfast and almost delayed our departure. Today is a work day and we must be off. We visit Jim and Suzy Gullett at Vino Noceto, they have been giving us good PR because we have three winery visits lined up. The forward vintages from Vino Noceto, from the barrel are even better than the current ones. Jim is another winery owner who trusts his grapes and, in his words, does not perform unnatural acts to produce the wines. It's amazing to me that Jim, a farmer at heart, actually has a full time job in the banking industry as well as providing direction to the winery. He excuses himself to rush off to a volleyball practice he has to coach. Dick and I continue to the other wineries that you will be hearing about in future newsletters and wine menus in the Valley. Dick tells me that he used to do this kind of winery visiting and thought that he was drinking too much. Now he thinks he is working too hard. This is tough stuff. Under the influence of our work I hear lots of things about Dick that could form the basis for future newsletters, however my memory was also overworked and all I remember is something about an old dog he had called "Yellar".

Feedback

I heard from Mary (thank you) that Alberto's in Cave Creek has Vino Noceto on their wine menu. This is pretty interesting because we haven't sold any wine there! I little research suggests that Alberto used to run Rosti's on Camelback. It went out of business - but he must have taken the wine to the new location. We'll check it out.

We also had a number of emails about our accident and our move. Thank you all for your support. We are still working on selling the house, but the new house is getting close to being ready to move in to.

Cin-cin, alla salute!

Richard and Laurie

Richard (newsletter writer) and Laurie Corles (editor)
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