



# Musings on the Vine

## Olé!

In June I attended my very first Society of Wine Educators Annual Conference. This year the conference was held in Monterey, California and was preceded by a three-day immersion in Spanish wine sponsored by the Wine Academy ([www.thewineacademy.com/web/eng/](http://www.thewineacademy.com/web/eng/)). At the conclusion of the seminar, attendees sat exams for the title of "Spanish Wine Educator." Happily, yours truly secured a high-enough score to add this accreditation to his credentials.

Overall, the conference was great, filled with non-

stop tasting seminars and a great group of truly passionate people. Over the



next few newsletters I'll be sharing the results of several of the more interesting tasting events. One huge surprise was the quality of wines and excitement generated by the *garagista* wine makers of

Monterey and the Central Coast. Wow, these folks are making some GREAT wine.

We stopped at Palmina, located in the "Lompoc Ghetto," and tasted some wonderful wines all made from traditional Italian grapes like Barbera and Nebbiolo. Another pair of favorites are Pelerin Wines and Marilyn Remark Wines. You won't find these wines outside of California, yet, but if you are in the Monterey area, make sure you stop by – you will not be disappointed!

Cheers!  
Paul & Betsy

## Feature: Cuvaision

I recently had the pleasure of enjoying a delicious lunch with Steven Rogstad, winemaker at the well-known Cuvaision winery in California. Lunch was courtesy of my friends at Terlato Wines and was hosted at Boston's latest bistro, KO Steakhouse, which is Ken Oringer's latest venture. Steve brought with him five lovely wines,

four from Cuvaision and one from a new venture, Brandlin Vineyards. Before we get to the wines, here's a bit about Cuvaision and Brandlin.

The Cuvaision winery got its start in 1969 when Thomas Cotrell and Thomas Parkhill, both Silicon Valley engineers,

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### Upcoming 2007 Wine Events:

- September 15—Wines of South America
- September 29—Wines of the Pacific Northwest
- October 13—Non-Vinifera Grape Wines
- October 27—Wine & Food Pairing
- November 10—White Burgundy
- December 8—Champagne

## Feature: Cuvaison

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started making wine from a 27-acre vineyard at the winery's present location. Oakleigh Thorne, a New York publisher purchased the winery in 1974 and then appointed the Swiss-born Philip Togni as Winemaker. In 1979, the Schmidheiny family of Switzerland purchased Cuvaison as well as 400 acres of prime vineyard land in the Carneros region in southern Napa Valley. The Schmidheiny family still owns Cuvaison and in 2002 appointed Steven Rogstad as winemaker. Steve took the reins from John Thacher, who had been selected Winemaker of the Year by "Wine & Spirits" magazine in 1988.

Cuvaison is really considered a pioneer in Carneros, since at the time of the Schmidheiny purchase in 1979, there were very few wineries taking advantage of the special soil and climate of the region. Thacher was the original architect of the estate and made no compromises when planning the vineyard. By making key decisions about row orientation, vine trellising, sustainable agriculture and other important vineyard components, John turned the once uncultivated land into a producer of exceptionally high-quality grapes. An obsession with quality defined John Thacher's approach and it is the same with extant winemaker Steve Rogstad. Rogstad is a respected authority on the unique Carneros climate and soil combination and understands the importance of clonal selection. While many of the key planting decisions have led to more difficult farming, those decisions are critical for optimizing quality in the fruit. According to Steve, "Due to cool and foggy conditions in our vineyard, we wanted to extend sunlight hours, so we developed a row orientation that is northeast-southwest to extend morning and afternoon sun and minimize the harsh, mid-afternoon exposure. Our rows are in the same direction of the Carneros wind, which allows for better circulation of dry air through the vineyard. So yes, we chose to have point rows that are more difficult to farm, but the sunlight and wind exposure were the key factors governing the decision."

Cuvaison follows a program of sustainable agriculture, which is not the same thing as

organic winemaking, but does utilize practices such as integrated pest management, which uses natural predators against pests in lieu of artificial pesticides and herbicides. Allowing the vine to exist and thrive in as natural an environment as possible results in a more balanced vine. These techniques also help to preserve the delicate ecosystems and microclimates throughout the vineyard, which are beneficial to overall ecology.

All of Cuvaison's Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Merlot is estate grown, allowing the winemaking team absolute control over the vines. As a result, the wines are true expressions of quality, demonstrating the fine wine potential of Carneros. Cuvaison produces approximately 60,000 cases of wine annually.

In 1998, Cuvaison Estate Wines bought the Brandlin Vineyard, a small parcel high in the Mount Veeder appellation southwest of Napa Valley. The property sits between 900 and 1,000 feet and was meticulously farmed for nearly 100 years by the Brandlin family. Chester Brandlin, the surviving member of the clan still lives in the mountains high atop the property. The vineyard has been carefully planted to the classic Bordeaux varietals: 32.1 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon, 2.3 acres of Malbec, 1.8 acres of Cabernet Franc and 1.4 acres of Petit Verdot. The unique diversity of soil and slope benefits each varietal and the attention to detail paid in Carneros has created fruit of the highest quality. As you would expect, such small parcels means that production is highly limited. In 2004, only 800 cases of the Brandlin were produced.

My readers know that when it comes to California wines, I am a harsh critic. I think it has something to do with the idea of holding oneself to a higher standard. As a result, I don't make friends with California wine easily. That said, I'm ready to walk down the aisle with these wines. The Chardonnays were wonderfully expressive, showing a light-handed technique that repeatedly suggested the great whites of Burgundy. The Pinot Noirs were more forward, but still showed amazing complexity

and balance behind the freshness of west coast fruit. The Brandlin was fantastic – well balanced with supple, chewy tannin that reinforced an elegant structure – Bravo to Steve Rogstad!

I want to thank my hosts, Pete Danko and Susan Bergland of Terlato Wines, for giving me the opportunity to taste these wonderful wines and spend some time conversing with Steve, it was great!

[2005 Cuvaison Chardonnay, Carneros \(\\$25.00/bottle\) \(30,000 cases\)](#)

Tight nose with delicate aromas of peach, apricot, apple and mineral. Medium-bodied with firm acidity – crisp. Good balance with a firm palate. Apple, peach and a hint of citrus – no apparent buttery or vanilla flavors despite seeing 60% ML and all French Oak. Wonderful structure with a long finish that doesn't cloy, unlike most domestic Chardonnays. Drinking well now and should improve with another 2 to 3 years in bottle.

[2005 Cuvaison Estate Selection Chardonnay, Carneros \(\\$36.00/bottle\) \(800 cases\)](#)

Tight nose with wonderfully expressive aromas of lemon, peach, vanilla and mineral. Medium-to-full-bodied with firm acidity – rich. Well balanced with a firm palate. Elegant fruit with apple, pear and peach and a hint of understated butter and vanilla. Endless finish with unfolding complexity and a nice mineral bite. Drinking well now and should improve with another 3 to 5 years in bottle.

[2005 Cuvaison Pinot Noir, Carneros \(\\$35.00/bottle\)](#)

Bright, fruity nose with red berry, strawberry, a hint of jam and delicate floral aromas. Medium-to-full-bodied with firm acidity and light tannin. Well balanced – pretty. Ripe palate with a nice dark fruit core, plummy with traces of allspice and white pepper. Moderate length with a persistent hint of spice on the finish – highly complex. Lovely. Drinking well now and should easily improve over the next

## Feature: Cuvaision

5 to 7 years in bottle.

[2005 Cuvaision Block F5 Pinot Noir, Carneros \(\\$52.00/bottle\) \(200 cases\)](#)

Ripe, fruity nose with tarry, floral hints – lovely and seductive. Medium-to-full-bodied with moderate acidity and soft, supple tannin. Well balanced – elegant. Cherry fruit palate with beautiful structure and finesse. Some red berry notes with wisps of vanilla and spice. Long finish, highly complex with great concentration. Drinking well now and should improve with another 7 to 10 years in the bottle.



[2004 Brandlin Vineyard, Mount Veeder \(\\$80.00/bottle\) \(800 cases\)](#)

Composition: 84% Cabernet Sauvignon; 12% Malbec; 3% Petit Verdot; 1% Cabernet Franc

Powerful, fruity nose, jammy with intense density, sweet, almost Port-like. Impressive. Full-bodied with moderate acidity and chewy, supple tannin. Well-balanced and beautifully structured. Dense, chewy palate with juicy, jammy black cherry fruit. Black currant, dark chocolate and black pepper notes. Long finish with an evolving, highly complex aftertaste. Magnificent. Drinking well, albeit a bit tight. Should really shine in another 5 to 7 years.

## Notable Potables: Red

Okay, so the following wines are not exactly red wines, they're rosé wines, but there is nothing more perfect on a summer's day than to quench one's thirst with a crisp and dry rosé. Summer gets very hot in the south of France, as well as the plains of Spain and when the mercury starts to bubble, our Mediterranean friends turn to refreshing rosé quaffers.

[2006 Vega Sindoa Rosado, Navarra, Spain \(\\$6.99/bottle\)](#)

Composition: 50% Garnacha; 50% Cabernet Sauvignon

Floral nose with bright cherry and berry fruit. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity. Crisp and refreshing. Good balance. Ripe, fruity palate with raspberry, cherry and rose petal notes. Moderate length with a clean finish. Drinking well now – not for aging. Superb value.

[2006 Bodegas San Alejandro Las Rocas Rosado, Calatayud, Spain \(\\$8.99/bottle\)](#)

Bright, perfumed nose with raspberry and lilac hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity. Crisp with a touch of light effervescence. Good balance. Lively, fruity palate with fresh strawberry and raspberry notes. Moderate length with a persistent floral aftertaste. Drinking well now – not for aging. A great value.

[2006 Domaine Flaugerques La Mejanelle Rosé, Coteaux du Languedoc, France \(\\$8.99/bottle\)](#)

Pretty, floral nose with raspberry and lilac hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity. Crisp and refreshing. Good balance. Juicy, fruity palate with fresh cherry, lavender and sweet mint notes. Moderate length with a ripe berry finish. Drinking well now – not for aging. Super value.

[2006 Chateau Villerambert Julien Rosé, Minervois, France \(\\$9.99/bottle\)](#)

Perfumed nose with bright berry and floral aromas – pretty. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity. Crisp and well balanced. Fruity palate with cherry, berry and lavender notes. Moderate length with a persistent floral finish. Drinking well now – not for aging. Great value.



## Notable Potables: White



[2006 Bodegas Martin Codax Albariño Burgás, Rias Baixas, Galicia, Spain \(\\$11.99/bottle\)](#)

Lively, lemony nose with loads of mineral and floral complexity. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity. Crisp and refreshing. Well balanced. Citrus palate with notes of wet stone and pineapple. Moderate length with a clean finish. Ideal for a hot summer afternoon. Not for aging. Superb value.

[2002 Trimbach Reserve Pinot Gris, Alsace, France \(\\$16.99/bottle\)](#)

Lively nose with lemon, apple and mineral hints. Medium-bodied with moderate-to-high acidity. Tart and crisp. Good Balance. Lightly fruity palate with apple, pear, apricot and wet stone. Pretty. Moderate length, a touch tart with lemon curd on the aftertaste. Drinking well now and should hold for another 2 to 3 years.

[2005 Lazy River Pinot Gris, Yamhill Carlton District, Oregon \(\\$16.99/bottle\)](#)

Delicate nose with peach, tropical fruit and floral hints. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity. Good balance. Soft palate with peach, lemon, honey and green apple. Light on the finish – crisp and clean. Drinking well now and should hold for another 1 to 2 years.

[2005 Henri Bourgeois La Bourgeois, Sancerre, France \(\\$26.99/bottle\)](#)

Grassy nose with green apple, pear and lavender hints. Pretty. Medium-bodied with moderate-to-high acidity. Crisp and refreshing. Good balance. Tight palate with green apple, lemongrass, gooseberries and wet stone notes. Lovely. Moderate length with persistent green apple on the finish. Drinking well now – not for aging.

## Truro Vineyards of Cape Cod

On a recent trip to Truro, Massachusetts we finally had the opportunity to stop at another local winery – Truro Vineyards of Cape Cod.

Truro Vineyards are situated right off of route 6 in North Truro. The grounds are beautiful, with tasting on the back patio. Cabernet Franc is grown on the property, which is why the wine made from it carries the Southeastern New England appellation. Vineyard tours are also available.

Visit their web site at:  
[www.trurovineyardsofcapecod.com](http://www.trurovineyardsofcapecod.com)

The Roberts family acquired the winery in March 2007 from the vineyard founders (1992), Kathy Gregrow and Judy Wimer. The Roberts have vowed to maintain the hands-on attention that fine wine production demands. Matyas Vogel has been the wine-

maker since 2004, and will continue on under the new ownership.



Truro Vineyards of Cape Cod wines:

[NV Sauvignon Blanc \(\\$13.99/bottle\)](#)

Citrus nose with bright lemon and grapefruit hints. Light-bodied with crisp, racy acidity. Refreshing. Good balance. More citrus and grapefruit on the palate. Moderate length with a clean finish. Nice. Not for aging.

[2003 Chardonnay \(\\$14.99/bottle\)](#)

Oaky, creamy nose with lemon and caramel hints. Medium-bodied with tart acidity. Good balance. Fruity palate with a mix of apple, pear and lemon notes. Moderate length with just a touch of oak on the finish. Not for aging.

[NV Vignoles \(\\$12.99/bottle\)](#)

Light, floral nose with pineapple and tropical fruit aromas. Pretty. Light-bodied with crisp, tart acidity. Good balance. Citrus palate with papaya and guava notes. Moderate length with a touch of sweetness on the finish. Very nice. Not for aging.

# Truro Vineyards of Cape Cod

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## NV Cranberry Light (\$15.99/bottle)

Restrained nose with cranberry and eucalyptus hints. Light-bodied with moderate acidity. Crisp. Good balance. Red berry palate with strawberry and tart cranberry notes. Moderate length with a touch of sweetness. Refreshing – not for aging.

## NV Diamond Light (\$15.99/bottle)

Lively, citrus nose with lemon and lime hints. Pretty. Light-bodied with firm acidity. Good balance. Lemony palate with a touch of honey. Short, crisp finish. Refreshing – not for aging.

## 2005 Cabernet Franc, Southeastern New England AVA (\$15.99/bottle)

Soft, cherry nose with mocha, tobacco and vanilla hints. Pretty. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate tannin. Good balance. Ripe cherry palate with black pepper and anise notes. Moderate length with a touch of sour cherry and vanilla on the finish. Nice. Drinking well now and should hold for another 1 to 2 years.



## 2005 Maritime Red (\$16.99/bottle)

A blend of Merlot, Zinfandel and Cabernet Franc

Bright, fruity nose with cherry and red berry aromas. Medium-bodied with firm acidity and moderate tannin. Good balance. Spicy palate with sour cherry and anise notes. Moderate length with a hint of vanilla on the finish. Drinking well now – not for aging.

## 2005 Triumph (\$19.99/bottle)

A blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc

Tight nose with soft cherry, menthol and vanilla aromas. Restrained. Medium-bodied with moderate acidity and moderate, dry tannin. Good balance. Dark fruit core with plum, black cherry and currant notes. Moderate length, complex with a hint of tobacco, mocha, black pepper and vanilla on the finish. Very impressive.

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## An Elemental Pairing: Cheese & Wine

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There's an old saying among wine sellers: Buy on apples, sell on cheese. In other words, when tasted with an apple, a wine will display all of its faults: lack of balance, lack of finesse, etc. Similarly, when paired with cheese, the less desirable attributes of a wine tend to be masked.

For Musings events, we choose our cheeses carefully, to best show the wines we're tasting—often seeking cheeses from the same regional areas as the wines

we're serving. As with everything Musings related, a cursory level of understanding is never enough. Recently, we've found two wonderful books that have expanded our knowledge about all things cheese related.

Written by Max McCalman, the *Maitre Fromager* of the Artisanal Cheese Center in New York, the books are aptly named "The Cheese Plate" and "Cheese: A Connoisseur's Guide to the World's Best." "The Cheese Plate" is Mr. McCalman's

first guide to fine cheese, while "Cheese" is his follow-up guide. Both books are expertly written and offer clear, concise information, including detailed guidelines for buying, aging and pairing cheeses.

The photography is gorgeous – make sure you have plenty of delicious cheese around when you're reading either book. We highly recommend the Artisanal Cheese Center itself: [www.artisanalcheese.com](http://www.artisanalcheese.com).

# MUSINGS on the VINE

A Collection of Thoughts, Suggestions and Opinions about Wine.



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## *Musings on The Vine*

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*Musings on the Vine* was conceived with a few very simple goals:

*One, to share my passion and excitement of wine with anyone who cares to listen, and by doing so engender similar excitement in others. Two, to strip away the mysteries surrounding the appreciation of wine, making wine tasting, buying and collecting fun and unassuming. And three, to provide a resource for those people who don't necessarily want to become a Master Sommelier, but instead just want to be able to buy something decent to drink with dinner tonight. I hope that my readers find this newsletter to be informative and enjoyable!*

Looking for more information about wine? Find it all at [www.MusingsOnTheVine.com](http://www.MusingsOnTheVine.com)!

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## Upcoming Musings Events

### *September 15-Wines of South America*

Twenty years ago, the wines of Chile and Argentina were just emerging as the latest high-value wines. Quality was somewhat variable, but you couldn't beat the prices. Today, both countries have invested significant capital in improving viticulture and wine making practices, efforts that have dramatically improved the consistency of their wines. At this tasting we will taste several high-quality, high-value wines from both Chile and Argentina.

The cost: \$50  
Location: Wrentham, Massachusetts  
Time: 3:00 p.m.

### *September 29-The Wines of the Pacific Northwest*

When people think about the wines from the west coast of the US, most think California. If that's all you think about, then you're missing a lot of really good, high value wine. While Pinot Noir made a name for itself in Oregon, many other varieties have become stars. Washington State was home to some of the finest Merlot-based wines, there again, the number of killer varietals has grown dramatically. At this tasting we will taste several wonderful wines from Oregon and Washington State.

The cost: \$50  
Location: Wrentham, Massachusetts  
Time: 3:00 p.m.

### *October 13-Non-Vinifera Grapes*

For centuries, fine wine has been a product of the "noble" grape varieties, all stemming from the family of grapes called *vitis vinifera*. Wines made from *vinifera* grapes have set the standard by which all other wines are judged, but with improved technology in both the vineyard and the wine cellar, non-*vinifera* and hybrid varieties are making fine wines of distinction. At this tasting we will taste several wines made from non-*vinifera* varietals.

The cost: \$50  
Location: Wrentham, Massachusetts  
Time: 3:00 p.m.