

January 2, 2009

The Sommelier Says....

Hello and welcome to the newsletter for <http://www.wine-sommelier.com/>

Happy New Year!



There is nothing like wine tasting when there is snow on the ground!

During the holidays Bev and I went up to Oregon and did some wine tasting in the Willamette Valley area. It was an amazing trip, I bought wines at every stop.... Luckily we went with Bev's cousin and they drove our wine home.

Saginaw Vineyards

We began our tasting at Saginaw Vineyards, which is right off the 5, an easy winery to get to, even being so small. Saginaw is a small vineyard originally planted by the Byler family. It is still operated by the family and specializes in traditional, hand-crafted, Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris wines as well as Rose' of Pinot Noir. With few exceptions their wines are made exclusively from grapes grown on the estate and annual production is less than 2000 cases - very small even by Oregon standards.

<http://www.saginawvineyards.com/>

King Estate Winery

This photo is from King Estate winery, and it is a must stop when visiting that area of the world. Their Pinots are delicious and their Pinot Gris to die for. I even joined the wine club! (I think that makes 9)

We had lunch there as well, and that was also a treat. I highly recommend visiting King Estate when in the Willamette area of Oregon. The staff took VERY good care of our group, and actually comp'd our wine we had at lunch because we bought so much! They have a regular wine list for tasting and a reserve one, both offer great selection, but I do suggest going for it and also asking what 'special' wines they might have opened that you can try. I did that and ended up buying the last four bottles of one of their award winning Pinots.

<http://www.kingestate.com/>

Sweet Cheeks

Rarely do I go to a winery just because of the name, (believe me I discovered Dark Star by liking the name so it might not be a bad way to go!) But when I saw Sweet Cheeks on the map, I just had to try them out, and I was not disappointed at all. The wine that I loved there was their Dry Riesling (you will find a lot of these in this area) but this one in particular caught my fancy and I ended up taking home 6 bottles!

<http://www.sweetcheekswinery.com/>

Silvan-Ridge

Located directly across the road from Sweet Cheeks is Silvan-Ridge. Silvan Ridge Winery was established in 1979 (as Hinman Vineyards) and is maintained in the tradition of a small European winery. Located just fifteen minutes southwest of downtown Eugene, their patio and picnic area overlooking the rolling hills covered in vines provides the perfect backdrop for an afternoon picnic, or an evening under the stars. (But it was 35 degrees when we were there so there was no sitting outside!) I ended up buying some of their Reserve Pinot Noir along with a Syrah that they source from Southern Oregon.

<http://www.silvanridge.com/>

LaVelle Vineyards

The last one on our trip, was certainly not the least, I have to say out of all of these wineries, this one had a great hostess in the tasting room, she was knowledgeable and friendly and took care of our group really well. LaVelle Vineyards actually began as Forgeron Vineyard, and is the oldest winery in Oregon's Southern Willamette Valley. The previous owners, Lee and Linda Smith, were pioneers in the Oregon wine industry, planting the bulk of the estate vineyard between 1968 and 1972. A downturn in the premium wine market in the early 1990's resulted in the closing of Forgeron Vineyard in 1992. The property was purchased by Doug LaVelle in April 1994 and has since been known as LaVelle Vineyards. The wines that got me going was first a Dry Rose of Gamay-yummy and it would be great with spicy Mexican food anytime. LaVelle also had a Dry Riesling that caught my eye, and wallet. But the one wine that I fell in love with was their Vintage Select Gamay Noir. I have a few bottles sitting very pretty in my cellar right now.

<http://www.lavelle-vineyards.com/>

Sonoma Barrel Tasting Weekend

Time to make your reservations! March 7/8 is right around the corner for the annual Sonoma Barrel Tasting weekend! This will be the 31st year of Barrel Tasting! Over 100 wineries in the Alexander, Dry Creek and Russian River Valleys throw open their cellar doors for you to sample wine from the barrel, purchase futures, meet winemakers and sample current release wines. Must be 21 years of age or older to attend event; kindly leave pets and underage children at home. All details available at <http://www.wineroad.com/>

My plans are flying up to Oakland Saturday morning, driving to Sonoma and having a hotel in the area (Santa Rosa) for the weekend. We come home on Sunday night. Some of you might decide to drive up to Sonoma, but remember we are ~~drinking~~ tasting all day Sunday too.

Southwest Airlines has 2009 SPECIAL pricing on 'wanna get away' fares that I recently bought at \$354 roundtrip for a couple. The flights I booked are as follows:

Southwest #3656, Depart Burbank to Oakland @ 8:30 am March 7

Southwest #2550, Depart Oakland to Burbank @ 7:50 pm March 8

Plus the hotel in [Courtyard Santa Rosa](#) 175 Railroad Street Santa Rosa, CA 95401 is \$150 a night. (*I have already booked mine*).

Please let me know ASAP if you plan on going with us, I am getting transportation for the weekend too.

Website updated!

Please take a few minutes and checkout the updated website!

<http://www.wine-sommelier.com>

It now has all of the past newsletters available for download as well as winery reviews! Your comments are appreciated too.

Cheers-

Tim

If you would like to be removed from this list, please reply to me at tim@wine-sommelier.com and request removal from this list.