

EXTRAORDINARY LIVING FOR EXTRAORDINARY LIVES

LUXURY LAS VEGAS

50

Happy Birthday...

Barbie
Turns 50!





America

The Beautiful...

BY MARILYN LAROCQUE

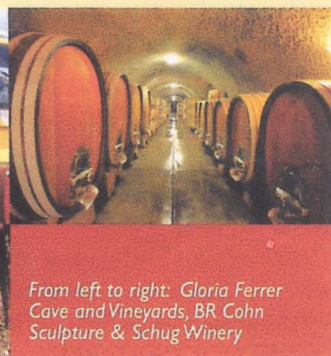
Sonoma Wine Country

Sonoma Wine Country reflects America the Beautiful...spacious skies, purple mountains, fruited plains, valleys, hillsides, and coastline, and not only the shining Pacific Ocean but bays, creeks and rivers to boot. It's bounded by the Pacific Ocean on the west, Mayacamas Mountains on the east, San Pablo Bay to the south, and the towering redwoods of Mendocino County to the north. The Russian River rambles through much of its western portion. By and large, climate is moderate. In many areas, fog is a natural air conditioner.

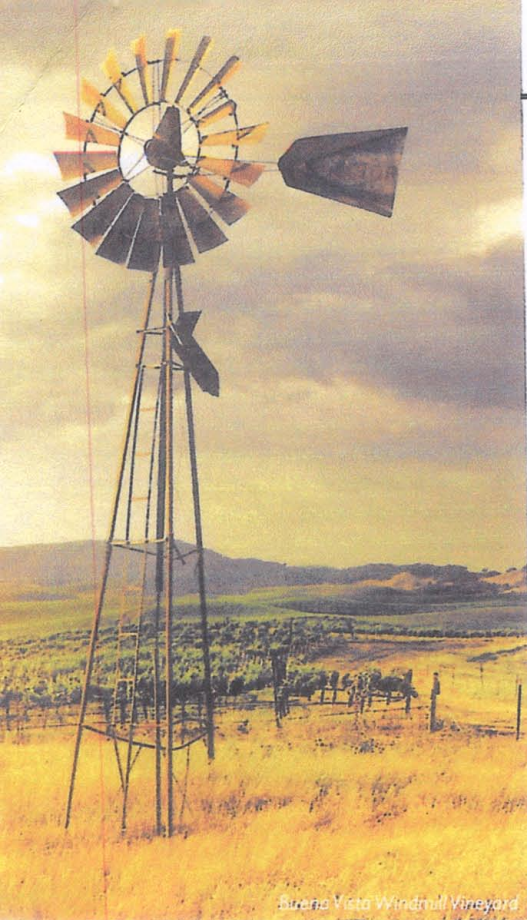
Primary varietals are, in descending order of production, Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc for the

whites; Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Merlot, and Zinfandel for the reds. Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris/Pinot Grigio are slowly gaining ground, as are Sangiovese, Syrah, and Petite Syrah.

There are 12 appellations: Alexander Valley; Bennett Valley; Carneros, which runs across the southern tips of both Sonoma and Napa; Chalk Hill; Dry Creek Valley; Green Valley; Knights Valley, the warmest appellation; Rockpile, the newest appellation; Russian River Valley; Sonoma Coast, the coolest region; Sonoma Mountain; and Sonoma Valley. Each has its claim to wine fame. Check www.sonomawine.com for details.



From left to right: Gloria Ferrer Cave and Vineyards, BR Cohn Sculpture & Schug Winery



Buena Vista Windmill Vineyard

“We try new techniques on a small scale,” Steve said, “and adopt what works and discard what doesn’t. We’re constantly refining our vineyard practices.”

“One size doesn’t fit all,” Michael observed. “You have to consider climate and soil differences. After a few years of working with us, people trust our judgment.”

Did they ever consider a “Sangiaco Winery”? “To succeed, you do what you do best,” Steve replied. “Our expertise is growing grapes,” Michael added. “Also, we’re not competing with our customers.”

HIGHWAY 12/12 AND ENVIRONS—SONOMA TO SANTA ROSA

GLORIA FERRER CAVES AND VINEYARDS, Carneros

www.gloriaferrer.com

The Ferrer family of the Catalan-based Spanish sparkling wine house Freixenet founded Gloria Ferrer in 1982. Elegant, charming, and dynamic, Executive VP Eva Bertran was part of the 1986 launch team.

Dragonflies hovered like helicopters as we sipped a glass of Blanc de Noir on the terrace overlooking the vineyards and spectacular view of the Bay and mountains beyond. We talked with Eva about the image of sparkling wine as a “celebratory” beverage, not for

everyday drinking. “Sparkling wine should be part of the table, like a fork and knife,” she said. “It has nuances and balance that make it compatible with a wide variety of foods, and there’s that wonderful moment of discovery of something new and different. It really shines with appetizers and tapas for a ‘grazing’ style of eating.”

Wine finds: A sparkler for every taste—from light, bright NV Sonoma Brut to the magnificent Carneros Cuvée, rich, yeasty, and exciting. Visit the winery to experience their lilted Rosé.

SCHUG CARNEROS ESTATE, Carneros

www.schugwinery.com

Schug is nestled into the hillside west of Highway 12. A native of the famous Rheingau, winemaster-owner Walter Schug earned accolades as founding winemaker at Joseph Phelps (“Insignia,” etc.). When Phelps stopped producing Pinot Noir, Walter’s favorite grape, he began making it under his own label and ultimately, in 1980, established his own estate.

We walked past large German oak casks, one of them beautifully carved, to reach the cave tasting room. “They’re neutral oak,” Walter explained. “We use them for settling and finishing raw red wines.” Walter’s son, Axel, who is managing partner, joined us. “It took us just three months to build the caves,” Walter remarked. “It’s been amazing to see it all evolve within one generation compared to many generations in the old-world.”

Schug grows and buys grapes—Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from Carneros and Sonoma Coast, Sauvignon Blanc from Sonoma County, and Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon from Sonoma Valley. They also make an exuberant Rouge de Noirs Brut Sparkling Pinot Noir. “It’s all free run juice, all stainless, no oak,” Axel explained, “and spends two years on the yeast.”

Wine finds: Unoaked ’07 Sonoma Coast Chardonnay; barrel-fermented ’06 Carneros Chardonnay; ’06 Carneros Pinot Noir; ’04 Heritage Reserve Merlot; and the sparkler.

B.R. COHN, Glen Ellen

(Sonoma Mountain) www.brcohn.com

A 1946 Ford “Woody” station wagon that provided transportation for Generals MacArthur and Eisenhower at the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines is parked adjacent to the B.R. Cohn tasting room. Bruce Cohn, Doobie Brothers discoverer/manager and

founder/owner of B.R. Cohn, acquired it in 1986. It’s also immortalized in one of the fanciful “junk” sculptures decorating the tasting room gardens. Originally a stagecoach stop for Wells Fargo, the building was the Cohn family’s first home on the property.

“I restored old cars in high school,” Bruce told us. “I was a hot rod guy, a racer, and raced fuel dragsters for three years professionally; but a bad accident ended that. I became a sound engineer for Channel 20 (San Francisco) from four till midnight. I also managed a rehearsal hall where bands practiced. My brother, Marty, a sound engineer in San Mateo, and I liked a group and cut a demo. Their first record was a disaster, and we divided \$100 six ways. Then ‘Listen to the Music’ hit in 1972; so did the Doobie Brothers; and I got off food stamps and brown rice.

“I was raised on a Grade A goat farm in Forestville,” Bruce continued. “I’ve been in the grape growing business since 1974 and winemaking since 1984. The land here (Olive Hill Vineyards) was hay when I bought it. I grew up on Lancers and Mateus and didn’t know about fine wines. So I started learning at UC Davis, read viticulture books traveling on the plane, and still take classes at Davis to train my palate.”

The property also has French Picholine olive trees dating back to 1870. “In 1990 the question was to buy new carpet or pick up the olives,” Bruce admitted. They’re the foundation of a thriving olive oil business. Bruce has also branched out into gourmet foods. His annual celebrity-studded charity events on property draw enormous crowds.

Wine finds: B.R. Cohn wines number over 15. Roadster Red, 100% zesty Zin; sophisticated ’05 Olive Hill Estate Cab; ’06 Olive Hill Estate Vineyards Malbec (tasting room only); ’06 Sonoma Valley SyrCab (Syrah, 77%, Cab, 23%).

LANDMARK VINEYARDS, Kenwood (Sonoma Valley) www.landmarkwine.com

A bright green John Deere tractor near the entrance to Landmark Vineyards pays tribute to the great-great-great grandfather of Michael Deere Colhoun, who, with his wife, Mary, owns the winery. The hospitable tasting room of the picturesque Spanish Mission-style winery has an open-beam ceiling and floor-to-ceiling mural of gargantuan grapevines on the wall behind the bar.