



Wine: Stories from the **OREGON WINE COUNTRY** *PART TWO*

Five Days of Dining and Tasting—Plenty of Cheer to Go 'round

By Kenneth Friedenreich

We continue our Oregon wine tale here, begun last issue. These alpha-arranged tasting impressions offer thumbnails of numerous wineries. Each vintner has something to say about their varietals. Consider my recommendations a starting point, not dogma.

My ritual in flying to Portland never varies. I land at PDX and taxi into the city arriving about a half-hour later. I sit at the bar at Jake's Famous Crawfish with a Bombay Sapphire, my Botanical Queen in the Blue Nightie, and a dozen oysters or a bucket of steamers

from the region. My friend and driver, JXP arrives then off to Hillsboro we go a launch pad to the whole of the Willamette AVA.

For two nights I am poised for the Willamette Wine Wanderlust experience from the Orenco Hotel, about 30 minutes' drive from downtown Portland. It looks like Saint Germaine on the left bank, but it's thoroughly wired 24/7. Because the North Willamette Vintners' Association has launched a "Meet the Winemaker" program, we plunge into a tasting presented by Appolloni. I have yet to unpack.

1.) ADEA: 26421 Highway 47 Gaston, OR 97119 | 503.662.4509: Dean Fisher is an inveterate tinker who makes his own stemming machines. A robust character, his family produces robust wines. I am partial to the tiny lot of estate wine, especially the 2006 and 2008 Dino's Pinot. They express Fisher's energetic, even gaudy, approach to solving the riddle of Mother Nature in a warm growing season followed by a cool, dry growing season. The Fisher Family estate 2008 Pinot Noir shows well, big berry and spice balanced with an earthy

underpinning, full in the mouth with nice finish. An elegant wine from a lean—cool and dry—season.

2.) Appolloni Vineyard: 14135 NW Timmerman Road Forest Grove, Oregon 97116 | 503.330.5946: Alfredo and Laurine Appolloni established their winery in 1999. Hailing from Fano, in northeast Italy, one is not surprised to find Sangiovese in their portfolio. Recommended: The 2009 Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris are nicely balanced, gold-yellow, appealing "drink-now". Both wines worked well with platters of Italian



Opposite Left Photograph
by Gaszton Gal

Opposite Center Photograph
Courtesy of Mount Veeder
Magic Vineyards

Opposite Right Photograph
by Karyn R. Millet

LEFT Photograph
Courtesy of Mount Veeder
Magic Vineyards

cheeses and cold meats. I look ahead to the wines yet to be released over the next several years. The 2009 Estate Pinot Noir is no fruit bomb; it is a deep ruby, complex take on the varietal and worthy of your attention. You can taste its Italian heritage in its palette of dryness and spice.

3.) Arterberry Maresh: 9325 NE Worden Hill Road | P.O. Box 401 Dundee, OR 97115 | 503.538.7034 or 537.1098: The grape doesn't fall far from the vine. Arterberry's late father, Fred Jr, was a Pinot pioneer and Jim's namesake is the owner of the Maresh estate who was there at the beginning. The 2009 Dundee Hills is for me characteristic of the best Oregon Pinot Noir. The Burgundian structure is implicit, but these show very well among the best examples of what an Oregon Pinot can do on the upper Left Coast. A 2011 release of 2009 Sauvignon Blanc under the Maresh flag makes a happy marriage of acidity and floral sweetness.

4.) Boedecker Cellars: 2621 NW 30th Ave, Portland, OR 97210 | 503.224.5778: There is a warehouse wine country located in Portland proper. This one offers very clean, distinctive whites including its 2009 Pinot Gris and 2011 Pinot Blanc. Quite appealing colors and scents; good finishes on both.

5.) Cascade Cliffs Vineyards: 211 Oak Street, Hood River, OR 97031 | 509.767.1100: The two best things about driving to Hood River are its views heading east on the Washington side of the mighty Columbia and the westbound return on the Oregon side. Here are two Italian varietals—Barbera and Nebbiolo grown in small blocks about 1,000' above the gorge--dressed up like Trapper John. More than a few people think this a good idea. The Italian forebears have more acid and tannins. These are more approachable, surely, yet I think them works in progress worth tasting now and following the narrative in coming years. Their blend of these two same grapes for its 2010 incarnation proves a good drink-me-now red. If you like elk burgers, this should work!

6.) Cerulean Cellars: 304 Oak Street, Hood River, OR 97031 | Pat Graham at 541.490.4905 or Jeff Miller at 503.333.9725: I am enamored of the Cerulean wines more than their "pure, natural, authentic" mantra. If it works for Pat and Jeff it works for me. I consider the strong suit in this portfolio its white varietals. The Austro-German such as their 2010 Gruner Veltliner or 2010 Gewürztraminer. Pinot Gris is admirably handled and very good with tart greens like arugula with dried apricots and dates tossed in for fun. It is their clean, steely 2009 Chardonnay that startled me by its total lack of affect and its completely subtle balance and artful structure. This also startling turn holds for their 2010 Pinot Noir that is delicately austere and sophisticated. Grown in small space 1200 feet above the river this pinot is all concentrated virtue—a keeper! Look for their Barbera and Temperanillo to extend their portfolio.

7.) Elk Cove Vineyards: 27751 NW Olson Road Gaston, OR 97119 | 503.985.7760: One of the state's top producers welcomes you to a meticulous tasting environment and its 35,000 case output is handled with similar business-like efficiency. Try their 2011 Pinot Rose with some country pate and fruit. The signature wine is very representative of the north Willamette area—good fruit that doesn't barge into the glass and vibrant color. The regular Willamette Pinot Noir 2009 is for my mouth even more appealing than its noble cousins from single blocks. There is no accounting for my taste.

8.) Groschau Cellars: 2621 NW 30th Avenue Portland, OR 97210 | 503.245.2245: Winemaker Jon Groschau sources variously at his recently vacated urban winery and produces an enigmatic and lovely Pinot Noir 2009 from the Bjornson Vineyard in Eola-Amity sub-district. After meandering among the vines, he plans to reappear in a new winery in Portland.



9.) Kramer Vineyards: 26830 NW Olson Rd Gaston, OR 97119 | 503.662.4545: I was inclined to like this vineyard when one of its resident dogs saw our car coming up the drive and lay down to sleep before it. For 23 acres the Kramers produce very varied wines such as a 2009 Brut, Rebecca's vineyard Pinot Noir, and a 2006 Chardonnay I still enjoy two cases later. The style of winemaking shows up with great clarity of expression in the glass in most of the varietals I have purchased or sampled; it complements by its reserve the genuine fun of the tasting room atmosphere.

10.) Naked Wine: 102 2nd Street Hood River, OR 97031 | 541.490.5092: If you drink here will you respect yourself in the morning? I fell in love with the wine club manager, and she was not naked. This is another Hood River winery whose premise is to wink-wink and nudge-nudge you into liking their wines. "Penetration" is their big Cabernet and it's more than everyday stuff. I am most partial to their whites, and recommend the Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris as two varietals that remind us that Oregon white wine should not just be the opening act for the reds. Of course, you can swing with 2009 Gay Rose or Foreplay Chardonnay (2009) from Rogue River. Get it?

11.) Patton Valley Vineyard: 9449 SW Old Hwy 47 Mail: P.O. Box 328 Gaston, OR 97119 | 503.985.3445: I like these wines. Try the 2009 Wente Clone Chardonnay for example: good aroma and fruit, but subtle as if leaving something implicit rather than broadcast. The 2009 West Block and 10=Acre Pinot Noirs show the difference between 5 acre blacks on the estate; the Lorna Marie Pinot Noir (2009) is endearing, as it is named in honor of two mothers who must have liked good wine. Mom keeps everyone in line—this is a beautiful translation of an ancient Burgundian text.

12.) Plum Hill Vineyards: SW Old Highway 47 Gaston, OR 97119 | 503.359.4706: the name derives from what once farmers planted here. JC Lint is irrepensible and one feels that his inviting tasting room somewhere has a wizard behind the curtain we're supposed to ignore. Just consider his three version of Pinot Gris: one is too sweet, another too acidic—presto! The blend of the two gets it right and is thoroughly enjoyable. A Patio Pinot seems more an experiment, and I will open it sometime before the leaves fall to see if this rosy wine gets to its destination. If you wish to play Jacob wrestling with no Angel, you can wrestle this winery's wax sealed tops. Proprietor Lint is a fine raconteur, too.

13.) Ponzi Family Vineyards: 14665 Ws Winery Lane, Beaverton, OR 97007 | 503.628.1227: A pioneer family in the industry should by now know how to make the best of each harvest. This space is elegant and apparently serene, but the varietals are numerous and command attention, if not also top dollar. The 2009 Estate Pinot Noir and the 2009 Reserve retail at \$75 for a 750ml bottle, about 30% more than top wines offered in other places in this listing. But this is not a comparison shopper; indeed their present Pinot Rose is \$18. The Ponzi family has been at it for a long while and their accumulated wisdom shows up in the wines they produce.

14.) Seven of Hearts: 217 W. Main Street, Carlton, OR 97111 | 971.241.6548 one of my favorites: Carlton is a two blinker town and this charm is that one might pass through oblivious to its varied wine rooms. Byron Coon is a wonderful nut in one sense, but a very astute grower and winemaker. The offerings are so varied as to leave one dazzled. I am excited about his Rhone varietals, and you can taste the Grenache, Mouvedre, and Syrah separately as well in its RSM flagship. The whites are imaginative and approachable. The estate Pinot Noir is a distinct, multi-layered

LEFT Photograph
by Jason Tinacci

and suave representation of the grapes. His wife runs the chocolate store in the tasting room, made on the premises. Heaven can wait. “Seven” is their cat as in Star Trek’s “Seven of Nine.” PS: 2011 Pinot Rose is marvelous.

15.) Willakenzie Estate: 19143 NE Laughlin Rd Yamhill, OR 97148 | 888.953.9463; what a beautiful property! I have been purchasing the wines from this rolling vineyard for a few years having been introduced to them more than a decade ago. The 2009 Chardonnay is a balanced and pale golden winner, hints of citrus and lemon, full in the mouth and satisfying finish. The Dijon Clone 2009 Pinot Noir and the 2009 Block 114 Pinot Noir share the same elegance and spine, yet the former is first chair in the orchestra and though latter a virtuoso soloist. We have since acquired two other winners from Willamette: 2009 Aliette (first Oregon pinot to wine Decanter Magazine Award for best of varietal, and an even bolder bit of oeno-sorcery called “Emery” for its block on the Estate. Both these 2009 wines are keepers.

Finale: Jeux de Vin

Following three days in the country, I returned to the city and chose to stay at The Governor Hotel, an exemplar of Deco-chic. Where is Carole Lombard? I tried my limited visual skills on the streetcars, which are nearly free in downtown and the Pearl district. I wandered into Thirst a wonderful combination of bistro, banquet room, full bar and tasting room. From this last I purchased a Pinot Gris from Eola Hills Amity district, about 60 miles south of Portland and of completely different character in by dint of its distinctions of climate and topography. The wine intended for dinner at Paley’s Place, which aggregated Frank, one of my hosts, introduced to me by Jonathan and Charlotte, my other hosts. We consumed a 2009 Burgundy, a tip of the hat to those Gallic godfathers of the Oregon wine trade.

We stayed on until nearly midnight, singing into our Port bawdy lyrics from Oscar Brand recordings of our youth and thus, ending a wine journey with laughter that calls up the memories of pleasures long past as we savor the exciting present of the Oregon wine country.

The Six Sub-districts AVA’s within Willamette Valley

- 1. Chehalem Mountains AVA**—(instituted 2008)
- 2. Dundee Hills AVA**—the largest district in terms of acreage planted and cases produced.
- 3. Eola-Amity Hills AVA**—Yes, Eola is a tribute to the windy conditions in the area, and is derived from Aeolus, the Greek god of wind.
- 4. McMinnville AVA**—(est. 2005) a classic small town with fine eats and accommodations. Visit the Blue Moon Café on Sunday—doing the time warp again.
- 5. Ribbon Ridge AVA**—located between Newberg and Gaston.
- 6. The Yamhill-Carlton District AVA**—established in 2005, lies close to the coastal range; designation requires this appellation to be from grapes grown at altitudes of 200-1000 feet.

Places To Stay

The Orenco Hotel—boutique accommodations on the edge of the wine country. 1457 NE Orenco Station Parkway, Hillsboro Oregon USA.

The Hotel Oregon—an historical marker suggests this is what the real deal was like a century or more ago. Visit its rooftop bar and patio. 310 N.E. Evans Street McMinnville, OR 97128 | 503.472.8427.

The Black Walnut Inn—Top of the line Italian-style villa in Dundee Hills. Gorgeous hospitality amid the Pinot Noir vines. One of the two best places I stayed in the wine country. 9600 NE Worden Hill Road, Dundee, OR, 97115 | 503.538.8663

A Tuscan Estate—A bed and breakfast that is non-pariel. Jacques and Liz Rolland do it up right. A terrific place to into which one wanders after a good day in the vineyards; the other best place I stayed. 803 NE Evans Street. McMinnville, OR 97128 | 800.441.2214.

The Governor Hotel—a marriage of two buildings from 1909 and 1928. A landmark establishment in downtown Portland Good service; 614 SW 11th Avenue, Portland, OR 97205

The Heathman—an art deco treasure. If you’re unable to lodge here, at least enjoy the ambience in its splendid art deco lounge and bar. Take high tea here. 1001 SW Broadway at Salmon, Portland, OR 97205.

Let’s Eat

The greater Portland metro area exceeds 2.2 million people. All of them are hungry and few cities in the country express better the American culinary evolution of the past 40 years than Portland. It is contained within the Willamette Valley, so it is near fresh produce and viands. It is also replete with microbreweries. Here are some of my favorite places, to which I make an effort to return each voyage.

The Bistro—100A SW Seventh Street, Dundee, OR 97115

Clyde Common—1014 Southwest Stark Street Portland, OR 97205

Jake’s Grill—(located in the Governor Hotel) 611 Southwest 10th Avenue Portland, OR 97205

Jake’s Famous Crawfish—(SW 12th at SW Stark) Portland

Thirst Bistro—0315 SW Montgomery Street | Portland, Oregon 97201 | 503.295.2747

M Paley’s Place—1204 Northwest 21st Avenue Portland, OR 97209

Tina’s Restaurant—760 Oregon 99W Dundee, OR 97115 | 503.538.8880

Thistle—228 Northeast Evans Street McMinnville, OR 97128 | 503.472.9623