

AHLGREN VINEYARD

Founded 1976

WINE CLUB NEWS

Spring 2008

The latest Wine Club tasting selections are:

**2005 AHLGREN Semillon
Livermore Valley**

**2003 AHLGREN Merlot
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch**

**2005 AHLGREN Cabernet Sauvignon
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch**

**2005 AHLGREN Semillon
Livermore Valley**

Our early experimentation with Semillon yielded the surprise that we preferred American oak over French oak barrels for this variety, although we continue to prefer French oak barrels for Chardonnay.

Like all Ahlgren Semillon, the 2005 is dry, not sweet, and is a wonderful wine to accompany shellfish, fish, and poultry. We especially like it with cracked Dungeness crab, spicy oriental foods, sushi, sashimi, and curries as well. A big favorite is Semillon with sushi. The wine complements the cool rice, bringing out a creamy character, enhancing the flavors marvelously well. Incidentally, it was not until Val bought a little Japanese rice cooker and started making sushi rolls that this favorite wine/food combination was discovered at Ahlgren Vineyard. Since it is not realistic to expect fresh, raw fish here on the mountain, except under special circumstances, Val depends on cooked shrimp for the fish in her homemade sushi rolls, and the results are more than satisfactory, delicious, in fact, especially when accompanied by Ahlgren Semillon.

At a recent party at Vino Locale, a wine bar in Palo Alto, Randy, the host, asked those present which of the Ahlgren wines was their favorite. Although he said his favorite was Ahlgren Cabernet, and hands were raised all around for each of the Ahlgren wines served, Semillon proved to be the most favored wine. Amazing, considering that most people have never even heard of the grape.

Ahlgren Semillon ages very well. Vintages back to the original Ahlgren Livermore Valley Semillon of 1981 are still sound, improving, and sought after.

The 2005 Semillon has a bright flowery bouquet and classic Semillon flavors with hints of pear. It demonstrates clean, crisp flavors, yet shows a pleasing richness that is typical of Ahlgren Semillon. It has fine balance with a long finish. This wine was fermented in 50 gallon oak barrels and aged on the lees. It is unfiltered. We like to drink it lightly chilled. 252 cases produced.

\$17.00 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle-10% \$15.47

Club Member 12 bottle price-15% \$14.45

**2003 AHLGREN Merlot
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates Ranch**

2003 was an exceptional vintage, and this Merlot is big and substantial, deserving to be set aside for some months or years, depending on how patient you are. If you are not the patient type, this wine is extremely drinkable now. We recommend, (Surprise!) decanting for all of the oft-stated reasons. The blend is 90% Merlot with 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, all Bates' Ranch. The bouquet is flowery, dusty, aromatic, and fruity. The wine is elegant, complex, and well balanced, with lush Merlot fruit character, admirable tannins, and mouth filling flavors. Unfined and unfiltered. Only 69 cases produced, much of it reserved for this Wine Club shipment to you.

Our relationship with the Bates' Ranch began when we started making their Cabernet during our first vintage, 1976. The Merlot was planted sometime later, as was the Cabernet Franc, so our history with these two varieties at Bates' Ranch dates to 1991.

Merlot is a very low production grape at Bates', only about 1/2 ton to the acre, and we get what there is, if that, and none of that mediocre stuff the grape produces in some places. The movie Sideways never provided a hint or a clue to the true potential of the grape. Clearly, if you are talking Merlot, Sideways is right, Santa Barbara is not a great place to find that. Consider, however, that Petrus of Bordeaux, certainly among the most famous, respected and expensive of French wines in the world is 95% Merlot.

This Ahlgren Merlot shows that the magically combined effects of the Santa Cruz Mountains terroir (excuse the snooty wine word), plus the low production of 1/2 ton to the acre result in an outstanding Merlot.

\$26.00 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle - 10% \$23.40

Club Member 12 bottle price - 15% \$22.10

**2005 AHLGREN Cabernet Sauvignon
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch**

The Ahlgren Santa Cruz Mountains Bates' Ranch Cabs continue to impress. 2005 is reminiscent of the 2004, (winner of a Double Gold at the San Francisco Chronicle Wine judging of 2008), although somewhat softer on the palate. It has deep rich flavors, and is definitely delicious. The wine clearly displays classic Bates' Ranch characteristics: Aromatic, bold dusty, briery bouquet, a rich, complex, mouth filling, full-bodied Cabernet. Big fruit balances tannins and acids. Exceptional vintage. This wine has not yet been entered into any competitions, but we are confident it will do well when it is. Unfined and Unfiltered. 225 cases produced.

\$35.00 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle - 10%

\$31.90

Club Member 12 bottle price - 15%

\$29.79

THE RANT ON DECANT CONTINUES: (This is an only slightly revised repeat of a repeat for benefit of the new Wine Club Members.) We keep hearing from Wine Club Members who are subjected to our continuing admonitions promoting decanting, and they report delight and surprise with the results of their decanting experiences (Send us your enchanting decanting stories!) that duplicate ours: wines are elevated to a new level of quality, resulting in added pleasure to the palate. So, we say again, please do yourselves the favor of decanting. If you do not have a handy decanter, but you do have a steady hand or a funnel, simply decant into a clean wine bottle, a pitcher, or even a Mason jar. If you cannot decant, at least pull the corks and put the reds in a place where they can gently come up to room temperature.

We are reminded every time we open a bottle of red wine, taste, and then decant, and taste again, that all reds, and most especially Pinot Noirs, respond dramatically to decanting.

So, be advised: These red wines will reward you well, if you make certain the temperature is about 65° or, roughly room temperature. Heed not our advice on warming and airing, and you will still have a very satisfying experience, but something even finer awaits you in these well-structured red wines. Young or old, they have been closed away in the bottle for many months or many years. Give'em air!

SOMETHING NEW! Wine Club Members and winery visitors enjoy access to some older or very limited AHLGREN wines, such as those we feature at Library Wine Sales (never often enough) and occasionally, when dug out of the dark recesses of the winery at unpredictable times. So, we have initiated a listing of the **White Board Wines** in the winery. Two most recent gems were the 2000 AHLGREN Nebbiolo, Santa Cruz Mountains and 375s of the 2000 AHLGREN Cabernet Sauvignon, Bates' Ranch. Both of these wines developed a lovely sophistication, are tasting remarkably fine, but are now sold out, unless some more turn up in the ongoing dig into the labyrinths of the library wine stacks at the warehouse. More news to come on that ongoing adventure

THE NEW WHITE BOARD WINES ARE:

Ahlgren 2001, Pinot Noir, Monterey, Ventana, half bottles,
\$20 per bottle. 375 ml.

Ahlgren 2002 Pinot Noir, Monterey, Ventana in half bottles,
\$25 per bottle, 375 ml.

Watch this space. White Board Specials are subject to change. They come and they go. If you are interested in purchasing some of these wines, see our list of **Additional Wines Available** below.

ADDITIONAL WINES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE: We have begun holding back some wines to have them available for sale at the winery and for Wine Club members, rather than just selling them out through restaurants and stores, leaving ourselves the first to run out. So, you will find a nice selection of slightly older vintages, limited quantities, some unavailable elsewhere.

2001 AHLGREN Syrah Ventana

Special price on this lovely Syrah: \$15 per bottle, or \$180 per case.

(No additional discounts on this wine)

Other wines available include:(750 ml unless otherwise noted.)

2004 AHLGREN Pinot Noir, Santa Cruz Mountains \$35.00 per bottle

2001 AHLGREN Cab. Sauv. Bates' \$45.00

2001 AHLGREN Cab. Sauv. Bates', Reserve \$65.00

2001 AHLGREN Pinot Noir, Monterey Ventana, 350 ml. \$20.00

2002 AHLGREN Pinot Noir, Monterey Ventana, 350 ml \$25.00

Note: See enclosed Price List for complete listing of wines currently available at the winery in addition to the new Wine Club shipment.

COMING SOON: For big Zin lovers, a big new Livermore Zin. Scheduled for bottling at the end of August. A blend of 2005 and 2006 (it will not have a vintage label due to Fed regulations), it has 17.5% alcohol and 2% residual sugar. Call it Late Harvest. It will sell for \$26 per bottle. Rich, roaring ripe!

REPORT ON VINTAGE 2007: Winemakers anticipated an early harvest, but that did not develop. All the grapes were coming on in just fine, and then a cold spell and a bit of rain came along. At the end, we were anxiously waiting for the Bates' Cabernet to complete ripening, which it finally did to the relief of the Bates' family and ours. So, all the wines are now made and safely in the barrels, aging one day at a time.

PROGRESS REPORT ON 2007: As of June 18th, the 2007 Ahlgren Estate Pinot Noir has been bottled, all 26 cases of it. Dexter says, "Tastes great!" This wine is reserved for the Wine Club and Dexter and Val.

ADVENTURES AT AHLGREN VINEYARD: We are seeing evidence that a weasel is visiting us. Some years ago, Val discovered that the cats were playing with what was subsequently identified as an immature long tailed weasel, a cute little creature, long and lean, brown and white, with a handsome little black mask. In the far north, these animals turn white in winter and their name becomes "Ermine." A very small carnivore, they are predators of gophers, making them especially valuable in the garden and the vineyard. We were very surprised to learn that they are quite common in the Bay Area, since we had never seen one before or talked to anyone else who had. Lucky us, having one, at least one, at work for us. We suspect there are more.

Birds have been enthusiastically gorging on the Madrone berries. The Toyon berries are still ripening. Band-tailed pigeons were flocking in the trees yesterday. They winter in this area, and the berries attract them to Ahlgren Vineyard. For the first time, we are seeing Ringed Turtle-Doves in flocks. They are very pale in color, and at first, we thought they were bigger than the Band-Tailed, which turned out not to be true. This pigeon is said to have descended from escapees from domesticity, and none of the bird books we have seem to know where they originated. Robins and Cedar Waxwings will be arriving in a month or so, just in time for the Toyon berries to be at their peak.

There is a place on the pressure pump, part of the water system, where a small drop of water always sits. Lately, flocks of lesser gold finches along with house sparrows and at least one cold, fluffed up brown towhee have been gathering there for a sip. There is a lot of flitting and fluttering, some king-of-the mountain jousting and other antics, making for some delightful bird watching from the porch. As the various birds come to spend the winter or to pass through on their way further south, any day can offer sight of a new visitor.

This spring, during March and April, no rain. Things are very dry. No wonder that little drop of water entices so many avian visitors! Let us keep our collective fingers crossed, hoping for a bounteous rainy season to begin when the grapes of vintage 2008 have been harvest.

For now, we continue to reinforce and renew the bird netting on the estate vineyard in order to protect the grapes. They go either to the birds or to the winemakers and are equally beloved by all.

As of now, three major wild fires have burned in Santa Cruz County, and we are very watchful and cautious. To date, no wineries or vineyards here have been burned. Hold a good thought.

REGARDING OUT OF STATE SHIPPING: We have made great headway and now have permits to ship to a growing number of states. The shipping situation changes almost daily, so if you have friends or family who would enjoy the delights and benefits of becoming an Ahlgren Wine Club Member, have them give us a call to discuss the possibilities of shipping to them.

ORDERING AHLGREN WINES: As a Wine Club Member, your credit card information is on file here, so you can simply fax or email us your orders, or just give us a call. No need to worry about online security. We always enjoy talking with you. Just let us know what you want shipped. We can run the charge using your credit card number on file, and the wine will be on its way.

Or, to fax an order, you can use the enclosed order form, or download the order form from the web site, fill it in, and fax it on to us.

Tell a friend! They can download the order form and/or the Wine Club

Application directly from the web page, or they can give us a call.

To contact us directly:

Long distance: 1-800-338-6071; fax 1-831-338-9111.

Local phone: 831-338-6071; email ahlgren@ahlgrenvineyard.com.

Unless excessively hot or cold weather indicates otherwise, we generally ship at the beginning of each week so that wines reach you before the weekend.

AVOID MISSING YOUR WINE CLUB SHIPMENT. If you have missed a shipment, it is because your credit card did not clear, or because the wine was returned due to address problems.

We send the postcards to alert you to update all info before it is time to ship, but even so, sometimes credit card charges will not go through for all the various reasons such things happen. Please be certain to call us, email, or fax us, keeping us up to date on all of your info, so that you can receive your wines without delay.

PICK UP AT THE WINERY: *Some members, for whom it is convenient, choose to pick up their Wine Club wines at the winery on a Saturday afternoon during our tasting hours. This makes for an opportunity to avoid shipping charges, to taste, talk, and enjoy the always gorgeous views. Due to very limited storage space here at the winery, if wine is not picked up before the next shipment is ready, we will ship the previous box on to you. We will give you a call before doing so, however. But please pick up promptly to avoid the cost of shipping.*

GIFT SHOPPING: *It may seem difficult to think of gifts or ways to say, “Thank you” these days when so many of us have more than we need, but Ahlgren wines never fail to delight, and are appropriate for almost any occasion. Don’t forget how easy and convenient it is to send wine for holidays or special celebrations! We are finding a number of folks are selecting Ahlgren wines as birthday, business and wedding gifts.*

Also, we have gift certificates available in any amount. Give us a call for the most convenient of gift shopping: 800-338-6071 or 831-338-6071.

WINE CLUB MOVING FORWARD: *Now that Shealagh, our bookkeeper is at work on the database, we look forward to expanding our membership. Enclosed is a Wine Club Application, an invitation to join, for you to pass on to a wine-loving friend.*

TASTINGS AND SALES: SATURDAYS 12-4 AT THE WINERY: *As always, it is great time to visit, pick up your Wine Club packages, and taste some current releases. We look forward to seeing you.*

That's all for now.
SALUD! CHEERS! À VOTRE SANTÈ! PAX!

Dexter and Val

GOVERNMENT WARNING: (1) ACCORDING TO THE SURGEON GENERAL, WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DURING PREGNANCY BECAUSE OF THE RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS. (2) CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IMPAIRS YOUR ABILITY TO DRIVE A CAR OR OPERATE MACHINERY, AND MAY CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS."