

AHLGREN VINEYARD

Founded 1976

WINE CLUB NEWS

Fall 2003

The latest Wine Club tasting selections are:

**2001 AHLGREN Semillon
Livermore Valley**

**2001 AHLGREN Merlot
Santa Clara Valley**

**2001 AHLGREN Zinfandel
Livermore Valley**

A WORD ABOUT THESE FALL 2003 SELECTIONS

We have chosen these wines to go especially well with holiday meals: Semillon, Zinfandel, and Merlot. Whether you serve Dungeness crab, the traditional turkey, roast beef, tamales, or whatever, one or more of these wines will add to your pleasure. Enjoy!

**2001 AHLGREN Semillon,
Livermore Valley**

The story of the fine Livermore Valley Semillon starts with cuttings from the legendary Chateau d'Yquem vines of the Sauternes district of Bordeaux, France. These Livermore vines grow in the deep gravelly soils, and the grapes are made into wine using the Ahlgren traditional, hands-on approach to winemaking. When we first had an opportunity to buy

Semillon, we had no experience with the grape. The only white wine we had made to that point, 1979, was Chardonnay.

As you know, we ferment our Chardonnay in French oak barrels in the cellar, which is naturally cooled by virtue of its location in the hillside, under the north side of the house with the cool mass of the concrete retaining walls and foundation.

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 2001 is dry, not sweet, and is a wonderful wine to combine with shellfish, fish, and poultry. We especially like it with cracked Dungeness crab, spicy oriental foods, 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. 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, and the results are more than satisfactory, delicious, in fact, especially when accompanied by Ahlgren Semillon.

The 2001 Semillon has an aromatic bouquet, with bright Semillon character and hints of spice. It demonstrates classic clean, crisp flavors yet shows a richness that is typical of Ahlgren Semillon. The wine has fine balance with a long finish. We like to drink this wine briefly chilled.

	\$16.50 per bottle
Club Member price per bottle-10%	\$14.85
Club Member 12 bottle price - 15%	\$14.02

**2001 AHLGREN Merlot
Santa Clara Valley**

The red wines of the western edge of the Santa Clara Valley have long been respected by those in the know about the vineyards of this area. This

Merlot comes from there, and it is a new vineyard for Ahlgren. Although the vines are young, the wine shows a fruity bouquet with hints of cedar, herbs, and cherries. It is mouth filling, rich with flavor, soft and balanced with a suggestion of mint. Long finish, unfinned and unfiltered. This should be a great wine with turkey and most any other entrée that might make it to your holiday table. The wine was bottled on April 9, 2003. Only 147 cases produced.

	\$22.00 per bottle
Club Member price per bottle-10%	\$19.80
Club Member 12 bottle price - 15%	\$18.70

2001 AHLGREN Zinfandel Livermore Valley

Ahlgren Livermore Zinfandel is definitely on many Zin lovers list of favorites. Every vintage sells out before the next vintage is ready for release. So here it is, the next Liv. Zin. Wine Club members are the first to know! It is big and soft, a classic Zinfandel with a great fruit bouquet showing hints of chocolate. It is rich and intense, balanced, mouth filling and complex with a long finish. This wine will go with any holiday meat, be it beef or turkey, venison, pheasant, duck, you name it! It will also complement fruit, cheese and nuts. This wine is almost a meal in itself, a thing we love to say about these big, gracious Zinfandels.

	\$22.00 per bottle.
Club Member price per bottle - 10%	\$19.80 per bottle.
Club Member 12 bottle price - 15%	\$18.70 per bottle

OTHER WINES:

We have not been in saying much in public about the 2000 Ahlgren Santa Cruz Mountains Pinot noir, because there is so little of it. Only 27 cases were made and that has been saved for Wine Club Members and family. The wine continues to improve beautifully in the bottle, rich and fruity with very nice color and distinct Pinot noir character.

Be advised: *This wine is another that will reward you well, if you make certain the temperature is between 65° and 70°. We recently took a trip and had a bottle with us in the car and the hotel room. Although it never got hot, it was definitely up from cellar temperature. When we were on our way home, we opened it for a picnic dinner in our motel, and were delighted by how lovely it was. Although not decanted, the gentle warming over the course of four or five days had brought out beauties we had not before seen in this wine, to this degree. (We do also recommend decanting as well as warming if you are in a position to have a decanter at hand.)*

There is little left of the 27 cases of Ahlgren Santa Cruz Pinot noir made on 2000.

\$35.00 per bottle.

Club Member price per bottle - 10% \$31.50 per bottle.

NON-VINTAGE AHLGREN ZINFANDEL, Central Coast *This wine is made from Santa Clara County and Paso Robles Zinfandel grapes, a blend of vintages 1999 and 2000. It has relatively low alcohol for an Ahlgren Zin, 13% alcohol with good acids combining to make it a very pleasant food wine. It has a bright, lively, intense and aromatic bouquet; balanced flavors with a berry finish. Unfined and unfiltered. 516 cases produced.*

\$17.00 per bottle.

Club Member price per bottle - 10% \$15.30 per bottle.

Club Member 12 bottle price - 15% \$14.45 per bottle.

ADDITIONAL WINES AVAILABLE: Some in very limited quantities. Club Member discounts apply to the following retail prices, (See accompanying order sheet.)

Regular Wine Club discounts apply to the wine below:

1998 AHLGREN Tre Vini Rossi™, Santa Cruz Mts. \$15.00

(The Tre Vini continues to show remarkable development with time in the bottle. Very European in style, the Nebbiolo in the blend shows through nicely. It is a good food wine as well as a good buy.)

1999 AHLGREN Syrah, Paso Robles, \$20.00

1999 AHLGREN Cab. Sauv. Bates' Ranch \$29.00

1998 AHLGREN Cab. Sauv, Harvest Moon \$14.00

(No additional discounts on this H.M.Cab.)

REPORT ON THE CELLAR SALE, AUGUST 9 & 10, 2003:

The Cellar Sale was once again, a stellar cellar wine event. We all had a great time. We may do another in the spring, but will certainly do one in late summer again next year.

MORE RANT ON DECANT: *Recently, we were invited to a Harvest Dinner at Sand Rock Farm, a terrific B & B in Aptos. Chef Lynn Sheehan prepared an Italian dinner (delicious) matched with a number of Italian wines, all of which were most interesting, but young, firm, and relatively closed. We asked if there was a decanter available, and began decanting some of the wines at our table. In a flash, our fellow diners began comparing the decanted wines with the ones simply poured from the bottle into the glass. More glasses came forth. More comparisons ensued. Diners from the adjacent table joined us in the exploration and experimentation.*

Hands down: decanted wines became softer and more drinkable before our very palates. The lesson continues:

Last night we participated in the Winemakers Wednesday tasting at Shadowbrook. The wines arrived at the tasting table very cold. The Semillon was perfect, as though lightly refrigerated. The reds were equally cold, which was too cold. We asked for decanters for the reds. Just the act of pouring into the decanters began a gentle airing and warming process. The reds opened and showed beautifully.

We have stocked some fairly basic decanters that we are selling for \$15 each. Check them out when you are here. We are making converts, even among folks who may never before have even considered owning, let alone using a decanter.

ADVENTURES AT AHLGREN VINEYARD: *We continued to hear a good deal of coyote song this summer and into the fall, often early in the morning, coming from nearby. Dexter spotted a fairly small coyote hunting in the grass when he walked up with the paper the other morning, and has spotted one or two every morning since, always in the same area. We suspect their family may live near that spot.*

Dexter heard a Western Screech Owl the other evening. It is the first we have heard in about two years.

Many other birds, the regulars plus the migrants are around. The Stellar and Scrub Jays found the few first little bunches of our Pinot noir. Next year, we will definitely have enough grapes to justify the labor of netting.

A group of eighteen to twenty turkey vultures were circling above a few days ago. We think they check the site to see how we are doing.

While we were on vacation in Scandinavia, our house sitter played host to a raccoon who ventured in after a warm day when windows and doors were thrown open to the cooling breeze. Some adventure ensued as the raccoon climbed into the rafters. The sitter grabbed him/her by the scruff of the neck, how we do not know, and escorted the surprised creature out the

door. Since then, the little beast has quietly visited whenever doors or windows are left open in the evening capturing cooling evening airs. It goes straight for the dog food, if that can be reached. Otherwise, it just strolls back out the way it came in. A very beautiful creature unbothered by Art the dog or the various cats.

Yet another cool visitor quietly entered the kitchen window unseen a couple of evenings ago. It accidentally stepped into a small dish of soy sauce on the counter and so made a trail of soy prints as it explored along the counter top. A little research on animal tracks yielded a possible identification: a gray squirrel.

VINTAGE 2003:

10/30/03 -- At this very moment, Dexter is on his way from Bates' Ranch with the first load of Cabernet Sauvignon. We crushed the Merlot about a week and a half ago, crushed the Cabernet Franc yesterday, and will have one more load of Cab to bring in tomorrow. That will complete the crush. Pressing of these last wines comes after fermentation is complete.

It has been a nearly perfect Fall. Warm to hot days followed by cool evenings. No rain or cold spells are due until just after the last of our grapes are in.

All of our grapes arrived looking very good, nicely ripened, tiny berries, and the crops are relatively small. We anticipate that the wines will be full flavored, big, rich, and fruity.

WINE BUYING TIPS TO REMEMBER:

www.ahlgrenvineyard.com

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. Just let us know what you want shipped. We can run the charge from the credit card number on file here, 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 indicate otherwise, we ship at the beginning of each week, so wines arrive before the weekend.

PICK UP AND DELIVERY: Some members, for whom it is convenient, choose to pick up their Wine Club packages at the winery on a Saturday

afternoon during our tasting time. This makes for an opportunity to taste, talk, and enjoy the view.

Picking up saves delivery charges, but has become necessary to begin packaging the wines in shipping cartons to assist us in organizing them to hold for you. There is a modest charge for the boxes.

We find that we are still holding some wines for a few Wine Club Members for as long as two years, awaiting pickup. In future, we will necessarily be forced to ship after six months, due to limited storage space. So, time your pickups to save shipping charges.

TASTINGS AND SALES: SATURDAYS 12-4 AT THE WINERY

It is great time to visit, pick up your Wine Club packages, and to taste some current releases. Bring a friend. Send a friend.

CHANGING TIMES: *It really is getting time for us to retire, and so we will be putting Ahlgren Vineyard on the market next spring. If you know of anyone who is interested in owning a wonderful little winery here in the mountains, surrounded by natural beauty, please let them know. We are hoping to find someone, or some ones, who would be interested in continuing a tradition of fine wine making.*

We have County approved plans for an additional building: two stories, office space, tool and equipment storage, lab/kitchen, bathroom, a barrel room below, deck overlooking the forest. The county has approved the septic, road access, soils report, archeological clearance, etc., etc., etc. Preliminary architectural drawings are complete and accepted. Only the final building plans need to be submitted for approval.

With this new building, production could be doubled. The existing winery equipment is top notch and up to date except for the venerable press, which is excellent, but not new.

Those of you who have visited us here know the great views, the uniqueness of the setting surrounded by protected watershed and redwood forest. The weather is lovely. The house is so comfortable with passive solar and southern exposure that we think we will never live anywhere else as comfortably as here. We are in no hurry to leave, but the permit on the new building has three and a half years to run, and we think the value of that to a new owner is such that we need to move ahead. Such permits have become more rare, and more difficult to obtain.

The property encompasses 4.5 acres, has direct access to State Scenic Highway Nine, and is located just 20 minutes from Saratoga in Silicon Valley, 45 minutes from Palo Alto, 90 minutes from Monterey/Carmel, 75 minutes from downtown San Francisco.

One acre of Pinot noir, three French clones, will come into production next year. The property is managed organically, including vineyard, garden and fruit trees. The house is 2300 square feet, plus 750 sq. ft. of covered

porch with views. The structure is redwood and fir milled largely on site, and features lovely views into the redwoods. The passive solar heat is provided by a long, high clerestory, which also makes the house light and airy. It was designed by Sym van der Ryn, as was the new building. The current winery, 1360 sq. ft, is in the cellar below the house, tucked into the north side of the hill, and is naturally cooled. It currently holds 199 barrels. All site planning and development were personally designed and supervised by our resident Civil Engineer, Dexter. We milled the lumber and built the house ourselves, and we love this home.

There is also another 4.5 acre parcel that would make a fine site for an expanded tasting facility, parking, a wine cave, possible additional winery and vineyard expansion. The proper zoning permitting these uses is in place.

Help us find the right person, or the right people.

That's all for now.

SALUD! CHEERS! À VOTRE SANTÈ, PAX!

Dexter & Val Ahlgren

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."