

AHLGREN VINEYARD

Founded 1976

WINE CLUB NEWS

Spring 2005

The latest Wine Club tasting selections are:

**2002 AHLGREN Semillon
Livermore Valley**

**2001 AHLGREN Merlot
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch**

**2001 AHLGREN Cabernet Franc
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch**

**2002 AHLGREN Semillon
Livermore Valley**

This 2002 Semillon is among our favorite Semillon vintages. It has great measure of all the qualities that we like in this variety: a bright and interesting bouquet with rich Semillon character; classic Semillon fruit flavors with hints of pear and fig. As always, the wine is barrel fermented. It is also mouth filling, complex and balanced.

This is a wine that is terrific with spicy Asian foods, curry, sushi and seafood even where few wines dare to go. With sushi, it combines with the rice flavors, giving a creamy character that is delightful. We like to drink it lightly chilled.

230 Cases produced.

\$16.50 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle - 10%

\$14.85 per bottle.

Club Member 12 bottle price - 15%

\$14.02 per bottle

**2001 AHLGREN Merlot
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch**

The only problem we have with Bates' Merlot is the limited quantity of grapes available, only 45 cases produced of the 2001. It is 76% Merlot with 24% Cabernet Sauvignon, all Bates' Ranch. Without the Cab blended in, there would be even less. This wine has a flowery, dusty fruity bouquet. In the mouth, the wine is elegant, complex, flavorful and mouth filling. The fruit and tannins are in balance and give very nice structure. Good finish. No wimpy Merlot here. Unfined and unfiltered.

\$26.00 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle-10% \$23.40
Club Member 12 bottle price-15% \$22.10

**2001 AHLGREN Cabernet Franc
Bates' Ranch**

If you have been reading this newsletter and drinking Ahlgren Cabernet, you know the story of Bates' Ranch. So, let us cut to the chase and go directly to this really exceptional 2001 Cab Franc. The wine has a soft, rich, spicy, blackberry bouquet. It has bright, big, complex fruit flavors, silky and elegant. The wine is balanced with firm structure. It is luscious. The blend is 90% Cabernet Franc, 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, all Bates' Ranch. Definitely, an exceptional wine. Unfined and unfiltered. Only 129 cases produced.

\$26.00 per bottle.

Club Member price per bottle - 10% \$23.40 per bottle.
Club Member 12 bottle price - 15% \$22.10 per bottle

THE RANT ON DECANT CONTINUES: Early in May, we made a business and sales trip to Connecticut. When we arrived, the young leaves on the deciduous hardwoods had just barely started to show green. The dogwood and apples were in bloom, tulips and all sorts of bedding plants were flowering.

We had never before seen a New England spring. Stunning! Just a week earlier, folks there had been experiencing 20° night temperatures. So, what does that have to do with decanting wine?

Nothing, this is just to set the scene. As we toured about half their state with our CT reps, spreading the good news about Ahlgren wines, we traveled from wonderful wine and spirits shops to charming restaurants. We pulled the corks in the morning, at the first account we visited. As the day wore on, the flavors of the wines we were offering for tasting expanded, growing better and better.

In the mornings, the wines came out of the cold distributor's warehouse and were dropped into insulated bags, to keep them cool while driving from place to place. We made certain that the bags were kept open so the reds could warm. Although we could not use decanters while traveling around, we were airing and warming the wines as we opened and poured tastes at our various stops. The change in the wines from the first pours early in the day, and the later pours in the afternoon were very pronounced, and a good demonstration for the reps working with us. The results were very impressive. Though the wines were very well received at the beginning of the day, we knocked the wine buyers out by the end of the afternoon.

Please do yourselves the same favor. 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 our red wines, taste, and then decant and taste again, that all Ahlgren 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 between 65° and 70°, 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 from air for many months or many years. Give'em air!

P.S. Just received a call from a Wine Club Member in Wisconsin reporting that they now decant every red wine, and that even the mediocre (clearly not Ahlgren) wines are improved. Go for IT! Additional note: She also said that she appreciated the so-called warning post card requesting updates on credit cards, phone numbers, addresses, wine quantities, etc. She would not have thought of updated the credit card otherwise. Your responses to those cards are very great and much appreciated timesavers for us.

AHLGREN VINEYARD WINE LIBRARY AND CELLAR SALE: *It was terrific. For two memorable weekends, we tasted over thirty wines from the 110 wines offered to Wine Club Members and other friends and customers of Ahlgren. Many fond vintage memories and stories emerged: birth dates, anniversaries, graduation dates. Friendships were formed, connections made. Amazing!*

We will certainly do this again, and in the meantime, we are keeping some older wines available at the winery. Many great wines remain, including the fabulous 87 Bates' and others.

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

If you have been tasting your Wine Club wines, you know there are terrific wines in this list.

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

The **Tre Vini** continues to show remarkable development with time in the bottle. It is very European in style. The Nebbiolo in the blend shows through nicely. It is a good food wine as well as a good buy, and still improving. Available only at the winery.

2003 AHLGREN Chardonnay (unfiltered) \$20.00

2000 AHLGREN Syrah, Paso Robles, \$20.00

2000 AHLGREN Syrah Ventana \$24.00

2001 AHLGREN Semillon \$16.50

2001 AHLGREN Cab. Franc, Bates' \$26.00

2000 AHLGREN Merlot (very little left) \$26.00

2001 AHLGREN Pinot Noir, Ventana \$25.00

2002 AHLGREN Zin, Livermore \$24.00

Non Vintage AHLGREN Zin \$20.00

2000 AHLGREN Cab. Sauv. \$30.00

Apple Dessert Wine, .375ml \$25.00

ADVENTURES AT AHLGREN VINEYARD:

The hummingbird drama began anew with spring. The migrants joined the locals to feast at Dexter's gourmet nectar bar. Consumption jumped to one liter a day, heading we thought, for the two liter days of 2004. But, those record numbers did not develop this year. The Black Phoebes are back, raising their babies in the cornice under the eaves upstairs. Quail are congregating and have nests hidden in the brush and weeds by now. We have not yet seen any baby quail, however. Coyotes are quiet this time of year. We understand that it is the young ones that make all the noise we heard last fall, so we assume they are too young to be serenading the neighborhood this early in the year.

Our Assistant Winemaker, Kenny Gallegos, spotted a bobcat the other morning on his way up the driveway. Now, there is a professional gopher hunter! And, Val needs his help. A most malicious gopher foiled her curses and took three flourishing Cherokee purple heritage tomato plants.

Yesterday, we were invited to canoe cruise on Loch Lomond, the reservoir here in the mountains, just about 40 minutes from us that serves the City of Santa Cruz. The day was pristine, the setting reminiscent of an alpine lake. Spring growth at the tips of the live oaks and redwoods was bright and tender green.

Blossoms covered the madrones, promising another good year for fall berries. We saw an osprey that is nesting there, an American merganser with her flock of about ten very young babies paddling behind her, darting about on the surface of the lake, skittering along too quickly for accurately counting. We also saw a cormorant and pairs of mallards.

The forest is just aglow with a fullness of green following the great rains of this winter and spring. We had about 65-70 inches of rain this season, and everything is lush. Weeds are trying to outpace the redwoods, but we are after them with tractor mower, weed whacker, and hoe. Right now, it feels like weeds are ahead.

The little estate Pinot vineyard looks wonderful. It is amazing for us to see it becoming established, looking like a real vineyard. We spent some years mooning over those little things tied to bamboo stakes when they looked like anything but world class vines getting ready to march into wine history as producers of extraordinary Santa Cruz Mountains Estate Pinot Noir by Ahlgren. If all goes well, we will get about three barrels this year. We watched baby clusters with tiny buds open and flower. We prayed that they would not get rained on at the crucial time of pollination. As of press time, all is well in the vineyard: flowering is complete, little green grapes are growing on little clusters, heading for their destiny in the press, the barrel, the bottle, and your glass. Hold a good thought for the Ahlgren Estate Pinot Noir.

THE TALE OF TWO LABELS, PART TWO: When last we wrote, we were just to the point of telling how we went from the original label, inspired by an 1860's railway ticket to the later "designer label."

In about 1985, we had grown to the point, though still very small, where we could not continue to do all of the marketing on our own and began working with Alexia Moore Wine Marketing. Alexia found that the wine buyers in San Francisco restaurants thought that the original label with its hand lettering to be "too seventies," unsophisticated, etc. Although in our hearts we knew better, we agreed to consider a change, and engaged Andra Rudolph, graphic designer, in Santa Cruz to do the job. She and her staff produced three potential designs for our consideration. After consulting with accounts, both restaurants and stores, the current "designer" label was selected. Just days before the "new" label was due to come hot off the press, one of Alexia's representatives came to us and said, "We are having second thoughts about this label change. Wine buyers may think the original label is unsophisticated, but consumers love it." "Well," said we, "after some thousands of dollars, we have bought this label for you at your request, and now it is yours. Please, go sell the wine."

At first, we labeled virtually all of the wines with the "new" label, but gradually, we reintroduced the original label to all except the Bordeaux wines: Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, and Merlot.

Although the original label was considered ugly and crude, and mistaken for a sample label by some folks in the '80's, it is now almost universally appreciated, apparently not even controversial any longer. "We love your label," is a refrain we hear over and over about the original hand lettered label,

“and we like the new label too,” the admirers add. So there you are, we have two labels, and you know the tale.

HOT TIP ON GLASSWARE: *A Wine Club member recently tipped us off to great glasses available at our local Costco, and maybe at yours too. We have mixed feelings about Costco, to say the least, because of the terrible effects it has had on local wine shops. However, we want to report to you that they have some terrific crystal glasses that remind us of the great Reidle glasses of very large size, being about 23 Oz, and. Eight glasses for \$26 here in Santa Cruz. We feel like abysmal showoffs with these huge wine buckets in hand, but we really are enjoying them, and do not hesitate to recommend them to you. Wine really does taste better in a big glass. And here, bigger is even better.*

THANK YOU, SUPREMES, AT LEAST 5 OF YOU: *What we long imagined could happen, did happen. The decision came down to permit wineries to ship to all states. We now wait for the states affected by this ruling to decide how to license us. In a way, the nightmare grows as each state continues to act like a separate country with different licensing rules, fees, taxes, filing dates, etc., etc. It is a challenge to keep up with it all, but we are grateful for the opportunities presented. Friends in formerly forbidden places will soon be able to enjoy the pleasures of Ahlgren wines. Let them know!*

HAVE WE HEARD OF EVERYTHING, YET????: *We recently received a letter from Juventa, LLC, proclaiming Virilols™ are “substances in red wines that increase testosterone.” We are invited to send our wines for virilols testing at the mere cost of \$455 per test. We are going to pass, and trust that all of you interested in conducting your own personal tests will proceed at will. Taste, and watch for results, we guess. For our women fans, we hardly know what to say, but we do not think you are in any danger, hormonally speaking, but that is just a winemaker’s opinion, not that of an M.D.*

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. Just let us know what you want shipped. We can run the charge using your 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 indicates otherwise, we ship at the beginning of each week so that wines reach you before the weekend.

NEWS FROM FED EX: *As members of the Wine Institute, we are eligible for reduced FedEx rates. Even so, sad to say, due to increased fuel costs, and an added \$2.75 charge for residential deliveries, Fed Ex rates have recently risen. We regret having to pass these costs on to you.*

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 hours. This makes for an opportunity to avoid shipping charges, taste, talk, and to 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 be hard to think of gifts these days when so many of us have more than we need of everything. But, Ahlgren wines never fail to delight. Also, Ahlgren has gift certificates available in any amount. Give us a call for the most convenient of gift shopping: 800-338-6071*

TASTINGS AND SALES: SATURDAYS 12-4 AT THE WINERY

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

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."