

AHLGREN VINEYARD

Founded 1976

WINE CLUB NEWS

Spring 2007

The latest Wine Club tasting selections are:

**2004 AHLGREN Semillon
Livermore Valley**

**2003 AHLGREN Pinot Noir
Santa Cruz Mountains**

**2003 AHLGREN Cabernet Sauvignon
Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch**

**2004 AHLGREN Semillon
Livermore Valley**

Ahlgren Semillon continues to find favor as the versatile white wine enjoyable as an appetizer before meals, and also with shellfish, curries, spicy Asian food, and so on. It is hard to imagine a better wine/food match than Ahlgren Semillon with oysters or Dungeness crab, two of our special favorites.

Many have never even heard of Semillon, even though it is ranked as one of the five noble grapes of France, and is reputed to be the most planted variety there. It forms the base wine for the great wines of Sauternes and is the premier white wine of Bordeaux.

Although Semillon is sometimes thought of, and made, as a sweet wine, at Ahlgren it is fermented to dryness in barrels, and then aged on the lees, developing its complex, distinguishing character. The lees are what falls to the bottom of the barrel when the yeast has completed its work. The French call aging on the lees, aging sur lees, and we use this method for both of our whites, Semillon and Chardonnay. When the aging is complete, the wine is gently pumped from the barrel and prepared for bottling, leaving the lees behind.

There are those who tell us they neither like nor drink white wines, except that they do like Ahlgren Semillon. We think it is the complexity and character of our Semillon that appeals to palates that might otherwise favor the reds.

This particular vintage has given us a wine with a bright, flowery bouquet and classic Semillon flavors with a hint of pear. It is crisp, dry, complex,

balanced and mouth filling. It can stand alone as a wine to sip, and yet joins with food in a way that truly enhances the meal. And remember, Semillon ages beautifully for many years. Serve lightly chilled. This 2004 is currently released only to the Wine Club. Barrel fermented. Aged on the lees. Unfiltered. 181 cases produced.

\$16.50 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle-10% \$14.85

Club Member 12 bottle price-15% \$13.70

2003 AHLGREN Pinot Noir Santa Cruz Mountains

The last Wine Club shipment brought you the 2004 Ahlgren Pinot Noir, Santa Cruz Mountains. Now, here comes the 2003! What gives? Well, we just thought it would be interesting to show you this wine with an extra year of bottle age. Again, this is a very limited production, essentially reserved for Wine Club Members.

Typical of Ahlgren Pinots, you will find that they respond enthusiastically, if a wine can possibly show enthusiasm, when decanted and given air.

Fragrant, rich floral bouquet. Violets? Dark in color with deep Pinot flavors. Mouth filling. Elegant and balanced. Aged in French oak barrels. Unfined and unfiltered. A mere 46 cases produced.

\$35.00 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle - 10% \$31.50

Club Member 12 bottle price - 15% \$29.75

2003 AHLGREN Cabernet Sauvignon Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch

The Ahlgren Santa Cruz Mountains, Bates' Ranch Cabernet continues to impress. The 2003 is reminiscent of the 2001 and 2002, but somewhat richer,

deeper, a bit more intense and definitely delicious. The only problem the Ahlgrens have with this wine is keeping it in stock.

274cases produced. \$30.00 per bottle

Club Member price per bottle - 10% \$27.00

Club Member 12 bottle price - 15% \$25.50

THE RANT ON DECANT CONTINUES: (This is a repeat, for the 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 experience. That duplicates ours: wines are elevated to a new level of quality, resulting in new and 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 our red wines, taste, and then decant, and then 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 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!

OLD NEWS! We have recently celebrated a significant family birthday, and as part of the festivities, not all in one sitting, we opened some older wines. Here is our report:

1976 Ahlgren, Chardonnay, Ventana Vineyards: The fill was very low, down about two inches and the cork was wet and just slid out. The wine still had good color, but the flavor was not terrific.

1977 Ahlgren, Chardonnay, Ventana Vineyards: Fill about as low as that of the '76, color just fine, flavors delicious!!. This may have been the last bottle. We will be searching for another. With the fills this low, there is no sense in keeping them any longer. Thirty years for a Chardonnay? Amazing!

1979 Ahlgren Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley, Rutherford, Adamson/Tupper Vineyard: This vineyard was once a favorite of ours. At one point, we were advised that Joe Heitz told the owner he would no longer buy any of the grapes unless he got them all, so Ahlgren was cut out. Sometime later, the vineyard was sold to El Molino, and we are told the vines were pulled and replaced with Pinot Noir. A sad act, we would say.

Anyway, '79 was not a vintage we liked much at the time. The grapes did not reach the full maturity we really wanted, and the alcohol was only 12.3%, a little light for a Napa Cab. The label description says, "...elegant ... claret style, reflecting the character of the vintage..." Well, the wine has outgrown its somewhat wimpy beginnings and is full and deeply flavored. A very pleasant

surprise. The cork did not cooperate and pretty much crumbled, the wine was just lovely.

1978 Ahlgren, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rutherford, Adamson/Tupper Vineyard.

This wine was terrific as well. It has a luminous history, winning a series of tastings of sixty four California Cabernets conducted back East over a number of weeks in flights of eight wines. It then went on to a wine tasting of the top eight of the original sixty four Cal wines with eight French Bordeaux of similar prices. The dollar was very high then, and the French selections included such names as Beychevelle, and Leoville-Las-Cases. Ahlgren won over all the French and over the other seven California Cabs as well, which included: William Hill, Cakebread, Shafer. The magic of this tasting was that Terry Robards had been invited. He was then the wine writer for the New York Times, and he wrote up the tasting. (We are enclosing a copy of the article.)

1978, Ahlgren Zinfandel, Livermore: We were impressed that a Zin would hold up so well. It was delicious, good color, much enjoyed.

We have more of the '76 Chardonnay, each bottle of which has a low fill, as did the one we tasted and commented on above. So, we will just have to open them and check them out. There are also older Bates' to be tasted. Work, work, work!!

ADDITIONAL WINES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE : We have begun holding back some wines to have them 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.

2000 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:

2001 AHLGREN Semillon, Livermore	\$16.50
A lovely, refreshing wine for summer.	
2002 AHLGREN Semillon, Livermore	\$16.50
Ditto	
2001 AHLGREN Pinot Noir, Ventana	\$25.00
Elegant wine with good bottle age.	
2004 AHLGREN Pinot Noir, Santa Cruz Mountains	\$35.00
2001 AHLGREN Cab.Sauv. Bates' (6 bottle limit)	\$45.00
2001 AHLGREN Cab. Sauv. Bates', Reserve	\$65.00
Non-Vintage AHLGREN Zin, Central Coast	\$17.00
An exceptional buy, good Zin character, fine food Zin.	

2003 AHLGREN Zin, Livermore \$26.00

That crazy, delicious 17.3%, fruity, huge and hugely popular Zin beloved by those with palates to match its might.

Note: See enclosed Price List for complete listing of wines currently available at the winery.

ADVENTURES AT AHLGREN VINEYARD:

The Black Phoebes are back for their annual stay at Ahlgren Vineyard, catching flies, roosting on the antennae of the car, and raising babies. Yesterday, Val heard the call of the Red Shouldered Hawk and looked up to see him soaring over the vineyard, searching, it is to be hoped, for gophers. The madrones are just finishing blooming, and much appreciated by the hummingbirds, who, even with all the blossoms, are consuming two liters of sugar water every day from the feeders. The little fruit trees are bearing good crops so far this year. Last year's spring rains came just at bloom time, and so there was little fruit. The grapes bloom later, tiny clusters of blossoms are just now beginning to open. The pears, peaches, plums and apples are sporting fruit the size of walnuts already, and for the first time, we actually got some cherries, there having been enough for us and the birds too. All of this productivity bodes well for the grape vintage.

Although still behind in garden work due to the month's vacation, Val has set out her tomato plants, anticipating those incredible flavors that come out of that garden.

The rains of this winter were a relatively meager 46 inches. Meager indeed, when compared to the 112 inches of last year, but in these Santa Cruz Mountains, even a low rainfall year can add up to a reasonable amount. It seems to us that winter rains tend to run in three year cycles: one year very wet, and two years not so wet, or maybe two years wet and one drier. We are always looking forward to see what comes next.

NOTES FROM THE TRAVELERS: *What a vacation it was! Four and a half weeks in France! Perfect until the last day when, somewhere between rigorous security searches and walking up to the Air France departure counter, Dexter lost his passport, wallet, and boarding pass. The next 24 hours were filled with taxi rides to and from Paris to the U.S. Consulate, providing a glimpse of the Eiffel Tower, and a ride through the Place de la Concorde, and giving rise to many memories of our first European trip in 1961.*

Paris taxi drivers are in a class by themselves, and very proud of their skills and bravado. Entertainment tax should be charged. Passing on the right on freeway ramps is but one example of an exciting Paris taxi experience. So, we did get the new documents and tickets, got on the plane, and ultimately arrived home.

Upon arriving in France, we picked up a spiffy little Peugeot and set out from the infamous Charles de Gaulle airport. If Charles the man was difficult, the airport is a fitting namesake. Fresh off the plane, and not feeling fresh at all, considering lack of sleep, but feeling fine enough, running on adrenaline, we confidently entered the stream of freeway traffic headed for Chartes, not far away, where we would get a hotel, see the cathedral, get some sleep, and then head out the next morning for the Normandy coast.

Great plan, but we could not have known that: 1) It would take us much longer to acclimate ourselves to the mysteries of the labyrinth of the freeway

system, and 2) that by the time we finally arrived in Chartes, we would discover that a big seminar on the cathedral was under way, and there were no hotel rooms in town. (Traveling off-season, we never make reservations, and very rarely have had a problem, so we did not take it all too seriously.) We realized that we had to get out of the fully booked city to find a place to stay, so we headed over the bridge to a neighboring town, but could not even find a hotel, let alone a room. We found ourselves wandering around aimlessly, in the dark, without a clue.

Finally, we spotted a pharmacy with its big green neon cross, and deciding that someone there probably spoke English, Val went in and quietly said, "We are lost." The clerk, non-English speaking, motioned for someone from the office behind the counter to please come out. That is when we met Alex, tall, handsome, cheerful, an experienced speaker of English and traveler of California, probably an angel down here to do good works. I explained that we could not find a hotel room, it was getting late, and that we had not slept for over 24 hours. He asked a couple of questions about what we were looking for. It boiled down to, "a bed!" Following his directions to follow him, he drove his BMW station wagon for about 20 minutes, winding through the town with us behind to an area where a new hotel had just opened two weeks before. He went in to check for us to see if a room was available, and one was. We happily thanked him, and gave him his pick of one of the Ahlgren wines we had brought along as gifts. Wisely, he chose a Bates' Cab. He left with the promise that he would come to visit us at the winery when he was next in California.

The hotel looked pretty basic from the outside, something like a Motel 6 with a McDonald's next door and a freeway interchange very nearby. We checked in, made our way upstairs with the suitcases to an immaculate room and then went back down to the dining room for dinner, wondering if we were at a French Denny's. Val ordered the special, which was venison with raspberry sauce; Dexter, salmon with a cream sauce. Long story short... one of the best meals we had in France! And the young couples and chef running the place were friendly and delightful.

The next day we were back in Chartes to see the cathedral. Lucky for us they were having a service, and we had the enormous pleasure of hearing the chants and the music, watching the ageless rituals in this venerable place. A wonderful experience. Acoustics in a big, old stone cathedral are to be absorbed, impossible to imagine or describe. It was a dark and dreary day, so the light from the incredible stained glass windows was subdued, but still most remarkable.

Then, off to Normandy. It was an adventurous beginning to a wonderful trip that wove through France for nearly 5,000 kilometers and included a week's stay in an old stone cottage in the village of St. Romain, Burgundy with Kay and Bob Roudon, retired now from Roudon/Smith winery and living in Nice.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SOCCA RECIPE: In the last edition of the Wine Club News, we included a recipe for Socca, "A Street Treat from Nice." Soon afterwards, we had company and Val proceeded with the Socca. She baked it in the oven while chatting with guests, not paying enough attention to the baking,

and it was pretty much an overdone disaster. While composing mental apologies to you all during the next few days, preparing for this edition, she received an email from a Club Member in Michigan relating a drive home from work on a snowy, icy night in a steamy car, deciding that they needed a very special dinner to restore their spirits. They made the Socca, and it turned out to be delicious! They were reporting in with delight at the success of the recipe. So, Val has to try again. Hopefully, none of you had the bad luck she did.

She is working on a gallette recipe, something we had in Vannes, in Brittany, which turned out to be a very favorite dish. You will need buckwheat flour, so if you are interested in trying gallette, pick up some of the flour. There are recipes on the internet. Let her know if you come up with something you really like, and would enjoy sharing.

JUST FOR FUN: *A couple of websites commenting on Ahlgren:*

www.weekendsherpa.com. Search Ahlgren, and you will get Wizard of Ahhs! 2) At www.yelp.com, search Ahlgren Vineyard near Boulder Creek. The map is useless, but the comments by Rod are very nice and he gives us a 5 star rating!

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 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.

PICK UP AND DELIVERY: *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: *Don't forget how easy and convenient it is to send wine for the holidays or special occasions! We are finding a number of folks are selecting Ahlgren wines as business and wedding gifts.*

It may seem hard to think of gifts or ways to say thank you these days when so many of us have more than we need of everything, but Ahlgren wines never fail to delight, and are appropriate for almost any occasion. 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.

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. We look forward to seeing you.

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."