



Beautiful Blonde Blends

A Presentation of Wines for a New Cuisine and a New Millennium

By Becky Wilson & Nan Slick

May 2004



Wine Evaluation Chart

Name:

Date: *May 16, 2004*

Place:

The Barbour's

Theme:

Beautiful Blonde Blends

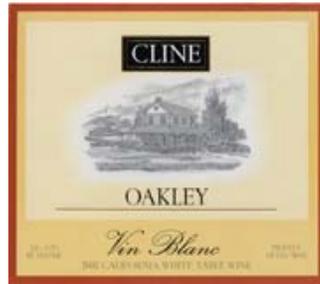
See Reverse Side for Scoring Guidelines

No.	Wine	Price	Appearance 3 Max	Aroma / Bouquet 6 Max	Taste / Texture 6 Max	Aftertaste 3 Max	Overall Impression 2 Max	Total Score 20 Max
<small>Warm up</small>	Cline <i>Oakley Vin Blanc 2001</i>	\$7.99						
1	Archery Summit <i>Vireton 2000</i>	\$27.99						
2	d'Arenberg <i>The Stump Jump 2002</i>	\$9.99						
3	Curtis <i>Heritage Blanc 2001</i>	\$10.99						
4	Rosenblum <i>Vintners Cuvée Blanc IV</i>	\$11.99						
5	Folie à Deux <i>Ménage à Trois 2002</i>	\$10.99						
6	Conundrum <i>2001</i>	\$25.99						

CLINE

Oakley Vin Blanc

California
2002



Harvest Date: August 15 - September 21
Brix at Harvest: 23.6°
Total Acidity: 0.56g/100ml
Final pH: 3.36
Residual Sugar: 0.79%
Alcohol: 13.5%
Suggested Retail: \$8.00

From www.clinecellars.com

Vineyards

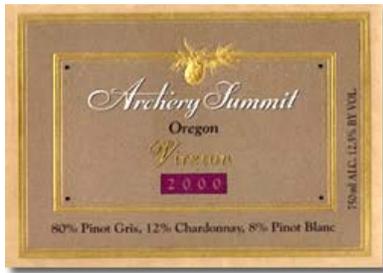
The mainstay varietals for the 2002 Vin Blanc are Pinot Gris, Viognier and Marsanne from our Los Carneros ranch. The Los Carneros district, famous for its morning fog and afternoon howling winds help cool the vineyards from the hot summer heat, resulting in a wine with luscious ripe fruit, acidity, balance and beautiful mineral nuances. Other grapes that fill out this wine's personality come from our Los Carneros vineyards including Chardonnay, Roussanne, Riesling and Gewürztraminer. From the unique sandy soils of Contra Costa County, a touch of Semillon is added plus Palomino from a small old vine head-trained vineyard giving the Vin Blanc its lemony appeal. The Malvasia Bianca also from Contra Costa County, adds a dense and exotic bouquet of spice and floral notes and fills out this wine's multi-faceted personality. Additionally, Sauvignon Blanc adds crispness and lush fig notes.

Fermentation and Aging

The production techniques used to create this unique blend were diverse, as each grape varietal was made separately, undergoing fermentation and aging best suited to its character. Chardonnay underwent full barrel and malolactic fermentation in new, medium toast American oak barriques, while Palomino fermented in stainless steel. For a large portion of the blend, cold-fermentation in stainless steel and blocking of malolactic fermentation provided wonderful freshness and forward fruit. Marsanne, Roussanne and Viognier were barrel-aged on their fine yeast lees and stirred bi-weekly to add complexity and richness, while Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris and Malvasia Bianca were cold-fermented, adding tingling acidity and a faint hint of sweetness. Most importantly, extensive measures were taken to prevent oxidization of the juice and wine, ensuring that the 2001 Vin Blanc tastes fresh and lively. The finished wine went through a light filtration to preserve as much freshness, fruit and varietal characters as possible.

Winemaker's Comments

First and foremost, when selecting grapes and wines for the Vin Blanc program, we are particularly conscious of good acid balance, intensity of fruit and what a single varietal will offer to the blend as a whole. The 2002 blend offers an added degree of complexity with rich tropical notes. We intend this wine to be a uniquely Cline interpretation of an everyday table white - adventurous, affordable, delicious and always a "Best Buy." Enjoy the 2002 Oakley Vin Blanc well chilled as an aperitif and with appetizers such as ripe tomatoes and fresh mozzarella drizzled with your best extra-virgin olive oil.



Archery Summit Vireton 2000

Parker says: "Three thousand cases were produced of the 2000 Vireton. Made from a blend of 80% Pinot Gris, 12% Chardonnay, and 8% Pinot Blanc, it boasts white and yellow fruit aromas with an appealing floral element. Medium-bodied and packed with flavors reminiscent of tangy red currants, orange zests, and juicy pears, this is a well-focused, expansive wine. Its silky-textured character leads to a white peach and apricot-flavored finish. It is a delicious wine, loaded with well-ripened fruit. Drink this highly expressive

offering over the next two years."

Colored bright gold with emerald highlights, the 2000 Vireton abounds with exotic aromas of litchi nuts, brilliant kiwis, tangerines, lime blossoms, wildflower honey and pineapple. The most Alsatian in style we have yet produced, the Vireton possesses a powerful attack supported by a wide mid-palate which is defined by ripe acidity that leads to a long, soft finish

Vireton: the feather on an arrow that causes it to spin in flight

ORIGIN: This original, ultra premium white wine from the Red Hills of Dundee is our proprietary blend of Pinot Gris (80%), Chardonnay (12%), Pinot Blanc (8%) and is the only white wine we make. All grapes are grown on our four estate vineyards in the Willamette Valley. The grapes from vintage 2000 express an extraordinary intense and deep flavor profile which is more expressive than any previous vintage.

VINEYARD: We have planted three clones of Pinot Gris: 146, 152 and UCD3; two clones of pinot blanc: 159 and 8C25; one albino pinot noir clone HGV; and Dijon chardonnay clones: 76, 95 and 96. All grapes for the 2000 Vireton were harvested with great ripeness in late September to early October 2000 from our narrow spaced vineyards of our Red Hills Estate, Renegade Ridge Estate, Arcus Estate and Archery Summit Estate.

WINEMAKING: The grapes are hand sorted before they are whole cluster pressed. The pinot gris and pinot blanc are fermented in traditional Alsatian oak ovals and also stainless steel for depth, complexity, and balance; the chardonnay is fermented in 100% French oak barrels for richness and breadth. These individual lots are fermented for four months and then blended prior to bottling in mid-March 2001.

TASTING NOTES: Colored bright gold with emerald highlights, the 2000 Vireton abounds with exotic aromas of litchi nuts, brilliant kiwis, tangerines, lime blossoms, wildflower honey and pineapple. The most Alsatian in style we have yet produced, the Vireton possesses a powerful attack supported by a wide mid-palate which is defined by ripe acidity that leads to a long, soft finish.

Baby Squash with Pancetta, Fennel Seed, and Roasted Tomato Stuffing

Recipes created by Chef Nathan Read of Oregon to pair with Vireton.

- Roast patty pan squash until soft at 350 degrees with a light coating of olive oil, salt and pepper.
- When done, let cool and then hollow out the inside of the squash, saving the insides.
- For the stuffing, render pancetta in olive oil, and drain off the excess fat.
- Roast tomatoes in oven at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes.
- When tomatoes are done let cool, and remove some of the liquid.
- Combine the roasted tomatoes, squash, toasted and ground fennel seed, pancetta, bread crumbs, pecorino toscano cheese, salt and pepper together in mixing bowl.
- Season the stuffing with fresh parsley, chives, rosemary and thyme.
- Place stuffing into the hollowed out squash and reheat.
- Finish with extra virgin olive oil.

Smoked Trout and Avocado Salad

You could serve larger portions of this beautiful salad for lunch or smaller portions as a first course.

Dressing

3 tablespoons lemon juice
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 heads butter lettuce
3 cups watercress leaves, no thick stems
1/2 head radicchio, torn into bite-size pieces
1 avocado
1/2 red onion, very thinly sliced
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
1/2 pound smoked trout, skinned, in large flakes

- Make the dressing: in a small bowl, put the lemon juice, a generous pinch of salt and several grinds of black pepper. Gradually whisk in the olive oil. Taste and adjust the seasoning.
- Pare the butter lettuce down to the pale yellow, innermost hearts; reserve the outer green leaves for another salad. Tear the hearts into smaller pieces, but keep the pieces fairly large. Put them in a salad bowl with the watercress and radicchio.
- Halve the avocado and remove the pit. With a soup spoon, lift the halves out of the skin in one piece. Put each half cut side down on a cutting board, and slice thinly crosswise. Add the avocado slices, onion and dill to the salad bowl.
- Add enough of the dressing to coat the salad lightly you may not need it all. Toss gently.
- Divide the salad among six plates, mounding it prettily. Divide the trout among the salads, arranging it attractively on top. Serve immediately.

Serves 6 as a first course.



2002 THE STUMP JUMP RIESLING SAUVIGNON BLANCMARSANNE

Region

McLaren Vale, South Australia

Varieties

Riesling (64%), Sauvignon Blanc (24%) Marsanne
(12%)

Maturation

Stainless Steel
Tanks

Technical Analysis

13.0% alc/vol

Background

The Osborns are proud to release The Stump Jump range of premium McLaren Vale wines, so named as the land for many of the region's old vineyards was originally cleared using the Stump Jump plough. This South Australian invention enabled the ploughshare to jump over the gnarled "mallee" Eucalypt roots, saving valuable time and resources.



Tasting Notes

The cool 2002 vintage in McLaren Vale was ideal for white wines, producing wines with very good mineral and natural acidity. Yields were low which resulted in concentrated flavors.

Marsanne, a full-bodied wine with heady aromas of honeysuckle and almonds, is an excellent blending partner for aromatic varieties with high natural acidity, such as Riesling and Sauvignon Blanc. These three varietals have proved themselves to be a popular blend since this wine's first release.

Following harvesting in the cool of the night and gentle crushing by our open mouthed, rubber toothed "Demoisy" crusher, the Stump Jump Riesling Marsanne was lightly pressed by d'Arenberg's 19th century 'Coq' and 'Bromley & Tregoning' basket presses to ensure the gentle extraction of color and flavor. Fermentation in temperature controlled stainless steel vats ensured the fresh varietal fruit characters were retained in the wine.

This is a fresh, lively, dry white wine displaying a wide array of fruit and floral aromas, including gooseberry, lime, citrus and many tropical fruits. These characteristics then follow through on the palate. Good acid and fruit balance is reflected in the long, clean finish.

Additional Notes:

For further information contact Rob McDonald OLD BRIDGE
CELLARS 703 Jefferson St, Napa, CA 94559 Tel:(800)
6222234 or www.oldbridgecellars.com

d'Arenberg - The Stump Jump White

An unoaked blend of premium varietals which changes from vintage to vintage, but always conspires to create an excellent crisp dry, lively white, proudly named after an important South Australian invention -the Stump Jump plough. Many of McLaren Vale's old vineyards were originally cleared using this invention.

The plough saved many a vineyard owners' back and patience as the plough 'jumped' over the most stubborn roots, saving valuable time and resources.

Following harvesting in the cool of the night and gentle crushing by our open mouthed, rubber toothed "Demoisy" crusher, the Stump Jump White was lightly pressed by d'Arenberg's basket presses to ensure the gentle extraction of colour and flavour. Fermentation in temperature controlled stainless steel vats ensured the fresh varietal fruit characters were retained in the wine.

At d'Arenberg we handcraft all our wines and press them in wooden baskets using the very gentle, traditional 'Coq' and 'Bromley & Tregoning' presses, for both reds and whites. The presses are both old soldiers, dating from approximately 1860, and then we had the original 'Coq' press replicated in 1940, because we liked its gentle action so much.

The main job of the winepress is to get juice, or fermented wine, from the grape skins and pulp. For white wines, this happens before fermentation (so the more delicate whites do not pick up any colour or phenolics from the skins) and for the reds, after fermentation, so that the action of the ferment and the alcohol has extracted the good bits out of the skins.

Basket pressing all of our wines makes for a very-labour intensive exercise, but the quality of results justifies this for us. The pressing action is very controlled and is extremely gentle.

We have also used our collective imaginations here in coming up with away to make basket pressing oxygen free, thereby preventing oxidation in our whites. This is achieved by using a big plastic bag and some dry ice, which encases the whole basket. d'Arenberg is unique in that it is the only winery in Australia to use this age-old basket press method for white wines as well as reds.

Chester believes that one of the advantages of basket pressing is cleaner juice, as it is partially filtered through the mass of pulp it drains through in the basket.

This saves time in settling and clearing the juice, and brings the procedure much closer to how we like things - minimal interference which enables us to preserve quality.

CURTIS

HERITAGE SERIES

Inspired by the pleasurable table wines of the southern Rhône Valley, Winemaker Chuck Carlson established our Heritage Series to craft unique, flavorful cuvées for everyday enjoyment. These wines ultimately aspire to unmatched value for premium appellation Rhône-style blends. True to form, our Heritage Series wines earned eight gold medals at major competitions in 2002.

2001 Heritage Blanc

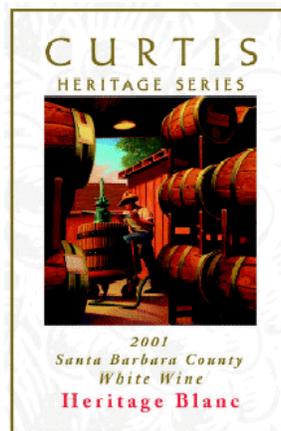
Santa Barbara County

Our 2001 Heritage Blanc is a sensuous Rhône-style blend that hails from Santa Barbara County's Santa Ynez Valley. Boasting an elegant bouquet of lilac and peach, it unfolds with flavors of tropical fruits and citrus that anticipate a creamy, lingering finish.

*Varietal Composition: Viognier 81%, Roussanne 11%, Chenin Blanc 8%
Vineyard Sources: Curtis Estate and Vogelzang Vineyard
Total Production: 1,000 Cases*

2000 Heritage Blanc

*Gold Medal for Best of Class: New World International Wine Competition
Gold Medal for Chairman's Award: Riverside International Wine Competition
Gold Medal: Orange County Fair
"Exceptional Value...87 Points." Wine & Spirits Magazine
Top-Ranking Wine in "Other White Varietals & Blends" Category: California Wine
Winners-The Best of the 2002 Judgings*



Box 244 Los Olivos, CA 93441 Tel: (805) 686-8999 www.CurtisWinery.com

OVERVIEW

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TASTING NOTES

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ASIAN- INSPIRED SHRIMP SALAD WITH TROPICAL FRUIT

(SERVES 2)

Tangy fruit and opalescent pink shrimp dressed with a spicy sweet-and-tart vinaigrette make a nice light beginning for a special meal. If you cannot find a mango or papaya in the market, 2 oranges, peeled and sectioned, or 1/2 cantaloupe, peeled, seeded and diced, can be substituted. Or the salad can be made without fruit and with the addition of cucumber (see below). The shrimp can be poached the night before or earlier in the day when you prepare the vinaigrette. Dice or slice the fruit as you like. Assemble at the last minute.

2 cups (16 fl oz/500 ml) water or dry white wine
1/2 lb. (250 g) medium-sized shrimp (prawns), peeled and deveined (about 10) (see glossary)
1 ripe papaya or mango
3 cups (6 oz/185 g) torn mixed lettuces
3 tablespoons torn fresh mint leaves
3 tablespoons torn fresh basil leaves

FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

1/3 cup (3 fl oz/80 ml) peanut oil or olive oil
finely grated zest of 1 lime (see glossary) 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 tablespoon brown sugar
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes or
1/2 teaspoon diced fresh jalapeno (hot green) chili pepper, or to taste
Salt

In a saucepan over high heat, bring the water or wine to a boil. Add the shrimp and cook until they turn pink and curl, 3-5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a bowl. Cover and refrigerate until needed.

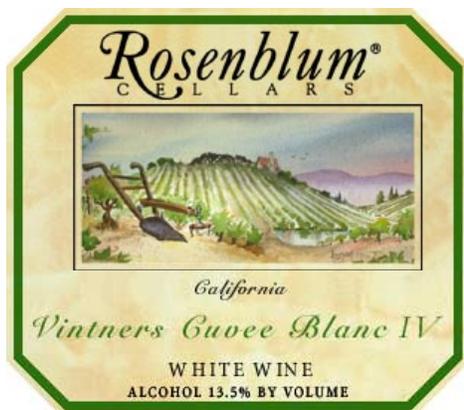
If using a papaya, peel, then cut in half lengthwise and scoop out and discard the seeds. Dice or slice the flesh. If using a mango, cut off the flesh from either side of the large central pit, then dice or slice the flesh. (There will be some tasty flesh still clinging to the pit; eat it off while standing over the sink for a true chef's treat.)

In a bowl combine the lettuces, mint and basil and toss to mix.

To make the vinaigrette, in a small bowl, thoroughly whisk together the peanut or olive oil, lime zest and juice, brown sugar, pepper flakes or jalapeno pepper and the salt to taste. Add a few tablespoons of the vinaigrette to the shrimp, toss well and let stand for a few minutes. Drizzle half of the remaining vinaigrette over the lettuces and herbs and toss thoroughly. Divide the lettuce mixture between 2 individual plates. Top with the shrimp and papaya or mango. Drizzle the remaining vinaigrette over the top.

SHRIMP SALAD WITH CUCUMBER

Omit the fruit. Peel 1 small cucumber, cut in half lengthwise and scoop out and discard the seeds. Slice the cucumber thinly and place in a bowl. Add 2 tablespoons of the vinaigrette to the cucumber, toss well and let stand for 10 minutes. Proceed as directed for the shrimp and lettuce mixture, then assemble the salad, substituting the cucumber for the fruit.



Vintners Cuvee Blanc IV

Vineyard:	Ripken, Fess Parker, RustRidge and Rominger California
Composition:	84% Viognier 10% Chardonnay 3% Roussanne and Marsanne
Harvest Date:	various Sugar: 26 Brix Total Acid: 0.65 pH: 3.64
Fermentation:	80% in tanks, 20% in barrels - 100% New Oak, 80% French, 20% American
Aging:	7 Months Stainless Steel, French, & American Oak Barrels
Bottling Date:	May 2003
Release Date:	May 2003
Production:	696 Cases

Vineyard

We have found over the years that blending the same varietals from different regions can add significantly to the complexity of the final blend. This being the case, blending varietals such as Viognier, Roussanne, and Marsanne, that are very tropical, with crisp Chardonnay has produced a seductiveness to the blend that provides the exoticness to make Cuvee Blanc a perfect wine for all occasions. This particular wine consists of: 64% 2002 Ripken Viognier, 17% 2002 Fess Parker Viognier, 10% RustRidge Chardonnay, 3% 2002 Rominger Viognier, 3% Rominger Roussanne and 3% Rominger Marsanne

Cellar Practices and Winemaking

All wines were tank fermented, except for 20%, which was barrel fermented and had the lees stirred twice a week to add depth and richness. The richness produced by the barrel fermented wines blended in with the bright and fruity wines from the tank has produced a fun and enticing wine.

Winemaker's Comments

This wine is exotic, intense, easy to consume. An intense combination of Rhône whites with a small amount of Chardonnay has produced the perfect aperitif or wine to be served with seafood or poultry.

Back Label Text

This excellent and refreshing white wine was produced from numerous fine vineyards in some of California's best viticultural regions.

Each Cuvee is a special and unique creation of the Winemaker, focused on fresh and elegant style. The is a well balanced and aromatic white wine that will nicely accompany seafood, pastas and hors d'oeuvres of all kinds.

Newsletter Comments

A blend of Viognier, Chardonnay, Roussanne and Marsanne, this combination of exotic Rhône varietals and a splash of Chardonnay (Burgundy varietal) has produced a perfect summer heat quencher.

"Vintner's Cuvee Blanc III" Composition:

- 55% Chardonnay
- 39% Symphony
- 6% Viognier

"Vintner's Cuvee Blanc II" Composition:

- 40% Palomino
- 20% Chardonnay
- 20% Viognier
- 20% Symphony

"1997 Cuvee Blanc I" Composition:

- 30% Palomino
- 30% Gewurtztraminer
- 30% Chardonnay
- 10% Muscat

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Source: www.rosenblumcellars.com



2003

Menage à Trois

California White Wine

Discover the excitement of our Menage à Trois. Expand your horizon with this stunning, delectable wine. Soft floral aromas and gentle, caressing fruit flavors leave you wishing for more.

Vineyard Notes

This wine is a superb blend of fine California white varietals: Chardonnay, Muscat Canelli and Chenin Blanc. Each variety is grown in its most suitable soil/climate combination, then harvested at its peak of maturity. Each is then fermented separately for 3 weeks in small stainless steel tanks before the winemaker's blending creates a perfect marriage of three.

Winemakers Notes

Menage à Trois white is produced in the classic Alsatian style: Muscat Canelli provides the fruitly impact which is highly sought after -- and Chardonnay provides the broad backbone for this wine. Chenin Blanc provides the bridge, or center, that marries the fruitiness together with the broad base. This is truly a winemaker's wine showing the finesse of the blender's art. Expect an impression of honeydew melon with inviting overtones of Gewurztraminer spice, strawberry, banana and lemon grass. A complex balance of fruit and spice that satisfies the pallet while at the same time inviting another sip. This wine is equally pleasing on a summer picnic, at a football game or a fine dinner.

Tasting Notes

Expect an impression of honeydew melon with inviting overtones of Gewurztraminer spice, strawberry, banana and lemon grass. A complex balance of fruit and spice that satisfies the pallet while at the same time inviting another sip. This wine is equally pleasing on a summer picnic, at a football game or a fine dinner.

Technical Data

Appellation..... California

Blend.....
 46% Chardonnay,
 38% Muscat,
 16% Chenin Blanc

Alcohol..... 12.5%

pH 3.3

Total Acidity..... .70

Residual Sugar..... 1%

Cooperage..... Stainless Steel

Bottled & Released..... March 2004

Cases Produced..... 5.713

UPC..... 099988 071058

Grilled Lobster Tails with Green Curry-Mango Dipping Sauce

Recipe courtesy Bobby Flay

Recipe Summary

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Cook Time: 50 minutes

Yield: 4 servings

8 (1 1/2 pound) live lobsters

Olive oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper

16 skewers, soaked in cold water

Green Curry-Mango Sauce, recipe follows

Chopped cilantro leaves, for garnish

Lime wedges, for garnish

4 ounces black caviar, optional

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the lobsters and boil until just cooked through, about 12 to 15 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat the grill to medium-high. Drain the lobsters and put them in a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking. Then drain the lobsters well, remove the tail from the lobster, and carefully remove the tail meat from the shell.

Skewer each tail onto 2 skewers so that the meat lies flat. Brush the tails with oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill for 2 to 3 minutes on each side or until slightly charred.

Place the lobster skewers on a platter and drizzle with some of the sauce over top. Sprinkle with chopped cilantro and garnish with lime wedges. Top with dollops of caviar, if desired. Serve the remaining sauce in small bowls for individual dipping.

Green Curry-Mango Sauce:

2 tablespoons plus 1/2 cup canola oil

1 red onion, coarsely chopped

3 cloves garlic, chopped

1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger

1 serrano chile, coarsely chopped

2 tablespoons green curry paste

3 ripe mangoes, peeled, pitted, and coarsely chopped

2 cups water

3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

3 tablespoons chopped cilantro leaves

1 tablespoon honey

Salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook until soft, about 3 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, and serrano chile and cook for 1 minute. Add the curry paste and cook for 2 minutes. Add mangoes and water, stir well, and cook until the mango is soft, about 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer the mixture to a blender (see *Cook's Note below). Add the lime juice, cilantro, and honey and blend until smooth. With the motor running, slowly add the remaining 1/2 cup oil and blend until emulsified. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Cook's Note: When blending hot liquids, remove liquid from the heat and allow to cool for at least 5 minutes. Transfer liquid to a blender or food processor and fill it no more than halfway. If using a blender, release 1 corner of the lid. This prevents the vacuum effect that creates heat explosions. Place a towel over the top of the machine, pulse a few times, and then process on high speed until smooth.

Vintage 2002

The word that comes to mind to describe the 2002 growing season is “balanced.” We experienced an overall pattern of moderate to cool temperatures laced with periods of very warm weather in mid-July and then again in September. Over the course of this long, even season, the white grape varieties that make up this proprietary wine enjoyed both extended time on the vine that deepened their flavors and also the essential periods of late summer/early fall heat that brought the fruit to full ripeness.



A question frequently asked about Conundrum is whether it is based primarily on Sauvignon Blanc or Chardonnay. I don't believe that this approach leads to a full understanding of this wine and its versatility with food. Our intent from the first vintage, in 1989, was to create a totally new wine in which the grape varieties would meld together seamlessly.

The conundrum—or puzzle—of the wine's exact composition was meant to be elusive. With all the grapes coming into the winery in optimal condition in 2002, the flavors were especially easy to integrate. The Chardonnay and classic Sauvignon Blanc/Sémillon combination in the blend work together beyond their individual characteristics to produce rounded, tart/sweet flavors and a dense mouthfeel. Similarly, the wine's distinctive spicy-floral aroma combines aspects of the Viognier and Muscat Canelli that are essential contributors.

The winemaking techniques we applied to the individual lots were also aimed at building the wine's layers of flavor, not showcasing its individual components. To retain fresh fruit aromas and flavors but also increase complexity, we fermented and aged about 30 percent of the wine lots in temperature-controlled stainless steel and aged the remaining 70 percent in a combination of French and American oak barrels for 7 months.

I am very pleased with the result. While carrying on Conundrum's signature taste profile, this vintage seems marked by heightened notes of pears, honeysuckle and vanilla in its aromas, an especially lush, creamy texture, and a lemony finish that balances the wine's core flavors of tropical fruits, peach/apricot and green melon.

Jon Bolta

Winemaker/Production Director

CONUNDRUM

WINE HISTORY

Conundrum was born from a core idea: why couldn't a wine mirror--in complexity and creativity--the dishes being invented by a new generation of chefs who had no allegiance to the traditions and rules of the past? From our first vintage, 1989, we were determined to make a dramatically different white-wine blend that would surpass the scope of single-varietal wines.

Blending several grape varieties together is a centuries-old tradition for both red and white wines. Vintners learned early on that just a small amount of Cabernet Franc or Merlot could complement and extend the flavors of Cabernet Sauvignon and that a little Sémillon could round and soften the herbal edges of Sauvignon Blanc. But we wanted to venture into a wider arena. Just as chefs were exploring the fusion of flavors from classic to contemporary, from east to west, often combining savory, spicy, herbal and fruity flavors in one dish, we wanted to explore how non-traditional combinations of grape varieties would work together. We wanted each variety to be distinctive but still complementary to the others and to the foods we were enjoying.

After experimenting with 11 different white wine grapes, we chose the three that we considered the key ingredients, the aromas and flavors that form the foundation of the wine: Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay and--for its intriguing floral/tropical character--Muscat Canelli. Then, from our "spice cabinet," we added small amounts of Sémillon and Viognier. Already, we were working with flavors and textures that formed a new and unprecedented combination--a conundrum, or puzzle to be teased out by the taster. To make the blend even more complex, we took the same approach we used when making red wine: we treated each small lot or portion of wine separately, respecting its unique flavor profile. This approach starts in the vineyards, where we expanded the number of rootstocks and clones we planted. It extends to harvest decisions, as we pick each grape variety at several different levels of ripeness and acidity within the spectrum we are seeking. It continues in winemaking, as we ferment some wine lots in stainless steel and some in oak barrels, varying the yeast to complement the character of each. Similarly, we keep some lots in cool-temperature stainless steel to maintain some fresh, crisp aromas and fruit flavors, and age some in seasoned barrels and a small portion of new barrels so that oak flavors remain subtle. As a result, when the time comes to blend the wine, we have not just five lots representing the five varieties, but sixty or more components, each offering its own aromas, flavors and textures. That's when the creative juices begin to flow.

The proportions vary slightly in each vintage, as Mother Nature hands us new "ingredients." But our goal is always the same: a wine whose complexity makes it appealing to both red and white wine drinkers, a highly styled wine that is excellent as an apéritif and pairs beautifully with the wide-ranging, global dishes we are eating as chefs experiment with fresher and more healthful cuisines that depend on vegetables, herbs, spices and creative preparation techniques to achieve intensity of flavor.

With the 2000 vintage--Conundrum's 12th bottling--Conundrum stands on its own as a brand. Caymus Vineyards, where Conundrum was developed, now focuses exclusively on Cabernet Sauvignon. Plans are moving ahead for a dedicated Conundrum facility scheduled to be built in Monterey County, close to the sources for most of the grape varieties that make up the wine.