

Jim Hiller's Wine Club

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Larger Than Life

In this edition of Jim Hiller's Wine Club, we feature wines from six of the wine industry's iconic personalities, six very successful but very different characters. They are not the best known (my bet is that you've never heard of at least a couple), nor are they the most critically acclaimed (although four of them have seen plenty of 90+ point scores for their wines). Neither are they the top moneymakers (although two of them would probably be on that list). They certainly don't share a common approach to the business or share much in the way of underlying philosophies - they are simply a quirky assemblage of six of the more interesting *dramatis personae* in the wine world, six of the mad geniuses, if you will - intriguing people who also make some pretty noteworthy wines.

Randall Grahm: Philosopher, Jester, Winemaker

An asteroid has been named in his honor, his best known wine pays homage to an ordinance passed by the village council of Chateauneuf du Pape that prohibited the landing of flying saucers therein, he has published a parody (in quite passable terza rima) of Dante's *Divine Comedy* entitled *Da Vino Commedia*, he is a self-described "vitizen of the world, a champion of the strange and the heterodox, of the ugly duckling grape varieties whose very existence is threatened by the dominant Cabo and Chardocentric paradigms" - he is the original Rhone Ranger and the founder of Bonny Doon Vineyards: Randall Grahm. There is no one in the world of wine to whom the word "quixotic" is more aptly or frequently attached. He writes and lectures brilliantly on the importance of terroir, but made a fortune by selling off an archetypal 'commodity' wine brand: Big House. He started his wine career in search of the great American Pinot Noir but turned into the wine world's greatest champion of Rhone varieties.

Subsequently his attention swung toward Italian grapes, the more obscure, the better, whilst more or less simultaneously rhapsodizing for Riesling via his Pacific Rim brand, which he then also spun off. He is modest and unassuming in person, looking "the part of an aging hippie who found a way to prolong graduate school indefinitely," but he garners rock star attention - recently profiled in the New York Times and, I have heard, set to appear on Oprah this week or next. This event brings up an odd point. Those of you receiving the 2004 Cigare de Volant in your Wine Club selections might want to check eBay before you open the bottle. I'd certainly not suggest forgoing the enjoyment of a Club selection, but one might predict that an Outbreak of Oprahatic Oenthusiasm will surely drive up the demand. (Puns, *naturellement*, from RG.)

In the ten plus years of the Wine Club, we've selected more of Grahm's wines than anyone else's - perhaps as much for the whimsical labels and the outrageous puns in his tasting notes - but the wines themselves have fully deserved the recognition.

Francis Ford Coppola Auteur

"Winemaking and filmmaking are two great art forms that are very important in the development of California. They both start with raw ingredients - in the case of wine, the land and the grapes, and in the case of film, the script and the actors' performances. The winemaker takes these raw materials and ferments and blends. He says yes to this batch, no to that one. The director does the same thing: a series of yeses and nos, from casting and costuming to edits and sound mixes. In both cases you have to start with top notch raw materials - whether it's the land or a script." - Francis Ford Coppola

Coppola changed the way Americans thought about movies with films like *The Godfather* series and now he is changing how Americans think

about and buy wine. He got into the wine business in 1975 when he bought the old Inglenook estate in Napa Valley and restored to the property both acreage and prestige, first as Niebaum-Coppola and, since 2006, as Rubicon Estate. The high end bottles from Rubicon have come to rank with the 'premier crus' of Napa winemaking, but it is in Sonoma County, with his more moderately priced and more populist Francis Ford Coppola Presents wines, that he is being truly innovative. Coppola Presents Bianco, Rosso, and Shiraz are some of the best easy-drinking, under \$10 wines you can find. Coppola has tried marketing wine in single-serving cups and under the Encyclopedia label in a bottle that looks like a cross between a laboratory beaker and a Wesson oil bottle. (There is practically no information save the name on its label.) He has recently bottled an Alicante Bouschet in his Diamond Collection Series as a nod to his home winemaking grandfather who used that grape and he has produced sparkling wines in cans and, more recently, a Riesling in a carafe under his daughter Sofia's label. His wines have not always, or at first, garnered the critical praise of the wine establishment, but they are always honest, often shocking, ambitious, creative, original, and steeped in a sense of family and tradition – much like his work in *The Godfather*.

**Charles Back
Prankster and Saint**

Charles Back, creator of South Africa's most successful wine brand, Goats Do Roam, is the third-generation owner of Fairview Wine and Cheese Estate, which makes wines under the Fairview, Spice Route, and Agostinelli as well as the tongue-firmly-in-cheek Goats Do Roam labels. The latter pay homage to the Fairview estate's goat herd although the French wine establishment has thought otherwise and brought suit against Back for various trademark infringements. The original Goats Do Roam (a Côtes du Rhone-like red blend of Syrah, Grenache, and Mourvedre) was followed by Goats Do Roam in Villages (eerily similar to Côtes du Rhone Villages), Goat-Roti (a Syrah and Viognier blend modeled on Côtes Rôtie), Bored Doe (a Cabernet Sauvignon based

Bordeaux style blend) and Goat Door (a Chardonnay à la Burgundy's Côtes d'Or.) There was also a Goat-father blend of the Italian Barbera and Primitivo varietals. To my knowledge, however, Back has not been sued by Coppola.

Back is locally and internationally regarded and respected as a pioneer who helped bring the South African wine industry into the mainstream after the fall of *Apartheid* and its economic restrictions. He was the first to plant Viognier and Mourvedre and almost single-handedly has moved much of the country's focus away from Bordeaux varietals and toward Rhone and Mediterranean grapes. His most admirable accomplishment, however, may be his role in initiating and underwriting the Fairvalley Workers Association, which is an empowerment project set up by and for the employees of Fairview Estate in order that they might develop and manage their own property. Initial funding, which went to purchase a 38 acre farm adjacent to Fairview, was provided equally by Charles Back and the South African government. The workers, who have served Fairview for many years, are now producing their own wine and the proceeds fund the building of homes and the eventual construction of a wine cellar. Till that is built, Back provides the cellar and bottling facilities of Fairview for the production of Fairvalley wines at no cost.

**Charles Smith
From Bands to Brands**

A relative unknown among the hotshots here featured, Charles Smith may be the most impressive of all considering that he is at a very early stage of his career. As evidence of that star quality, Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate* is not usually given to such hyperbole as this:

K Vintners is where the larger-than-life Charles Smith presides. He is an innovator, marketing genius, outspoken, you name it – but above all the man is a brilliant winemaker who knows where all the great fruit is hidden. In a region where blending is the rule of thumb, he is the ultimate terroirist. Each wine reflects the vineyard from which it was

produced but there is also a house style which lets you know immediately who made the wine. While it's way too soon to put K Vintners on the same level as a Domaine Leroy or Domaine Zind-Humbrecht, the experience you get tasting in the cellar is much the same as in those legendary wineries, brilliantly made wines reflecting the terroir but also a winemaking signature that makes it totally clear which winery made the wine.

After managing rock bands in Scandinavia for 11 years, Smith opened K Vintners in Walla Walla, Washington in 2001 and began immediately producing remarkable single vineyard, award winning wines with a high potential to improve with age. In 2004 he developed the Magnificent Wine Company and its phenomenally successful House Wine label. He then sold a majority interest in MWC (though he still makes the wines) to fund the start of Charles Smith Wines, the Modernist Project, the focus of which is to produce wines to be enjoyed now, but with typicity with regards to variety - that is merlot that tastes like merlot - and to the vineyard - wine that tastes like where it was grown.

Smith's success as a marketer stems from his straightforward and unpretentious response to how people generally consume wine today: that is, immediately. At his lowest price point, MWC produces simple wine that is made to be drunk the day it's bought, his CSW tier wines put as much quality wine into a bottle as possible and are also meant to be drunk early, and his K Vintner wines jump out of the bottle in their exuberance, but have the structure to age as well. "It's just booze - drink it" is his mantra and his marketing secret. Washington wines are red hot right now; Charles Smith is the state's rising star.

**Fred Franzia
Enfant Terrible**

Fred Franzia fought the Napa Winegrowers Association and the state of California over his right to produce wines under the Napa Ridge, Napa Creek, and Rutherford Vintners labels that were

made with non-Napa fruit. The suit was contested for six years all the way to the Supreme Court before Franzia finally lost when the Court declined to take up a lower court's finding against him. So Franzia began making wine under the Napa Ridge label *that was* made with Napa fruit and sold it for less than ten dollars just to show that it could be done. Franzia is the same man who bought the Charles Shaw brand and turned it into "Two Buck Chuck," and told ABC News, "We choose to sell good quality wines at \$2 a bottle because we think it's a fair price. We think the other people are charging too much." Thanks to Two Buck Chuck, Bronco Wine Company was named winery of the year at the 2003 United Wine and Grape Symposium. When the announcement was made, *The Western Farm Press* reported, "the ballroom literally erupted in disbelief and contempt."

Bronco maintains more than fifty wine brands, including Harlow Ridge, Dona Sol, Forest Glen, Crane Lake, Montpelier, Congress Springs, Pacific Oasis, and many more (but the list does not include the Franzia label – his father sold that to Coca-Cola and precipitated a seven year rift between the two, no doubt providing much of the psychic impetus for Fred's drive). How can he afford to price so many of his wines so low? It's all about scale. Franzia owns over 35,000 acres of vineyards – most of them in the fecund Central Valley of California. He has facilities with the capacity to produce over 25 million cases of wine each year and his sales are nearly that much. In a famously cyclic business, Franzia comes out of every downturn with more labels, more grapes, more capacity. Other take on debt through acquisitions, build architecturally significant wineries, and spend lavishly on promotions. Franzia works out of a trailer or his car, has industrial scale, butt-ugly facilities, doesn't socialize and heaps scorn on wine critics. He may be the most hated man in the wine industry, but through his success at making decent and affordable wines available to all, Fred Franzia has done more to change America's wine drinking habits than any other man. The bottom line for the consumer is that he

always has delivered value for the money.

Jess Jackson Entrepreneur Extraordinaire

Jess Jackson, founder of Kendall-Jackson Vineyards and Winery, whose Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay is arguably America's favorite wine, is as unlike Fred Franzia as one man can be from another. Where one is practically invisible to the public eye, the other has several times in the last decade been featured in the Forbes list of America's 500 wealthiest individuals. Franzia buys up the labels and assets of wineries that are distressed and turns them into entirely different brands, Jackson buys prestigious, high-profile wineries (e.g., Cambria, Byron, Edmeades, Freemark Abbey) and continues to operate them in the same market niches but under his corporate umbrella. Where Franzia is somewhat crude, profane and anti-social, Jackson, a former San Francisco real estate attorney, is the picture of the sophisticated winery owner, as comfortable as the public face of his empire in its advertising, as he is hobnobbing at Churchill Downs with his beloved thoroughbred race horses. One concentrates his holdings in the lowlands of the California's Central Valley, the other searches out and buys hillside vineyards in the state's toniest coastal appellations. One tours his properties in his battered Jeep, the other by company helicopter or jet. Both, however, are hard-nosed competitors and in an industry increasingly dominated by mega-corporations, both have managed to keep their enterprises in their own hands.

The key element in Jackson's success was that he created a style of wine that consumers love and then, much like McDonalds, Starbucks, or other mass merchandisers, he replicated that profile with consistence. The taste profile of KJ's Vintner's Reserve Chardonnay originated as an accident - the result of a stuck fermentation that left more residual sugar in the batch than was intended, but it turned out to hit the consumer's sweet spot exactly. Turning his back on the trend to more and more specific appellations, Jackson drew fruit from all over the state and blended to reproduce that same taste vintage after vintage.

Though often derided by critics, the VR Chard sells over 2 million cases a year. Even more surprising, the brand repositioned its pricing dramatically upward a couple years ago, from 8 or 9 bucks up to the 12 to \$14 level. After an initial sticker shock adjustment, sales bested their previous highs. Meanwhile his ultra-premium Grand Reserve line has been a consistent critical and commercial success. Most recently, Jackson has created the White Rocket portfolio of wines to exploit the 'fun brand' phenomena of wines aimed at the twenty-somethings of the millennium generation.

It's a bit ironic that Jackson and Coppola, who best fit the stereotype of the winery owner as super-sophisticate, are with the one's White Rocket wines and the other's Presents line, moving into the "fun brand" territory that was essentially invented by Randall Grahm and perfected by Charles Back. Or that Smith, he of the wild hair and kick ass attitude, should be lauded as the most serious *terroirist* of our lot. Or that the bottle that is possibly the most stylish of all this edition's selections, namely the Filus Malbec, comes from the man, Franzia, who has said that no wine is worth more than ten bucks.

Tasting Notes

Taster's Table Whites

2008 Rutherford Vintners Napa Valley Chardonnay

This Napa Valley Chardonnay from one of Bronco Wine Company's many labels is certainly not the most complex Napa Chard you'll ever taste, but it is recognizably Napa and really quite nice. For the price, it's outstanding. A light straw-colored wine with aromas of pear, butterscotch, and vanilla, it shows flavors of apple and melon and has a soft and lingering finish. It earned a Gold Medal at the 2008 Pacific Rim Wine Competition.

2006 Goats Do Roam Goat Door Paarl Chardonnay

The Wine Spectator gave the 2006 Goat Door an 87 point score, saying, "Clean-cut melon and pear flavors, with a round,

fresh finish. Nice unadorned style.” It is medium straw in color, a lightly oaked Burgundian style Chardonnay with a bit of hazelnut on the nose and flavors of mandarin orange and apple. It has a firm, full mouthfeel with good acid and concentration, and a rich finish. Alas, Goat Door is no more. Goats Do Roam has pared it, as well as Bored Doe and The Goatfather from their offerings. We scarfed up some of the last remaining bottles on the market.

2007 Congress Springs Lodi Viognier

Viognier is a rich, spicy, perfumy northern Rhone variety which thrives best in a warmer climate tempered by cooling winds. Fruit from the Lodi appellation, cooled by the San Francisco Bay breeze, is ideally suited to produce such a wine. With high-tone fruit aromas and flavors of peach, honey, flowers and green apple, this full-bodied and flavorful wine is supple and fruity in the mouth, but zesty and clean, a excellent companion for Thai, Vietnamese and other Asian foods as well as popular, traditional chicken and fish entrees. With its smooth, fruity character, Viognier is also a great sipping wine served chilled whenever a dry white wine is called for.

2008 Kung Fu Girl Washington Riesling

We selected the 2007 Kung Fu Girl as a Wine Club selection also and if it keeps on getting better every year, we may just do it again next year. Charles Smith explains the name by simply noting that both girls and Riesling “kick ass.” The grapes used in Charles Smith's "Kung Fu Girl" Riesling are harvested from a single rocky vineyard comprised of fragmented basalt and caliche soils, resulting in a wine with lush aromatics, tons of flavor and a pleasant minerality. On the nose, it bursts with Asian pear, white peach and spring flowers. Apricot and peach show on the palate with explosive, concentrated flavors and a long fresh finish. This is a great wine for a summer picnic.

2008 Fairvalley Coastal Region Chenin Blanc

This is a fresh, fruit driven style of Chenin Blanc with a crisp mineral backbone. Tropical fruit and melon

aromas with hints of citrus dominate the nose leading to a juicy and refreshing palate that nicely illustrates the ability of Chenin to retain ripe acidity while offering textural richness and full body. The vividly fresh-fruited finish offers more than sufficient enticement to take the next sip. The 08 earned 85 points and a “Best Buy” designation from *The Wine Enthusiast*, which said, “This unoaked white offers rounded tropical fruit aromas and flavors like pineapple, melon and pear. The style is straightforward and exuberant, with balanced acidity and a fruity, lush finish. Keep on the table for everyday enjoyment.”

2006 Pacific Rim Columbia Valley Dry Riesling

All restaurant goers should refuse to patronize any sushi restaurant that fails to include the Pacific Rim Dry Riesling on their wine list; there is simply no better food/wine match. The wine is crisp, dry and lush with flavors of citrus, jasmine and minerals and a zippy acidity that is a perfect palate cleaner. No oak and no malolactic on this wine - it's as pure and unmanipulated as it gets. 20% of the fruit is German Riesling wine from the Mosel region; 80% is Columbia Valley Riesling. The German Riesling lends great depth and acidity, as well as a lower alcohol.

Taster's Table Reds

2005 Filus Mendoza Malbec

In November of 2007, we selected this wine as a Collector's Club selection, saying, “A rich bouquet of ripe plum, mulberry, and mocha cream leads to rich dark fruit and cocoa flavors in a full-bodied, dense wine with sweet tannins and delicate balance. . . This wine could compete very well against many so-called first growths from around the world at four or five times the price. You won't find Franzia's name anywhere on the bottle, but what's in the bottle speaks loudly for itself.” To make room for a more recent vintage, the wine's local distributor halved the price of the remaining inventory of the 05, so we snatched it up as quick as we could. It earned 87 points from *The Wine Enthusiast*: “A full and pulsing wine, with leather and other animal notes to

make things more interesting. The mouth is like a black-fruit explosion: muscular berry and tannins fly all over the place, ending in a lively, almost fiery finish.”

2007 The Velvet Devil Columbia Valley Merlot

In a previous incarnation as Holy Cow Merlot, this too was a former Wine Club selection. The fruit is sourced from three of eastern Washington's most prestigious areas: 44% from the Wahluke Slope, 36% from Horse Heaven Hills, and 20% from the Yakima Valley. Smooth, rich and explosive, it shows red plum, bittersweet cocoa and hints of smoke and cedar in the nose. Fermented in stainless steel and aged 10 months in French oak (40% new), it has a slightly elevated tannic profile that provides a robust character to this hallmark Columbia Valley Merlot.

2005 Horse Play Rollicking Red

Red blends are the biggest growth category in domestic wines – this mix of 44% Cabernet Sauvignon, 39% Merlot, and 17% Syrah shows why with bright aromas of cherries, currants, blackberries and vanilla in the nose and roasted and toasty oak tones adding a savory note. On the mouthfilling palate, cherry, cassis and spice flavors lead leading to a long, nicely balanced finish. This is a nice red for grilled and barbecued meats, hearty pastas and flavorful cheeses. The 2005 is the debut vintage of this wine (the name an homage to Jess Jackson's thoroughbred horse raising avocation) and was produced from grapes grown in Sonoma County and the Central Coast regions of Paso Robles and San Benito County.

2006 Tin Roof Cellars California Merlot

When the Tin Roof label was first introduced, it was a punning reference to one of the first premium wines to be bottled under screwtop, but that is only a piece of insignificant trivia any longer. The labels were re-designed and the brand re-launched by White Rocket Wines and aimed at the “millennial” generation of wine consumers who supposedly are after fruit-forward, softly tannic, easy-drinking wines. The 2005 Merlot managed to stay within that

profile and score a surprising 90 points from *The Wine Enthusiast*. The 2006 has not yet been rated, but we found it equally appealing with a straightforward, albeit relatively simple charm. Fruit is sourced from the North Coast and Central Coast where Merlot thrives in moist alluvial soils, developing bright fruit and soft tannins. Blended with small amounts of Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel, the 2006 Merlot was fermented in stainless steel tanks, then aged in French and American oak to soften and mature its lush fruit flavors. It pairs especially well with grilled red meats, herb-roasted chicken, pork chops, red-sauced pastas and flavorful hard cheeses.

2005 Pacific Oasis Santa Barbara County Syrah

This is a hearty, big red wine with boysenberry and anise aromas from one of California's best growing regions for Syrah. The palate shows flavors of black stone fruit, coffee, blackberries, and cherry skins. A final addition of 5% Viognier (a technique developed in Hermitage, the famous Syrah based wine of the northern Rhone) adds a tangible hint of orange blossom, spice and a savory smoothness. Enjoy with Mediterranean fare, wild game, rack of lamb with mint sauce or a portabella mushroom steak.

2005 Fairvalley Western Cape Cabernet Sauvignon

Once malolactic fermentation is completed this wine is aged in a combination of new and used French oak barrels for 14 months. It shows classic Cabernet fruit, with cassis and dark berry flavors, elegant tannins and well-integrated oak influence. *The Wine Enthusiast* rates it a "Best Buy," giving it 87 points and saying, "Like the country in which it's made, the Fairvalley Cabernet is a combination of refined and rustic, spicy and subdued. There's an earthy, indigenous element here, with its wave of plucky smoke and spice and beefy tannins, but the wine also has poise and a clean mineral touch. A distinctive wine at a very nice price."

Collector's Club Whites

2007 Francis Coppola Presents Director's Cut Russian River Valley Chardonnay

The Russian River Valley climate is shaped by a regular intrusion of cooling fog from the Pacific Ocean a few miles to the west. Much like the ocean tide, the fog ebbs and flows, arriving in the evening, cooling the area down from its daytime high temperature by as much as 35 to 40 degrees, and retreating the following morning. This natural air conditioning allows Chardonnay grapes to develop full flavor maturity over an extended growing season - often 15 to 20 percent longer than neighboring areas - while retaining their all-important natural acidity. The Director's Cut is 100% Russian River Chardonnay grown on the Dutton Ranch, one of the most highly regarded plots of land in all of Sonoma. The wine is full-flavored and creamy with pear and fig flavors, and hints of minerals. It makes for an easy and delicious match for creamy pasta sauces, cheese, or sauced fish dishes.

2007 Spice Route Swartland Chenin Blanc

"Still a touch tight, with the minerality up front, though there are brioche, almond and yellow apple notes in reserve. Nice richness and length. Give this a few months to round into form." 88 points from *The Wine Spectator*. Light golden straw in color, it shows aromas of baked apple and hazelnuts, with a hint of melon. The palate has a slight creaminess, balanced with good acid, and a long finish. It's likely to develop more baked apple and honey notes over time. South Africa has lots and lots of Chenin Blanc planted, though some of it travels under the name of 'Steen.' It can be very good when made in a fresh, simple style with no influence from wood, or when made in a bigger, more complex style by means of barrel fermentation or ageing. Chenin has never gained much popularity in the U.S. (possibly because for years cheap jug wines were often mislabeled as Chenin Blanc or Chablis regardless of what was actually in the jug, a practice that is no longer legal), but this wine shows how wonderful it can be. Only

France's Loire Valley has taken the grape to comparable heights.

2007 Fairview Paarl Viognier

Fairview was the first winery in South Africa to plant and bottle Viognier and has now been producing this wine for over 10 years. With gentle oak aging and careful site selection, they look to emphasize the complex fruit flavors and fragrance that characterize the grape. "Fruity-floral notes of pears, apricots and rose petals with whiffs of lavender. The 2007 Viognier shows good structure, with elegance and length." earning a 90 point rating from *The Wine Spectator*.

2006 Kendall Jackson Grand Reserve California Chardonnay

The 2006 Grand Reserve Chardonnay, which is aged 8 months in a combination of French and American oak, and put through malolactic fermentation is a cross-appellation blend of 55% from Monterey and 45% from Santa Barbara. "Gorgeous tropical fruits, pineapple in particular, as well as honeysuckle and some floral notes jump from the glass of this pure, rich wine that exhibits subtle oak but is dominated by its fruit. It's a beauty that should drink nicely for several years." *The Wine Advocate*, 90 points.

2007 K Vintners Columbia Valley Viognier

"From a single vineyard; this is fermented in neutral oak. It's wonderfully pure, fruity, and forward, with a lovely bouquet of acacia, lemon/lime and lightly tropical passionfruit. Though fresh and fruit-powered, it is not at all a simple wine; in fact, it's quite intense." *The Wine Enthusiast*, 92 points.

2007 Pacific Rim Dauenhauer Willamette Valley Riesling

This single vineyard Riesling shows intense notes of apple, honey and grapefruit. It is a sweet wine with an incredible acidity and low pH, making it taste quite dry for its Residual Sugar. The wine has the potential to age for 30 years or more, but if you don't have the patience to wait that long, you can enjoy it now with some dried fruits or some cheeses (particularly goat cheeses). Ice

cream would also be a spectacular pairing, as would, believe it or not, smoked salmon.

Collector's Club Reds

2007 Coppola Diamond Collection California Claret

Francis Coppola Diamond Collection Black Label Claret, as its British-derived name implies, is a Cabernet Sauvignon-based wine created in the same style as classic Bordeaux. All five Bordeaux varietals are in the blend: Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, and Petit Verdot. The Merlot and Cabernet Franc are estate grown, the Cabernet Sauvignon and the small amounts of Malbec and Petit Verdot hail from from Napa, Sonoma, and El Dorado Counties. The 2007 vintage got underway earlier than most years as a result of premature bud break. This occurred because of an unseasonably warm winter. The season lasted longer than normal as well because of prolonged moderate temperatures. These conditions were ideal for creating physiologically perfect fruit, which is why winemakers have declared this one of the best vintages of the decade. The wine is a deep crimson color with aromas of blackberries, plums, and vanilla cream and flavors of wild berries, cherries, spice, and mocha.

2007 Goat Roti Coastal Region

The 2006 Goat-Roti is a blend of Shiraz (96%) and Viognier (4%), sourced from from sites in the Paarl and Agter-Paarl regions.

"Fresh and focused, with good black cherry, currant, tobacco and toast notes. A juicy cherry note lingers on the medium-weight finish." *The Wine Spectator*, 87 points.

"This red blend has a soft, dry, herbal nose that leads into flavors of spice, dried herbs and red berry. The wine is elegant and full of energy, but needs time to age and soften. A fun red that will pair nicely with soft cheeses and dried meats." *The Wine Enthusiast*, 86 points.

2005 Kendall Jackson Grand Reserve Sonoma County Merlot

90% Merlot 10% Cabernet Sauvignon, aged 14 months in oak. Shows black plum, boysenberry, and cherry flavors on the palate, violet, chocolate and cedar aromas in the nose - this wine is smooth with round and refined tannins. In true Merlot character, this wine caresses the mouth and lingers beyond each sip. 85% of the fruit from Sonoma County and 15% from Napa County.

2004 Bonny Doon Vineyards Le Cigare Volant California Red Wine

"To the sound of galloping hooves, the Rhône Ranger rides by leaving a whirl of dust and wind. Who is that masked man? He is a man in "quiet, persistent struggle to live up to the promises of early efforts." With the 2004 vintage, we believe we have produced a Cigare likely to gain such praise as "the best yet." 2004's early spring and consistent heat made for a spectacular harvest, particularly for grenache. As our long-time members will attest, a Le Cigare Volant heavy in mourvèdre tastes pretty much like mourvèdre; with syrah, it tastes like syrah; but when dominated by grenache, it tastes like nothing so much as Le Cigare Volant, a creation far superior to the sum of its parts. Traditional pairings for Cigare include lamb, venison, and game fowl. Vegetarians will enjoy this stellar vintage with an assortment of soft goat cheeses, wild mushroom crêpes or eggplant parmesan." No better tasting notes are written than those on the Bonny Doon website.

2005 Bonny Doon Vineyards Syrah "Le Pousseur"

"The label of the Syrah "Le Pousseur" suggests a mysterious figure, cloaked in a great coat, in which rare vials and flasks of vaguely illicit elixirs, potions and philtres are cached. The image evokes a Tarot card, and as such, represents an archetypal figure, an icon resonant to our unconscious. Great syrah is all about perfume and the tension between the wild and the refined. 2005 was a coolish year, one of elegance and restraint, and the '05 is extremely refined; the wine (upon decanting) has an especially seductive perfume. The ignifiers of vrai syrah:

bacon fat is well in evidence, as is the scent of licorice, anise, wintergreen, violet and spicy elements – white pepper, most notably, juniper, cardamom and sandalwood. I almost neglected to mention the brilliant mineral element herein- mostly in virtue of shy-yielding grapes. The texture is particularly noteworthy, with melted, creamy tannins and a very silky finish."

2007 Spice Route Swartland Pinotage

"Allspice, cinnamon, clove and mint aromas are followed by a slightly sweet blend of vanilla oak and red berry. The wine has a peppery base and a spicy finish that gives it balance and poise. The acid and tannins are also all in check. Hold for a few years for added enjoyment." *The Wine Enthusiast*, 87 points.

"Very juicy, with a blast of fig, currant and plum sauce flavors layered with a healthy dose of mocha-tinged toast. Tangy acidity and a bright iron note on the finish help keep this honest." *The Wine Spectator*, 89 points.