

Freemark Abbey Winery

PO Box 410
3022 St. Helena Hwy North
St. Helena CA 94574
Phone: 800.963.9698
ext 235
Fax: 707.963.7633
Email:
wineclub@freemarkabbey.com



SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR JO'S MEMBERS:

15 years of Sycamore Vineyards Cabernet! With this shipment, you receive the first vintage and the most current vintage of this spectacular wine!
Enjoy-



Continued from Page 1...

Q. How do you determine when the grapes are ripe?

-Arnold Culler, Las Vegas, NV

A. Good question, Mr. Culler. In the old days, university-educated winemakers based picking decisions on the condition of the vines and their crop, the current and predicted weather situation, their previous experience with a given vineyard, and the perfect balance of sugar and acid. Mindless drones! Now we know that you should never pick until the grapes have lost all traces of varietal character or terroir, and ignore the numbers (except that the potential alcohol has to be at least 15.5%).

Q. How many winemakers does it take to change a light bulb?

-Sam Barker, Dallas, TX

A. One; a winemaker holds the light bulb and waits for the world to revolve around him.

Q. I'm a cellar worker. How come you winemakers always pick the hardest way to do any given job?

-Sarah Burton, Sebastopol, CA

A. Well, Sarah, the truth is that it's been quite awhile since we winemakers have actually worked a full day in the cellar. So we don't have to be bothered by practical considerations, overtime, or physical laws.

Q. I remember the days when wine writers just told a winery's story, and gracefully described their wines. Articles were well-constructed examples of the writer's craft. Don't you wish they would stop all this ratings business?

-Jonathan Story, Manhattan, NY

A. No, Mr. Story, I think they should save us all some time by not bothering to describe wines at all and just assign them a score. They wouldn't even have to pretend to critically taste them, and could review five times as many wines per issue.

Q. If great wine is made in the vineyard, how come you winemakers get all the glory instead of the vineyard managers?

-Greg Kjelsgard, Healdsburg, CA

A. Hey, look at that, we've run out of space in the newsletter! That about wraps it up for this issue's "Ask the Winemaker", so please keep those cards and letters coming, and remember: 2003 in Napa Valley—What a wild ride!

Event Wrap-Up

Our New Release Party in November was a huge turn-out! Thanks for joining us to enjoy our latest releases. Just before the holidays, we made up a batch of *gluwein* (warm spiced wine). Even though it was raining, we were warm and happy for December's Holiday Open House. Finally, in January, we kicked off our club dinner series in Newport Beach. Thanks Bayside Restaurant and members for a fabulous evening! Hope to see you at our next good time!

Freemark Abbey Winery

Inside this issue:

What's Ted Drinking?	2
New Arrival	2
Savings Galore	2
Club Calendar	3
Event Wrap-Up	4
Contact Us	4
Jo's Special	4

IMPORTANT STUFF!

- Wine doesn't travel well. Try to let your bottles lay down for at least 7 days prior to drinking.
- FREE SHIPPING is offered on all orders of \$500 or more.
- Sign-up for the eMonitor to receive the latest pricing and special offers. See our website for details.
- Refer a friend to the *Key to the Abbey* Wine Club and get any current 750ml bottle at a 50% discount

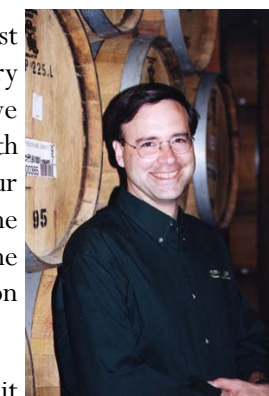
KEY TO THE ABBEY

February 2004

Freemark Scoop

by Tim Bell, Winemaker

This is the issue of the newsletter in which I typically recap the most recent harvest. But let's be honest; you don't really want all that dry blather. Indeed, as winemakers throughout the Napa Valley have learned, recounting the dates when all the different stages of growth occurred is no way to get quoted by the press and further your career. The winemaker seeking a higher profile needs to turn up the hyperbole—make winemaking edgy! Here's the sound bite for the 2003 harvest that I provided to the Napa Valley Vintner's Association for use in their press releases:



"What a wild ride! Rain in April, late onset of veraison, and it looked like everything would come in two weeks later than normal. Then a heat wave in September suddenly made everything ripe: Chardonnay, Merlot, and Cab all at the same time. I'm especially excited about the good color and extraction we have gotten this year."-- **Tim Bell, Winemaker, Freemark Abbey Winery**

Okay, now that we've gotten that out of the way, let's get to what you really came here for: answering your letters, or—as we like to call it—Ask the Winemaker!

Q. My favorite merlot normally has a characteristic weedy aroma I've come to love. But last night I had a bottle that smelled, well, poopy. I've heard Brett described as "barnyard". Is that what I'm smelling? And is it dangerous?

-Carrie Yoder, Omaha, NE

A. No, and no. I've experienced the same phenomenon, and have actually sent two different bottles of the same wine out for analysis of the two main chemical culprits in Brett aroma, 4-ethyl phenol and 4-ethyl guaiacol, hoping to find a difference. There was none. Apparently poopy is not part of the Brett barnyard. However, in conjunction with a local well-known independent laboratory, I have developed a set of analytical tools for poopiness, as well as its chemical precursors. Poopy will be the next big thing in the wine industry, and whether or not wine writers see it as a positive or a negative, I'm poised to clean up as a consultant.

Q. What's the secret to a 96-point score?

-Jerry Poole, Newport Beach, CA

A. Never produce any wine in quantities exceeding 235 cases; it should not actually be available to most of the publication's readers. And never have a pH below 4. Wine writers like it flabby.

Continued on Page 4.....

What's Ted Drinking?

I have to tell you... it is a wonderful experience to produce a wine and to see it enjoyed by the people so very close to you...analogous to the warm feelings that I get in preparing the Christmas dinner. I love the Holidays and one of my discoveries this year was how well the 2000 Merlot was drinking!

Taking the path of least resistance and gravitating to the wine that promised immediate gratification, we opened several bottles of our Merlot with the multitude of visits from family and friends...*and the wine was genuinely loved by all!*

The 2000 Merlot is everything that I would want it to be; it is dark ruby in

color and the initial fruit in the aroma is reminiscent of dark cherry, plum, juniper berry and a hint of leafy salad-like arugula. Upon swirling intensely, with the wine "catching air" (for you snowboard riders out there), a fairly strong black raspberry aroma opens up. In the bouquet, the nuances of cedar, molasses and chocolate add to the complexity. The wine finishes fairly smooth with tame tannins and enough acidity to give it good length in the overall flavor perception, along with a clean aftertaste. This is a wine to be enjoyed over and over and over again.....

....to many returns. -Ted



"...one of my discoveries this year was how well the 2000 Merlot was drinking!"



New Arrival

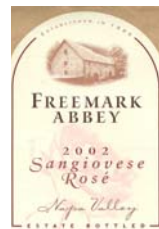
We are very pleased to introduce you to the newest wine in the Freemark Abbey Family-our 2001 Syrah! This is a luscious, ripe, red wine perfect with a wide variety of foods. You might know it by its alternative name-Shiraz. Cardinal and Josephine's members enjoy this brand new wine in their February 2003 shipment. Cheers!

Savings Galore!!

The holiday lull is over and we're back to work! The cellar staff is getting ready to bottle and that means we need to make room in the cellar. For you, that means savings galore!!

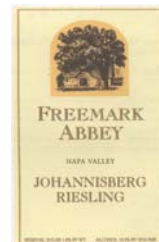
Step right up and get these amazing deals on some fantastic wines!

Quantities are limited-and there are no guarantees that we'll have what you want available, so you had best call today!



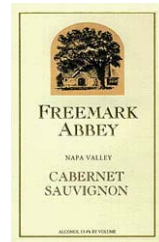
- '02 Sangiovese Rose: now \$7.50 per bottle!

Our first ever blush wine is a perfect accompaniment for holiday tables, picnics or a warm afternoon. Don't be fooled by its color-it's dry and delicious!



- '01 Johannesburg Riesling: also just \$7.50!

This light, crisp, easy drinking wine is a natural favorite with spicy foods-the delicate sweetness offsets the fire in your mouth! Also a great aperitif.

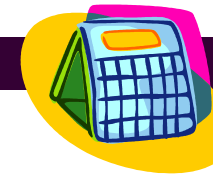


- '98 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon: 50% off!

Drink now or save for a few years for the most enjoyment!

- All Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon magnums from the 1980 vintages: now 30% off!

We all know wine ages better in large bottles. We've kept these beauties carefully cellared and are ready to share them with you for your next dinner party or special occasion.



Calendar of Events

- March 20, 2004: Three Cab Comparative 2pm-4pm at Freemark Abbey

Always wondered what the difference is between our three delicious cabs? This sit-down tasting is your opportunity to relax, enjoy and try them side by side. We'll select a few vintages to taste and compare, nosh on some yummy food and have a great afternoon. \$25 for Members (one guest at same price)/\$35 for non-members/guests

- March 24, 2004: Wine Club Dinner in New York Location TBD



Freemark Abbey visits the Big Apple for a night of fine dining and fantastic wine! We share six of our premium wines accompanied by a delicious multi-course dinner-all for one inclusive price. Join us for this one of a kind evening. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. \$110 for Members (one guest at same price)/\$130 for non-members/guests.

- April 17, 2004: Sycamore Vineyards Cabernet Library Tasting 10a-4p at Freemark Abbey

We've searched our cellar for some of the best vintages of our acclaimed Sycamore Vineyards Cabernet and will pour them for your enjoyment. We'll pair these wines with a few good munchies and you've got a lovely Spring day! Special wine pricing available. No reservations are required. \$10 for Members (one guest at same price)/\$20 for non-members/guests.

- April 27, 2004: Library Dinner in Chicago Location TBD



A first-exclusively for our Key to the Abbey members! Enjoy a luxurious meal paired with a dazzling array of our highly sought after library wines. This intimate evening of fantastic wine and epicurean delights is limited to 10 lucky Freemark enthusiasts. RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. \$140 for Members (one guest at same price) All inclusive.

- April 28, 2004: Wine Club Dinner in Chicago Location TBD



Another exciting dinner in Chicago! If you can't make our library dinner, don't miss this one. Five courses, six wines and a great time-one price, all inclusive. Last year's club dinner sold out, now we're back for more! RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. \$105 for Members (one guest at same price)/\$125 for non-members/guests.

- May 03, 2004: Wine Club selections begin shipping. Delivery dates vary with each state.

Please ensure all address and credit card information is updated at least two (2) weeks prior to shipment or your shipment may be delayed or cancelled. Freemark Abbey is not responsible for charges incurred for reshipping wine due to an incorrect address. Shipping delays may occur due to weather.

- May 15, 2004: Third Annual Bud Break Party 1pm-5pm at Freemark Abbey



A favorite for members and staff alike! This is the 3rd year we invite Napa Valley's finest restaurants to join us in kicking off the winemaking season. Relax on our lawn as you sample the best that Wine Country has to offer in wine and food. This event always sells out so reserve your space today. \$35 Members (one guest at same price)/\$45 non-members/guests.

- June 19, 2004: Winemaker Dinner 6pm at Freemark Abbey



This one's different! You bring your favorite library bottle of Freemark, we supply dinner! Details to follow!

- July 10, 2004: Reds, Whites and Blues Picnic 5pm at Freemark Abbey

Bring a picnic, enjoy some wine, listen to some great music. Summer is here! Details to follow.