

EYE ON THE VINE

Riesling: Ripe for Revival

By Sheila Nicholas
Nicholas Vineyard
Anam Cara Cellars

With the resurgence of a cool climate, Oregon Riesling is making an interesting turn. Back in the 1980s, Riesling accounted for one-quarter of the state's wine production and was primarily made in a sweeter style. Over time, the grape lost favor in the market and vines were grafted over to more lucrative varieties such as Pinot Noir or the more trendy (and easier to grow) Pinot Gris. Riesling acreage dropped to an all-time low in 2005 with only 524 acres in the entire state. But thanks largely to a few stalwart producers such as Amity, Chehalem, Elk Cove and Argyle, who kept the faith and refused to compromise on vision and quality, Riesling has gained a following of enlightened wine drinkers and is making a comeback.

More than 20 local winemakers with established reputations for spectacular Pinot Noirs, met recently at Argyle Winery in Dundee to talk about the past, present and future of Riesling.

Connected in our belief that Oregon will duly be known as much for Riesling as Pinot Noir, we discussed our viticulture and winemaking and shared outstanding home-grown Rieslings from Chehalem, Argyle, Brooks, Lemelson, Elk Cove, Amity, Belle Pente, Brandborg, Ponzi, Vitae Springs, Retour, Anam Cara and A to Z, among others. Without exception, these were delicious wines of structure, finesse and clarity. It was a tasting that none of us wanted to end.

Gone are the sweet and simple sippers, replaced by noble Rieslings that are transparently stunning reflections of the vineyard and terroir. These "new wave" wines are interesting, structured, balanced and ageable, many showing similar characteristics to the great producers from Alsace and Germany.

Before the buzz, we at Nicholas Vineyard dipped our proverbial toe in the water and planted one tiny acre of Riesling because we were impressed with the wines we'd seen and felt that we had a great site (southeast facing, steep slope on Chehalem Mountain, a Tiger Woods 4-iron from Rex Hill winery).

We weren't alone. For the first time in over a decade, the annual Oregon State Agricultural Statistics report indicates Riesling plantings to be on the rise. Is it consumer awareness? Winemaker's passion? Attention by wine columnists? Probably a combination of all of those. The winemakers are succeeding, the media is noticing, and consumers are benefiting.

While we are among the smallest producers of Riesling in the Newberg area with only 200 cases possible from our acre, we've committed to the renaissance by clearing a jungle of blackberries to plant two more acres, tripling our Riesling production.



Nicholas



Profile – Natalie's Estate Winery

Origins

Boyd and Cassandra Teegarden are the owners of Natalie's Estate Winery. Their journey into the wine business began when a job transfer brought them from Florida to the Portland area over 12 years ago. Boyd began working at Valley Wine Company, E & J Gallo's Oregon wholesaler. He soon became acquainted with David O'Reilly, who was then marketing director at Elk Cove Vineyards, as Valley was also Elk Cove's distributor. "David was just about to start Sineann with Peter Rosback when I met him," explains Boyd. "They were so enthusiastic about what they were doing, it was infectious." O'Reilly convinced the Teegardens that going into the wine business for themselves offered exactly the lifestyle they were looking for, knowing that they had already fallen in love with the Chehalem Mountain appellation and wine country.

In 1999, the Teegardens bought 15 prime, hillside acres near the eastern end of the Chehalem Range and named their winery Natalie's Estate in honor of their 1-year-old daughter. They de-

Quick Facts

Owners: Boyd and Cassandra Teegarden
16825 N.E. Chehalem Drive, Newberg
503-554-9350 or 503-807-5008

Website:
www.nataliesestatewinery.com

Open to public by appointment. Call 503-807-5008 or fax 503-554-9350 to arrange a visit.

cidied to devote the estate vineyard entirely to Pinot Noir. The upper block was planted in 2001 and the lower block in 2002. To create a balanced blend, they put in a diversity of cuttings — the newer 113, 114 and 115 Dijons and the traditional Wadenswil and Pommard. Boyd and Cassandra knew that their few acres of vines wouldn't be enough to build a sustainable business, so they began looking around for long-term buying/farming relationships. They now lease specific rows from eight vineyards located in the warmer

growing regions of the Columbia Gorge and the Columbia and Yakima valleys. They work closely with the vineyard managers to produce high quality, concentrated grapes for their wines

A Variety of Varietals

Natalie's Estate focuses on NW Reds primarily, such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Pinot Noir and Syrah. However, they do have small lots of Viognier, Chardonnay, Zinfandel and Cabernet Franc blends. The winery focuses on making big, rich extracted wines with structure. Boyd Teegarden's goal is to create extremely well balanced wines with complexity. Wines are made by hand, using traditional open fermenters and basket presses. They are matured in a combination of French and American oak barrels for 12 to 18 months before bottling without filtering or filtration. Grapes are grown using sustainable farming practices which reflect the winery's mission statement of environmental, social and financial responsibility.

Distribution and Awards

In their first year of business, Natalie's Estate released



A rainbow appears over the vineyards at Natalie's Estate.

100 cases of wine. This year, they will produce between 2,000 and 2,300 cases of mostly single vineyard wines, which will be distributed to selected markets in the United States, with most of it going to fine wine shops and restaurants.

Natalie's Estate has received several scores in the 90's from The Wine Spectator and Wine Maker of the Year awards from some local organizations.

Labeling

The symbol of the hummingbird on the Natalie's Estate label was chosen to represent the Teegardens' wine-making philosophy — to be a small producer where the in-

tensity of the wines becomes their strength. Like the hummingbird, it is their goal to harvest the finest fruit nectar. Their single vineyard wines are exclusively under this label. The Teegardens looked for several months for the right artist to represent their wines and ended up finding two that they really enjoyed as people as well as artists: Lance Morrison and Brent Lawrence. Boyd and Cassandra commission pieces of art from the pair to become the foundation of their labels.

Expansion

Natalie's Estate is currently expanding the Pinot Noir Estate vineyard at the winery with three additional acres.

Explore ~ Taste ~ Savor

In Oregon's Premier Wine Region



Artist Kathleen Buck: www.kathleenbuckart.com

WINE TASTING VENUES

Bishop Creek Cellars
Thurs.-Sun. 12-6pm,
12-9 pm on First Friday
700 E. First St. #200
Newberg
503-476-8686
www.bishopcreekcellars.com

Hip Chicks Do Wine
12am-7pm Everyday
602B E. First St.
Newberg
503-554-5800
www.hipchicksdowine.com

Methven Family Vineyards
Wed.-Sun. 11am-5pm
1400 Westland Lane
Dayton 97114
503-868-7259
www.methvenfamilyvineyards.com
bethany@methvenfamilyvineyards.com

Natalie's Estate Winery
For a private tasting,
please call 503-807-5008/
503-554-9350
16825 NE Chehalem Drive
Newberg
www.nataliesestatewinery.com

Sokol Blosser Winery
Open Daily 10 am-4 pm
5000 Sokol Blosser Lane
Dundee 97115
800-582-6668
info@sokolblosser.com
www.sokolblosser.com

Cusick Picture Frame and Art Gallery
608 E. First St.
Newberg
503-554-1912
cusickpictureframe@comcast.net

Dundee Manor
8380 N.E. Worden Rd.
Dundee 97115
1-888-262-1133
www.dundee Manor.com

ART GALLERIES

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115 N. College St.
Newberg
503-538-0888
www.newberggallery.com

Wine Country Farms
6855 Breyman Orchards Rd., Dayton 97114
503-864-3446
www.winecountryfarm.com

SHOPPING

Dave's Flowers and Gifts
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Newberg
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Tastefully Yours Home and Garden Accents
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Newberg
503-537-9003

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503-537-0754

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Newberg
5093-538-3828
www.theSOAPYbear.com

Ken & Daughter Jewelers
707 E. First St.
Newberg
503-538-1347

The Quilted Hill
7601 N.E. Blackburn Rd.
Yamhill
503-662-4052
www.thequiltedhill.com

Verna's Sewing Center
450 N. Hwy 99
McMinnville
503-472-0523

Ferguson's Fragrant Nursery
21763 French Prairie Rd NE
St. Paul 97137
503-633-4585
www.fragrantnursery.com

BED & BREAKFASTS

VISITOR INFORMATION

Chehalem Valley Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center
415 E. Sheridan St.
Newberg
503-538-2014
www.chehalemvalley.org

