



Fall 2003 Newsletter

# Lost Canyon WINERY

## Our First Commercial Release— What a Year It's Been!



Partners: Bob Riskin, Randy Keyworth, and Jack States.



### SPRING 2004 WINE RELEASES

2002

Russian River  
Pinot Noir

Dutton Ranch—Morelli Lane

2002

Russian River  
Pinot Noir  
Saralee's Vineyard

2002

Los Carneros  
Pinot Noir  
Las Brisas Vineyard

2002

Sonoma Coast  
Syrah  
Stage Gulch Vineyard

2002

Russian River  
Syrah  
Alegria Vineyard

New wineries go through different developmental stages: creating a vision, developing a business plan, building relationships in the industry, constructing production facilities, purchasing equipment, securing grapes, making their first commercial wine, and, yes, learning how to use all of the new toys and equipment. Our first two years represented a huge learning curve. Through hard work, skill and good fortune, we succeeded at each venture. However, as new and exhilarating as these early stages have been, they were just a prelude to the biggest and most terrifying of developmental stages: the **FIRST COMMERCIAL RELEASE**.

Yes, we do use the word “terrifying”! As much confidence as we had in our wines, as much great feedback as we received, as sure as we were that



our first wines were the highest quality, there was absolutely no way to prepare for putting our wines in front of world class wine competitions, restaurants, sommeliers, wine critics, wine shops, and the wine press. These are folks who have no vested

interests whatsoever in our dreams and hopes, but will only judge our success by the quality of our wines compared against the very best wines in the business. It is like placing your children in front of very critical judges and saying please tell me everything you like and don't like about them...and then going in front of more judges each week. There is simply no way to stay calm during this process.

And finally, to further increase our anxiety, our fearless Marketing Partner—Bob Riskin—insisted that we insert ourselves at the very highest level of the review/competition pyramid. He researched and developed lists of the very top rated restaurants, sommeliers, wine shops, competitions, wine



critics, and periodicals...and submitted/presented our wines. While his other more timid winery partners—Jack States and Randy Keyworth—might have gone with a lower profile “lets get our feet wet” approach, Bob insisted “we make world class wines and we need to compete at that level from day one.” Well, Bob was right!

We released our 2001 Vintage—Los Carneros Pinot Noir, Russian River Pinot Noir, Stage Gulch Syrah, California Syrah—to the wine world in March of 2003 and it has been an extraordinary success! We could not imagine a better response to all four of our wines.

Our wines have won international, state and county awards. They have been added to the wine lists of many of the most exclusive restaurants and wine shops in the Bay Area. We have had enthusiastic articles written in numerous industry and mass media periodicals and received great reviews from many of the top critics in the industry. Our wines have been written about in various internet newsletters and our web site even won an award—the 2003-04 Golden Web Award.

Most of all, our wines have brought great satisfaction to our friends and ourselves—they are still our favorite wines to drink. To those of you who have purchased our wines, spread the word about our winery, helped us with production, and supported us in many other ways, thanks for helping us reach our dream. The ride has been exhilarating!

*Bob Riskin, Jack States, Randy Keyworth*

# The Role of Barrels in Making

As many of you may recall from our first newsletter, Lost Canyon's winemaking philosophy includes three principles:

- Remain small enough to respect the uniqueness of grapes and wine
- Spare no expense obtaining the highest quality grapes and maintaining close partnerships with great growers
- Specialize in varieties you love

Well, we are about to add a fourth:

- Spare no expense obtaining the highest quality of barrels, matching the uniqueness of barrels and wine, and maintaining close partnerships with great cooperages.

Many wineries talk about the role that barrels play in wine-making, but few wineries talk in depth about the importance of selecting just the right barrels, from the right cooperage, that will provide extraordinary notes of flavor to enhance the fruit. There is a tendency to believe that barrels are barrels and oak is oak.

*The reality is that barrel selection—matching individual barrels to individual wines—is one of the most critical and complex decisions made by the winemaker!*



At Lost Canyon, we think of barrels as items from the spice cabinet. To produce a great meal, you select just the right flavors to enhance the dish. To produce great wine you must select just the right barrels to add the desired flavor

profile to that wine. Like the wide selection of spices one can choose from in cooking, there are an amazingly large number of choices in barrels.

Believe it or not, there is a huge difference between French and American oak, and even between different French forests. The “toast” of a barrel, length of time the staves are aged, shape of barrel, etc. all make a distinctive difference in how wines develop. The age of barrels and how long wine stays in them adds to the complexity. We will often age the same wine in different types of barrels to blend in various complexities and tastes. If you were to taste these identical wines after they had been in different barrels, you would taste dramatic differences...after only weeks in the barrel.

Consistent with our philosophy, Lost Canyon has built partnerships with small, customized, world-class cooperages in France. The barrels we purchase are among the most respected in the industry. The cooperage representative—Jerome Aubin—also lives in Oakland (we are bound and

determined to make Oakland the center of the winemaking universe) and works closely with us to match barrels and wines. He has also joined us for winery events to mesmerize guests with his knowledge of barrels.

At Lost Canyon we are committed to the use of French Oak for our Pinot Noir and Syrah wines. The forests that these barrels come from are located across France. From the east of France we use the forests of Vosges, Châtillon, and Bourgogne. From the center of France comes the oak of Allier, Nevers, Tronçais, Allier, and Jupilles.

These forests are owned and managed by the French government. The wood is hand selected by the cooper. The wood is cut into staves and allowed to season in the open air for 2 years before being made into barrels. This helps to eliminate the green tannins and phenols that can negatively impact the taste of the wine. We have recently invested in barrels with staves that have been seasoned for 3 years, which are supposed to produce even more remarkable “seasoning”.

When the barrel is constructed, its shell is heated to bend the staves and form the barrel. In addition, the inside of the barrel is “toasted” giving the barrel a certain flavor profile. One can choose from light, medium, or heavy toast levels. Each one brings its own flavor profile ranging from lightly toasted (grilled bread), to caramelized flavors (butterscotch), to smoky (bacon).

For our Pinot Noir we use barrels made by a small, family owned cooperage called Rousseau. These barrels are constructed in Burgundy in the Marsannay region. They supply some of the best known wine producers in Burgundy as well as a select number of smaller producers in other parts of the world. They have been in business for about 50 years.

We use “east forest” Rousseau barrels for extractions that will work well with the fruit-forward nature of our Russian River grapes while enhancing the structure of these graceful wines. For our Los Carneros wines we follow a different path. Our choice is “central forest” Rousseau barrels in order to add finesse with a refrain of chocolate that compliments the dark fruit of this region and adds to the already wonderful mouth feel of the wine.



# Exceptional Wine

When it comes to our Syrah we proceed in a different direction, matching other forests and a different cooperage so as not to overwhelm the tannins of this magnificent grape. We focus on barrels made from another small, family owned cooperage called Saint Martin. They are located near Bordeaux and also have been in business for 50 years. These barrels gently polish the Syrah and provide a “little Bordeaux savior-faire”.

From Saint Martin we select house blend barrels from the Allier and Vosges forests. We have also been extremely pleased with single forest barrels from Jupilles. These barrels impart an elegance that does not overpower the fruit, and at the same time offers wonderful highlights of chocolate.

As you can see, from a winemaker’s perspective, barrels are the spice of life.

## Lost Canyon Winery Wines Win Awards

During the year, we entered a select number of competitions with our wines. We participated in the San Francisco Chronicle’s Wine Competition in the spring with our Carneros Pinot Noir and received a Silver Medal in the category of wines \$25.00 and over. This was our first award for our wines and we were very excited!

In June we submitted our Carneros Pinot Noir and our Stage Gulch Syrah to the San Francisco International Wine Competition. This is very prestigious and large competition involving 26 states, 21 countries, and over 4000 wines. We were awarded Silver Medals for both our wines!



## Here’s What People are Saying about Lost Canyon Wines...

*Wine Spectator* – Soft and supple, with good concentration of plum, red currant and cherry flavors that fold into chocolate and cedar notes in the modest tannin of the finish. *Carneros Pinot Noir 2001*

*Wine Enthusiast* – Simple and jammy...with lip-smacking, candied flavors of cherries, raspberries, and spicy mocha. Feels light and silky to the mouth, with gentle acids and tannins. *Carneros Pinot Noir 2001*

*Connoisseurs Guide to California Wine* – Redolent of ripe cherries seasoned with rich creamy oak, this wine is surprisingly moderate in concentration, and it gets much of its support from us for its balanced underlying structure and its somewhat exotic nuances of dried flowers and root beer. Its complexity is beyond question. *Carneros Pinot Noir 2001*



*The Pinot Report* –Medium ruby color, cherry and earth aromas, spice oak on nose, full rich on palate. Good forward flavors with the structure and balance to match but not overdone with oak. Nice style from a new producer and I think one to watch. *Carneros Pinot Noir 2001*

*Wine & Spirits* – Vibrant, lifted by spicy fruit, this is grounded in mineral tones hard and black as granite. Grown on a hill near the Petaluma Gap, the wine shows good promise, even with its slight sage green edge. Pour it with herb marinated roast lamb. *Sonoma Coast Stage Gulch Syrah 2001*

*Dean & DeLuca Wine & Food Letter* – The Lost Canyon Stage Gulch Syrah is ripe and meaty with cherry blueberry sorbet, and smoke with some white pepper notes creeping in, nice mouth structure with defined length and complexity. *Sonoma Coast Stage Gulch Syrah 2001*



## Note from the Vineyards

We are excited to announce that we have added the Trenton Station Vineyard from Saralee’s Vineyards, to our list of outstanding vineyards. Trenton Station is Saralee’s newest endeavor. The vineyard is 46.5 acres in size with plantings of Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Viognier, Zinfandel, and Syrah. We will be making a vineyard designated Syrah from this vineyard that promises to bring long hang times and intense flavors from this Russian River hillside location. Our first harvest from Trenton Station was October with release of this wine scheduled for Spring 2005.

We have just brought the grapes in from the 2003 harvest. The harvest ran about a week to 10 days later than last year. This Spring was a wet one with the ground staying moist into early days of the summer. For many of the vineyards, the bud break led to reduced crop size with smaller berries. The Summer also remained on the cooler side, slowing the timing of veraison. Warmer weather late in the summer accelerated the ripening process leading to less but more intense fruit for harvesting. We are excited about this year’s prospects for our vineyards. All of our growers have taken great care in farming the vineyards to lower yields that will give us just the kind of flavors we are looking for to make great wines!

Check out [www.lostcanyonwinery.com](http://www.lostcanyonwinery.com) for the most current information on Lost Canyon.



# Lost Canyon

WINERY

1017 22nd Ave. #300 Oakland, CA 94606  
510-534-9314

**Here are a few of the outstanding restaurants and wine shops where you will find Lost Canyon wines:**

One Market  
Hawthorne Lane  
Greens  
The Four Seasons Hotel S.F.  
Campton Place  
Cafe Kati  
Citron  
Hayes Street Grill  
Brix  
Roya of San Francisco  
Marche  
Mistral  
Viognier  
Gotham Bar & Grill NY

Dean & DeLuca  
Beltramos  
Joseph George  
Draegers  
Napa Valley Wine Exchange  
John Walker Wine & Spirits  
The Cannery Wine Cellar  
The Wine Vault

## Syrah~ The Next Really Big Red!

In the September 30, 2003 edition of Wine Spectator, Matt Kramer wrote an article on "Syrah, the Next Really Big Red". We were very happy to read Matt's comments about Syrah and why he thinks that it will be the next wine slated for stardom. "Really big" is the equivalent of Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, or Merlot.

Matt states a number of criteria that a varietal has to have to qualify for this type of stardom.

- **There has to be a lot of the fruit planted.** Although this is not true in the U.S. to date, 17,000 acres vs. 98,000 for Cabernet Sauvignon, 76,000 for Chardonnay, and 52,000 for Merlot, there is plenty of the varietal being grown in the Rhone Valley, Australia, and Languedoc-Roussillon. In addition, we are seeing more and more high quality California growers expanding their Syrah acreage.
- **There must be a pinnacle wine representing the varietal at very high price points.** These pinnacle wines validate the grape's quality and help to set price points for the category. Examples include Cote-Rotie, Hermitage, Grange and Henschke Hill of Grace.
- **The varietal has to grow successfully in multiple climates and soils, and provide commercial yields from the vines.** Syrah can adapt to a number of climates and soil conditions, it also

is known as an abundant producer.

- **Finally, the wine needs to be obvious, full of flavor, color, and fruitiness.** You can't miss distinguishing its characteristics! If you have enjoyed a glass of Syrah you know immediately what you are experiencing!



We have selected cooler climate vineyards from which to produce our wines. Our Syrahs are very fruit forward and intense in color. We age them for 10 months in half new and half one and two year old French oak barrels. We produced two Syrahs in 2002: one from the Sonoma Coast (Stage Gulch Vineyard Syrah) and the other from the Russian River (Alegria Vineyard Syrah). Although they are both cool climate wines they are very different in their characteristics from the soil they are grown in and the micro-climates they come from. We will be adding our third Syrah for 2003 from Trenton Station Vineyard in the Russian River.

As you can tell, we love working with Syrah and we know you will enjoy the wines we are producing!