

# Winemaker's Notes

November 2003

## Students Embark on a Unique Winemaking Project

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**I**talian grape growing and winemaking has its origins at the dawn of western civilization. Over the millennia, certain regional wine styles have survived to become the classics we know today. One of the more interesting of the ancient Italian regions is Valpolicella (*Ital.* “Valley of many cellars”) located north-west of Verona near Lake Garda.

Writings dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD describe regional wines fermented from intentionally withered and dehydrated grapes. Known at the time as Acinatico, the ancient wine style evolved first to yield the desert-style wine today known as Recioto and, later, its the heavy-bodied red wine equivalent, Amarone.

Production of both Reciotos and Amarones has changed little since the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. According to tradition, grapes are harvested at the end of September and either hung from rafters or laid on straw mats for 3-4 months to allow for withering. During this time, clusters lose half or more of their initial fresh weight. Once the fruit reaches 30+% sugar, it is fermented. To prevent raisining (rather than slow withering) and unwanted mold growth, modern cellars, such as our own, carry out the drying phase in air-condition, humidity-controlled cellars.

Fermentations are carried out in oak barrels. In the cooler climate of northern Italy, these may take months to complete. Modern wine-making techniques in temperature-controlled cellars shorten the period of fermentation and yield fresher, more fruit-forward styles of wine that require considerably shorter cellar aging time. After the fermentation is complete, wines continue to age in oak for several years. Once bottled, the wines are again allowed to “rest” for months before being sold.

Well-crafted Amarones are full-bodied and concentrated wines that display deep red colors and focused cherry and currants aromas. Rich port-like aromatics followed by chocolate and spice also can be expected. They may require years to fully develop before drinking.

The name Recioto is derived from “recia” or “recie” which refers to the smaller riper clusters of higher sugar content. Grapes are harvested at higher sugar levels than those destined for Amarones. To concentrate the sugars more, the drying phase is allowed to proceed further before processing. Depending upon the final sugar level, fermentations may be complete to yield a dry style wine or subside before all the sugar is fermented



Fresno State student, Egon Smith, prepares grapes to be hung on the frames

yielding a naturally sweet dessert-style wine. Reciotos are often bottled in “splits” or 375 mL bottles (approx. 1/10 U.S. gal). Reciotos mature more rapidly than Amarones and are ready for consumption 5-6 years after bottling.

### *Our Amarone Project*

During the 2003 vintage, Fresno State student winemakers worked on several “classic” wine styles including Amarones and Reciotos. Although we were unable to obtain the indigenous red grape varieties (Corvina, Corvinone, Rondinella and Molinara) of Valpolicella, these were substituted with the southern Italian red grape Primitivo and white Rhone cultivar, Viognier. In early September, both cultivars were harvested at near 24% sugar, sorted and hung from frames in our temperature and humidity controlled cellar to slowly mature (see photos). As of today, the withering process is well

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(559) 278-WINE (9463)

[www.FresnoStateWinery.com](http://www.FresnoStateWinery.com)



Winemaker Fugelsang at the Winemaker's Weekend wine reception at the Tenaya Lodge Yosemite in March 2002

### Look for Fresno State wine at these events:

- Le Vin Nouveau— Fresno State Winery—November 20, 2003
- Holiday Memories -Visalia Convention Center— December 6, 2003
- Fresno State Winemaker's Weekend—Tenaya Lodge Yosemite —Workshops, and Five-Course Gourmet Meal March 5-6, 2004

## Unveiling our new “Brand Identity”



*Paula Sugarman of Sugarman Design Group in Fair Oaks presents ideas for a new look that will soon garnish all of Fresno State's agricultural products—including our wine!*

**Several varieties of Fresno State wine await our new wine labels that will have our “new look”**

Earlier this year, the winery embarked on a new project to improve the “look” of our wine products. We set out on this task with a goal of creating a consistent image for all of our wine labels, one that consumers could easily identify in the marketplace.

Soon after discussions began, it was clear that the concept of having one common “brand identity” for the winery could also benefit all of the university’s agricultural products. Dr. Carl Pherson, director of Agricultural Operations for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, was called upon to join this unified effort. As a result, the Sugarman Design Group (SDG) of Fair Oaks, California was hired by the Ag Foundation at California State University, Fresno to design a “brand identity” for all student produced products including the wine, ice cream, jam, meat and cheese products, and raisins.

A university team comprised of Dr. Carl Pherson and repre-

sentatives from all of the agricultural enterprises joined the winery team that had begun this project: Dr. Robert L. Wample, chairman of the Department of Viticulture and Enology and director of the Viticulture and Enology Research Center, Kenneth Fugelsang, winemaker and associate professor of enology, Kevin Connor, production supervisor for the winery, and Cynthia Wood, information services coordinator for the viticulture and enology programs. The combined team, in consultation with the University Relations Department, has been working with Paula Sugarman and the SDG team ever since with a goal of unveiling the “new look” this fall.

So, when will you see the new look? The farm’s “brand identity” image that will garnish all ag products is currently in its final stages of approval. In addition, the winery team is working with SDG on the final touches for three new wine label designs that will incorporate the new

image. This process, which also requires governmental approval of each wine label, takes several weeks.

In the meantime, our case goods storage area at the winery has several varieties of delicious Fresno State wine—just waiting to be garnished with our new labels—and shipped to our valued Wine Club members. We hope you will agree that it was worth the wait when you open your next shipment and see our new look for yourself! (and, of course, enjoy the wonderful wine!)

You can be assured that we are working hard to have your next Wine Club shipment ready before the holiday season—when the new labels are scheduled to make their first community debut.

Our Wine Club members now have the scoop on our upcoming new look. Thanks for your patience as we grow!



*Viognier grapes will hang from rafters and mature from early September 2003 until they reach 40% of their original weight*

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underway and the sugar content of both is 30+ percent.

Following tradition, the fruit will be allowed to “hang” for several months. Since the fruit has been allowed to dehydrate to less than half of its original weight, juice yield will be very limited. It is estimated that we will be able to produce only 60 gallons from the ton of fruit originally used. Fermentations are expected to take a month or more to complete followed by 2-3 years of aging in oak.

We hope to release our project the week of Thanksgiving, 2007.



*Grapes were harvested and hung from rafters in an air-conditioned, humidity-controlled environment in the Fresno State Winery (L to R: Brian Strohmeier, student, and Kevin Connor, production supervisor)*

## *Saroyan Vineyard Ties* — Submitted by *Ralph Saroyan*

The planting of the George Saroyan Vines, old vine Grenache, began in early April 1957 when Mr. Saroyan and his wife, Charlotte, hand cut 3200 Grenache cuttings from the Ed Deranian vineyard located in Minkler, five miles east of the Saroyan farm. The entire process took approximately two weeks with the cuttings being planted on seven acres east of their home on April 18, 1957.

George Saroyan, a first cousin to the author William Saroyan, emigrated with his parents and several relatives from Armenia in December, 1908 at the age of four. The family arrived in New York and came directly to the Fresno area—eventually settling in Sanger. George attended local schools in Sanger and graduated from Sanger High School. In 1935, he married Charlotte Misanian of Fowler and they moved

into a house across the street from his parents on California Avenue, just east of Academy Avenue.

After working well into his adulthood for his father, Levon B. Saroyan, George and Charlotte purchased a small plot of land further east on California and began planting a vineyard, beginning with four and one-half acres of Thompson Seedless grapes followed by the Grenache east of the Thompsons. The Thompsons were made into raisins and the Grenache were sold to local wineries for making Grenache Rosé.

George Saroyan passed away in January 1981, leaving Charlotte to maintain the family farm which, by then, covered over fifty acres and included twenty-four acres of French plums,

twenty and one-half acres of Thompsons and eight acres of Grenache (an additional acre was planted in the early 1960's).

George and Charlotte had two sons, the late Stan Saroyan and Ralph Saroyan. Both attended the University of the Pacific and graduated from the School of Pharmacy. Through hard work and sacrifice Charlotte and George put two sons through five years of college each. At times, Charlotte held two jobs and maintained the household while George managed the farm. Stan's two children, Steve and Sarah, also graduated from Pacific's School of Pharmacy.

Recently, younger son Ralph, who, in 2001 retired from a thirty-two year career on the pharmacy faculty of the University of the Pacific, took over the management of

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*In 1957, George Saroyan, first cousin to the author William Saroyan, planted the Grenache vines that produced the grapes for Fresno's State's 2003 Grenache wine—to be released in late 2004*

## *Le Vin Nouveau — November 20 at Fresno State*

You won't want to miss out on our *Le Vin Nouveau* celebration on November 20, 2003 in the Fresno State winery from 6:30 pm—8:30 pm.

Join us for a casual evening to celebrate our newest Nouveau wines—in time for the holidays!

Visit with students, friends, and learn more about food and wine pairing from our Winemaster Ken Fugelsang and Chef Frederick Clabaugh from the Tenaya Lodge at Yosemite.

Admission is only \$10 per person (must be 21 years of age or older to attend) and includes complimentary tastes of each featured wine and hors d'oeu-



*Enology student, Megan Prentice (Graduating Class of 2003), pouring wine at the 2002 Le Vin Nouveau event in the Fresno State winery*

vres. Scrip will be sold at the event for additional tastes. Wine Club members and members of the Fresno State Alumni Association will receive a \$5 discount per person, payable at the door.

The winery will accept wine orders and will also offer special discounts on wine purchases at this event. Wine Club members will receive an additional 15% off!

RSVP by November 17 (encouraged but not required) by fax 559 278-4795, or by email to [cynthiaw@csufresno.edu](mailto:cynthiaw@csufresno.edu).

Registration forms available at [www.FresnoStateWinery.com](http://www.FresnoStateWinery.com) or <http://cast.csufresno.edu/ve>.

Le Vin Nouveau is being presented by Fresno State Vineyards, the Department of Viticulture and Enology, and the Enology Society.

Bring a friend!

***Le Vin Nouveau* will be held at the Fresno State Winery on November 20.**

**Registration forms available online. RSVP by November 17. Wine Club Member Discount!**

## Fresno State Vineyards— California State University, Fresno

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### ORDER WINE ON THE WEB

[WWW.FRESNOSTATEWINERY.COM](http://WWW.FRESNOSTATEWINERY.COM)

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Wine Club members receive a 15%  
discount on all online wine orders.



### *Wine Club News*

- 'Tis the season for crush! The Fresno State winery production staff and students have been in full swing—busy crushing grapes and making delicious Fresno State wine!
- On the horizon! We anticipate a “new look” for our wine labels by the end of the year—pending government approval. See page 2 for full story.
- Thank you for your patience. Wine Club shipments are expected to resume in December, just in time for the holidays!
- Are you enjoying the Fresno State tailgate season? Whether at home or at a designated tailgate party, don't forget to celebrate with some Fresno State wine.
- Due to personnel changes in the winery this year, we may have inadvertently missed some of our Wine Club members. We appreciate your patience during this transition and are always seeking ways to improve our Club.
- Do we have your correct shipping address? email address? billing information? Please send all address changes to the attention of Kevin Connor at [kconnor@csufresno.edu](mailto:kconnor@csufresno.edu).

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the farm constantly seeking advice from his mother, Charlotte, who is now eighty-five years old.

In December 2002, Ralph came very close to pulling out the eight acres of Grenache vines because of back-to-back years of financial loss. While discussing his angst with a relative at a Christmas party, Ralph was advised to speak with Ray Krause of O'Neals, California who referred him to Kevin Connor at California State University, Fresno's winery. Following a meeting in early January 2003, an agreement was established between the Fresno State winery and Saroyan. Through the excellent guidance and advice of Kevin Connor, Department Chair Robert Wample, and Saroyan's PCA, Aram Michigan, (and of course mother, Charlotte) Ralph managed the farming of these special old vines in memory of his late father, George.

Two-thousand three, represents the first year that these old vine Grenache grapes will be made into a traditional Rhone style of red Grenache wine at Fresno State and Sequoia View Winery in Minkler. What goes around, comes around, you might say.

The winemaking staff and students at Fresno State are very pleased with the early development of this wine and look forward to its release in late 2004.



*George Saroyan. Grapes from George Saroyan's vineyards will be made into a traditional Rhone style of red Grenache wine at Fresno State—available in 2004*