

# THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF WINE

By Sarah Powell, Winemaker

“The recipe seems to be to grow grapes at as high a yield possible to make a simple, ripe, soft and fruity wine, then put the wine in 100% new oak barrels, and wait for the oak tannin to provide the structure, stuffing, strong aromatics and flavor. I do not find artistry, or appealing taste or texture, in wines made this way.”



It's been several years now that we stopped using all that flowery language to describe our wines. All Davis trained winemakers take Sensory Evaluation, a course which teaches us to dissect and give a specific name to every smell and taste (real or imagined) in a wine. The more specific smells and flavors one can name from a pre-determined vocabulary, the higher one's grade in the class. And so a whole science of “name that smell/taste” emerged, backed up with charts and graphs derived from statistics. The goal: to define and categorize wines for various purposes – most commonly, to define quality or style. An extension of its use: verbose, flowery back labels used to market wine.

I don't read labels when deciding to try a new wine. I describe what I like stylistically to a knowledgeable wine shop buyer, and he/she leads me to wines that are stylistically similar. Although wines come in many styles, I would have to say that for my classically French trained and globally experienced palate, the problem with so many wines today is a simplistic, two-dimensional style. The market is flooded with cookie-cutter, high production wines, that while they lack any complexity, they also have no flaws – other than being utterly boring for people who want more out of their glass.

What the sensory evaluation class at Davis omitted is important: great wine is not meant to simply be a two-dimensional media of smell and taste.

Anyone who loves red wine very quickly comes to understand the third dimension of wine: its feel or texture. Great white winemakers are acutely aware of this stylistic aspect as well. I was taught in France, and have come to thoroughly understand through my work and travels that great wine texture comes essentially from low-yield, highly ripe and concentrated grapes. Such grapes provide not only tannin, but most importantly, **extract**. Through careful vinification, the combination of extract and tannin can be balanced to produce viscous, velvety, supple wines that have a concentration which escalates their complexity and provides the stuffing needed for long-term aging. I have noticed a trend among many American wineries, approaching texture from quite an opposite path. The

and be able to help Grapevine continue to grow. Every winery they represent has a unique place in their portfolio. They will not add a winery that duplicates something they are already doing with one of their suppliers. In other words, their first priority is to existing partnerships with their current wineries.

The end result is that Grapevine has taken Oregon from a non-entity in North Carolina, to a major area of concentration for retailers and restaurateurs, now selling a combined 7,000+ cases of Oregon wine a year. Since 1994, Foris sales have increased nine fold, and Grapevine has been our top out of state wholesaler four out of the past five years, just slipping to the number two spot in 1999 by a mere few hundred dollars in sales.

While each of our distributors makes their own unique contribution to our marketing program, Grapevine's efforts are exemplary. Salutations to the Cohen family and Grapevine Distributing for their growing success! ■

## NEW RELEASE

### 1998 PINOT GRIS ROGUE VALLEY

#### Varietal

100% Pinot Gris  
62% Estate Grown  
100% Rogue Valley

#### Harvest Data

Averages from many lots

#### Maple Ranch 38%

Picked Oct. 22-23  
24.6 Brix  
5.5 g/L TA  
3.28 pH

#### Three Creeks 24%

Picked Oct. 21-31  
23.9 Brix  
5.0 g/L TA  
3.29 pH

#### Aguila Vineyard 24%

Picked Oct. 25  
22.1 Brix  
7.4 g/L TA  
3.36 pH

#### Pheasant Hill 14%

Picked Oct. 10  
23.8 Brix  
6.9 g/L TA  
3.39 pH

#### Bottling Data

13.9% Alcohol  
0.4% Residual Sugar  
5.5 g/L TA  
3.45 pH  
Bottled June, 1999

#### Production

2649 cases