

## PROMOTIONAL VISITS (SUCCESSFULLY) SHOWCASE WINERIES

by Rich Mauro

Denver is a large enough market that we benefit from countless visits by winemakers and winery owners every year. This column highlights several producers I met with recently that I found particularly impressive.

**PRETTY SALLY ESTATE:** The vineyards at Pretty Sally Estate were first planted in 1996 to land that had never been farmed before. The estate is located in Australia's Victoria region, 40 miles



north of Melbourne. The name comes from the nearby Pretty Sally Hills that were the site of the Australian Gold Rush during the 1860s.

Dan Cornew, who with his wife, Rosalie, handles marketing and sales for Pretty Sally Estate, told me the goal of owners McKay and Jim Davies is to produce elegant, old world style wines using traditional methods. Although not certified, they use organic practices whenever possible.

John Ellis, who gained respect for his decades of achievement with numerous wineries (most notably Rosemount), makes the wines. Although he has state-of-the-art equipment at his command, he professes a "minimal interventionist" philosophy.

The first wines were released in 2004. They are imported "winery direct" and now are distributed in 23 states. I found the current releases to be very good.

- 2005 Estate Sauvignon Blanc — abundant citrus and apple fruit, with herbal notes, a touch of spice and just a hint of sweetness.
- 2004 Cabernet Shiraz — 51% Cabernet, 49% Shiraz; bright fruit; meant for early consumption.
- 2003 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon — tasty fresh fruit, along with smoky and herbal touches.
- 2003 Estate Shiraz — loads of berry fruit; suggestions of black pepper and even a little brown sugar; good concentration and just enough tannin to suggest the ability to improve.

**D'ARENBERG:** While Pretty Sally Estate is a newcomer to the Australian wine industry, d'Arenberg, on the other hand, has been around for 80 years in the McLaren Vale region of South Australia near Adelaide.

Without question, d'Arenberg is one of the most significant wineries in Australia. Year after year, d'Arenberg garners international praise for its wines, so it was no surprise the recent winemaker visit to Denver was anxiously awaited and the events heavily attended.

Current winemaker Chester d'Arenberg Osborn came through Denver with his father, Francis d'Arenberg Osborn as part of a U.S. tour to celebrate d'Arry's 80th birthday (and his 64th vintage!). At the Westminster Westin hotel, attendees were treated to a tasting, followed by a reception showcasing verticals of several of d'Arenberg's top wines, and capped off with a multi-course dinner paired, of course, with more of d'Arenberg's best.

There isn't room here to review all 49 of the wines presented but it was an incredible array of red/white, dry/sweet and new/library wines. It is remarkable how many different wines Chester produces and still achieves such amazing quality across the board. The portfolio includes Riesling, Chardonnay, Viognier, Marsanne, Roussanne, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Grenache, Mourvèdre, and even Pinot Noir and a blend with Tempranillo and Souzao, not to mention the multiple bottlings of different varieties.

If you weren't there, you will just have to trust me that it was one of the most spectacular winemaker dinners I have ever attended.

**FAIVELEY:** Can you imagine being in charge of a major business that is 181 years old at the age of 27? That is the challenge facing Erwan Faiveley. And he's been at it since he was 25!

Of course, representing the seventh generation of a family of vintners, Erwan grew up immersed in the wine business. Now he is directing the domaine's journey into the future, even while keeping a respectful eye on his family's history and Burgundy's culture.

Still, 181 years and a status as one of

**FAIVELEY** 



the largest vineyard holders in Burgundy (including significant Grand Cru and Premier Cru holdings) is quite a legacy to safeguard.

While Faiveley produces somewhere around 44 different wines, only about ten are consistently available in the U.S. and while the prices reach into the three figures, luckily most are available for under \$40 and most of those hover around \$20.

The red wines show good fruit and structure, smooth textures, and are good values. In general, tasty cherry and strawberry are complimented by brown spice notes: 2003 Bourgogne Rouge, 2003 Mercurey Domaine de la Croix Jacquet, 2003 Mercurey Clos des Myglants.

If you are a Chardonnay fan, try these and compare the fresh crisp fruit and mineral notes to the typically oaky, buttery California Chardonnays: 2003 Bourgogne Blanc, 2002 Montagny Les Jons, 2004 Chablis, 2003 Mercurey Clos Rochette.

**DA VINCI:** Cantine Leonardo da Vinci is a cooperative of around 200 vineyard owners who provide their best grapes to the winery, which, yes, is located near Vinci, the historic home of Leonardo.

The cooperative relationship is a traditional formation that dates back hundreds of years in Italy but became the object of disdain in recent decades because of a tendency of growers to favor quantity over quality. Cantine Leonardo Da Vinci (which was created in 1961) is a most notable exception.

Giovanni Nencini, the cooperative's Vice President for Marketing and Sales, came to Denver to present the co-op's new releases, which are imported by the Gallo family. Each wine represents a good value at its price. It is good to see Gallo offer these at still affordable prices.

- 2004 Chianti — 85% Sangiovese, 10% Merlot, 5% Syrah; straightforward, with fresh fruit; just right for casual drinking.
- 2003 Chianti Classico — 95% Sangiovese, 5% Colorino; black cherry and good acidity.
- 2002 Chianti Riserva — 100% Sangiovese; admirably intense fruit, balanced with spice and tannin.
- 2003 Da Vinci "S.to Ippolito" — "Super Tuscan" style 50/50 blend of Merlot and Syrah; packed with dark fruits, spice in a full, firm frame.

