



# PLUMPJACK

WINES

## WINE CLUB August 2006

There have been many occasions when I have said that a great wine should have the ripeness of fruit that California offers coupled with the complexity of flavor that is the hallmark of many European wines. It is not often that you can find domestic wines with the right combination of these qualities, but when you do, it can send your organoleptic sensors spiraling towards enologic nirvana. This month our two wines showcase a splendid balance of the aforementioned characteristics. Their quality is a result of talented winemakers utilizing fruit meticulously harvested from carefully tended

vineyards that benefit from wonderful location, climate and soil. While immediately enjoyable, these are wines that will continue to improve with additional aging. As usual, supply is limited, and with this quality at these prices, they won't be available for long!

Marin's viticulture has long been overshadowed by neighboring Napa and Sonoma counties. Marin's winegrowing history dates back to vineyards planted in 1817, at the Mission San Rafael. From then on, Marin County's residents recognized that the county's unusual climate and diverse soils and topography made Marin County a good place to grow wine grapes. The majority of the vineyards are located in the central and northwestern part of the county. Plantings in this phylloxera-free region, strongly influenced by the frigid Pacific Ocean and San Pablo Bay, include Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Gewurztraminer, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Riesling and small plots of Cabernet Sauvignon on warmer sites further inland. Marin County sits atop the San Andreas earthquake fault, which over time has created a diverse collection of soils suitable for grape growing, ranging from well-drained, gravelly loams to decomposed sandstone. Marin's persistently cool spring and summer weather and complete lack of heat waves (especially on the coast) push flowering, "set" and harvest many weeks beyond the so-called "cool-climate" district of Carneros, and contribute to one of the longest natural "hang times" in the state. Because of this long growing season, Marin wines tend to display more balance, have superb natural acidity, and many have lower alcohol levels than other wines produced nearby. Pey-Marin Vineyards was founded by Jonathan and Susan Pey. They produce Marin-grown wines under two labels: Pey-Marin Vineyards and Mount Tamalpais Vineyards. The Pey's winemaking philosophy is based in their firm belief that fine wines are first made in the vineyard. They believe crafting great wines requires exceptional quality grapes - which can only come from unique, well-tended vineyards. The grapes for their "Shell Mound" Riesling are grown on a fifteen-year-old vineyard located less than eight miles from the Pacific Ocean in western Marin County. The vineyard terrain is characterized by gently rolling coastal hills, and its soil profile is largely decomposed marine sedimentary material (sandstone) which drains well and is moderately fertile. The Peys farm their estate vineyard incorporating sustainable viticultural practices (compost, hand tilling, ladybugs and cover crops). Their Riesling vines' genetic background comes from a rare selection which originated in Neustadt, Germany, and is rarely found on the West Coast. The 2005 "Shell Mound" Riesling is the Pey's first release of Riesling. There is no oak, no blending and no malolactic to alter the pure expression of its terroir. The small, compact Riesling bunches were hand-harvested and hand-sorted in the field and then transported to the cellar. The grapes were then gently whole-cluster pressed (a la champagne method.)

*2005 Pey-Marin Vineyards  
"Shell Mound" Riesling  
Marin County, California*



*2003 Baileyana  
"Grand Firepeak Cuvee" Syrah  
Edna Valley, California*



# PLUMPJACK

## WINES

After settling, the juice was cold-fermented (59° F) for 19 days capturing its delicate aromatics. After a few months on the yeast lees, 269 cases were bottled in April 2006. According to Sue and Jonathan, “Our aim is to showcase our Marin County vineyards soils and uniquely cool climate attributes by crafting Riesling which displays exemplary steeliness and freshness.” The 2005 “Shell Mound” Riesling has aromas and flavors reminiscent of its German and Alsatian cousins. Its bouquet offers a combination of pears, minerals and a hint of petrol. In the mouth, the wine has wonderful intensity of fruit that lingers on the palate, and finishes clean and crisp with bright acidity. It is the perfect wine to accompany any seafood and would pair nicely with Jack Falstaff’s seared sea scallops with braised pork shank ravioli, golden Chanterelle mushrooms, cauliflower, and English peas.

The 2005 Pey-Marin “Shell Mound” Riesling is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case.



Edna Valley is located in the southern corner of San Luis Obispo County. It is a natural, elongated valley consisting of approximately 35 square miles. It is oriented along a northwest-southeast axis and is well defined by the Santa Lucia Mountains on the northeast side; by a low, hilly complex on the southeast; and by the San Luis Range on the southwest. The upper end or northwest border merges into the Los Osos Valley just beyond the city of San Luis Obispo. The north-south valley’s proximity to the ocean makes its vineyards some of the closest to the sea of any in the world. Cool Pacific breezes are channeled straight into the mouth of the valley, bringing frequent fog and a remarkably mild climate. Edna Valley’s grape history was revived from dormancy when new vineyards were planted in the early 1970s by Paragon and Chamisal Vineyards. Catharine Niven founded Baileyana Winery, named after the neighborhood where she and her husband Jack first met, over 20 years ago. Jack introduced her to the wine industry in the early 1970’s via their move to the Edna Valley. Pioneering the planting of the first wine grapes in this area, they founded Paragon Vineyards. Today, the third Niven generation, Catharine’s grandsons John and Michael, is at the helm. Veteran French winemaker Christian Roguenant was hired in 1998. He earned a degree in enology and winemaking from the University of Dijon, and became the head enologist for Champagne Deutz, one of the grand marques of Champagne. The 2003 Baileyana Grand Firepeak Cuvee (“GFC”) Syrah comes from the winery’s estate Firepeak Vineyard. The vineyard is located at the foot of Islay Mountain, the last in a chain of extinct volcanoes known as the Seven Sisters. The vineyard slopes on all sides and the vines are oriented in a north-south direction, allowing for excellent drainage. Located just a few miles from the Pacific Ocean (as the seagull flies), the Firepeak Vineyard is the first to benefit from the cool maritime breezes funneling in from Morro Bay. The soils, known geologically as a Diablo series (dirt of the devil), stresses the vines, encouraging the intense varietal characteristics found in the Firepeak wines. The vineyard is divided into thirteen blocks, devoted to Pinot Noir, Syrah and Chardonnay. The 2003 “GFC” Syrah is composed of 3 different clones of Syrah that were vinified separately and then blended before bottling. The grapes were hand-harvested and fermented in small open-top stainless-steel fermentors for 3 weeks. The wine was then aged in barrels, 50% new French oak, 5% new American oak, and 45% 1-year and older French oak, for 16 months. The wine was bottled unfinned and unfiltered, and 1,325 cases were produced. The wine is opulent in the nose with dark fruits and plums, as well as burnished wood spice. In the mouth, there is a delicious combination of blueberry, plum, dark cherry, blackberry, vanilla and spice. This is a rich and full-bodied wine, full of dark and deep flavor elements though they are tightly wound. I had this wine with a grilled hamburger and corn-on-the-cob. The bottle was empty before I knew it!

The 2003 Baileyana “GFC” Syrah is \$19.99/bottle, \$215.90/case