



SPRING MOUNTAIN
VINEYARD
ST. HELENA *Napa Valley* CALIFORNIA



NEWSLETTER

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SPRING-SUMMER 2006

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At the Vineyard

It's funny how the cultivation of a vineyard can mirror the life of a wine. Today I'm musing about the parallel between growing grapes on steep hillsides and decanting a bottle of wine. Of course the similarity lies in what happens to the liquid, be it rainwater or wine. The goal in the vineyard is to channel rainfall to keep it from stripping away precious topsoil, and to capture its clean essence in our streams and wells. To do this, we use carefully defined erosion control practices.

We study our vineyards and invest in many eco-friendly ways to avoid erosion. We plant the vineyards in a dense meter-by-meter format that dispenses with the need to cut erosion-prone terraces. We cast seed for bright, yellow mustard flowers and brilliant crimson clover as cover crops in between the vine rows to help stabilize the soil. These useful crops add a serendipitous burst of color to the beauty of our mountain in springtime.



Spring Mountain's York Creek

Spring Mountain Vineyard does its best to be a good steward of the land. Similarly, a good wine steward decants to keep a wine's sediment where it belongs, in the bottle, and not in the wine. Decanting is a much simpler process than keeping soil on steep hillside vineyards. It requires only a few items to ensure clear wine in your decanter: a candle, a sharp eye and a steady hand. The next time you try to get the wine out of the bottle without sediment, think about Spring Mountain Vineyard trying to get the rain off the hillsides without taking the soil with it!

Celebrating the Decanter

By Winemaker Jac Cole

As a birthday gift to mark a very special year, I received two bottles of 1949 Cos D'Estournel, a 2nd growth Bordeaux from my birth vintage. I decanted this 50 year old beauty with great expectation. Like me, the wine had aged for 50 impressive years, quite an accomplishment for both. While the label showed the wear and tear of cellaring, not unlike the few lines of maturity marking my own face, I knew that true beauty lay within.

When I carefully decanted this perfectly aged wine from its bottle, it showed beautifully with some initial fireworks and then faded gracefully like a fragile flower. This lovely Bordeaux had held itself for 50 years in the bottle, waiting for a gentle hand, a corkscrew and an appreciative audience.

While one expects to decant an older wine to separate it from its sediment, most of us don't think about decanting the young wines we drink daily. And perhaps we should. At Spring Mountain Vineyard we are blessed with a climate that pampers red grape varieties like Cabernet Sauvignon, and vineyards whose soils give abundant color, concentrated fruit and polymerized tannins that have developed to a great intensity in the berry itself. This means our young wines don't need fining to reduce hard edges. It may also mean that these young wines would benefit from decanting, sometimes to remove

sediment, but mostly to aerate the wine. Young red wines with chewy tannins greatly benefit from decanting. Letting the decanted wine sit for thirty minutes or so will cause the oxygen to soften the tannins and push the fruit forward to intensify the bouquet and delight the palate.

In blind tastings here at the winery, we have repeatedly found dramatically different impressions of identical wines when one was decanted prior and the other not. The decanted wine is more demonstrative and appealing. Young, full-bodied beauties definitely benefit from the oxygenation that decanting provides. Decant and increase your enjoyment!

Decanting Young Wines

This process does not have to be gentle. In fact, you may want to decant with vigor and splash the young red wine into a decanter or even a water pitcher. The purpose is to aerate the wine to soften youthful tannins and awaken the aromas that normally develop with years in the bottle.



Jac Cole decants a 1987 Cabernet Sauvignon

Decanting Older Wines

It's best to plan ahead and stand the wine up for several days to allow sediment to sink to the bottom. Completely remove the capsule so you have a clear view of the neck of the bottle. Holding the bottle horizontally over a candle or small flashlight positioned under the neck of the bottle, slowly and gently pour the wine into a clean decanter. Stop when an arrowhead of sediment begins moving into the neck of the bottle. You should have about a half a glass of wine and sediment remaining and a clear carafe of wine. Don't rush, and pour steadily until you see the first of the sediment. Then stop.

If you pull a wine from your cellar and wish to decant immediately, keep it horizontal to avoid disturbing the sediment. Opening a horizontal bottle without spilling the wine all over yourself and the kitchen sink can be tricky, but can be done by tipping the bottle up slightly

until the wine in the neck of the bottle no longer touches the cork. Then, using a waiter's lever type cork screw, carefully withdraw the cork. Fortunately, older wines with sediment usually have corks that are easier to remove.

Older wines may be delicate and unable to retain their essence for long when exposed to oxygen during decanting, so decant them at the last minute before serving. Always leave the empty bottle and cork next to the decanter so your guests will know what they are drinking.

At the Table

Most dinners with friends and family become memorable because of the unpredictable chemistry of personalities and unforeseen turns of events. In the spirit of letting the good times roll without worrying over complicated cooking, here is a classic recipe for filet mignon with an easy Cabernet Sauvignon reduction sauce. It can be infallibly paired with a full bodied Cabernet Sauvignon like Spring Mountain Vineyard's newest release from the 2003 vintage.

Filet Mignon with Mountain Cabernet Sauce

Serves 6

Preparation and cooking time: approximately 75 minutes

Ingredients:

6 six ounce beef filets mignons
Extra virgin olive oil

Cabernet Sauce

4 Tbsp unsalted butter
½ cup finely chopped shallots, about 6 bulbs
3 sprigs thyme
1 bay leaf
1 Tbsp freshly ground black pepper
1 (750 ml) bottle Cabernet Sauvignon
2 cups beef stock or low sodium beef broth

Sautéed Shallots

3 Tbsp unsalted butter
8 shallots, sliced lengthwise ¼ inch thick
3 sprigs thyme
1 bay leaf
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
¼ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

Directions:

To make the sauce, melt 2 tablespoons of the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the ½ cup of shallots, decrease the heat to low, and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the thyme, bay leaf, pepper, and wine and increase the heat to high. Bring to

a boil and reduce to ½ cup, 25 to 30 minutes, depending on the diameter of the pan. Add the stock, bring to a boil, then decrease the heat to medium-low. Simmer gently, skimming 2 or 3 times, for 30 minutes, or until thickened and reduced to about 1 cup. Remove from the heat and pass through a fine mesh sieve. Swirl in the remaining 2 tablespoons butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Hold sauce over warm water to keep warm.

To cook the shallots, melt the butter in a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the shallots, thyme, bay leaf, and salt and pepper to taste. Decrease the heat to medium-low and cook until the shallots are tender, about 10 minutes. Remove the thyme sprigs and bay leaf. Stir in the parsley. Set aside and keep warm.

To cook the filets, heat a heavy sauté pan large enough to hold the steaks without crowding (use 2 pans if necessary). Place pan(s) over high heat, lightly coat with oil, and sear the filets on one side for 1 minute. Decrease the heat to medium and cook for 2 more minutes. Turn the filets over and cook for 2 to 3 minutes on the second side for rare or medium rare. Remove from the heat and let the filets rest for 2 to 3 minutes to allow the juices to settle.

To serve, spoon a pool of sauce onto 6 plates. Place a filet in the middle of the sauce and spoon the shallots around it. Serve with roasted new potatoes and sautéed spinach. Don't forget to decant a bottle of 2003 SMV Cabernet Sauvignon to accompany this classic dinner.

Bon Appétit!



New Release

2003 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon \$50



As a pure expression of mountain grapes our 2003 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon is redolent with notes of blackberry, cherry, dark chocolate, and red currants laced with exotic spices and hints of cigar box. The palate greets you with a lush rendering of the same ripe red fruit and dark cocoa. Balanced with a long, firm finish, this Cabernet Sauvignon develops multiple layers on the palate while fully coating the mouth.

Full bodied and effusively flavorful, this wine is both supple and elegant, promising youthful delight and maturing beauty. Decant to release the abundant flavors and aromas of this youthful and vibrant cabernet. (See the previous note on Decanting Young Wines).

A discount of 10% applies to orders of 6 or more bottles. Call 1-877-769-4637 (1-800-SMWINES), email info@springmtn.com, or visit our web site to place an order. A 20% discount is extended to Wine Club Members.

People Are Talking

Spring Mountain Vineyard continues to spread the word and the wine!

Wine Spectator reviewed the 2003 Syrah in March, rewarding it with 90 Points. "A bit rustic, with a trace of racy boysenberry in the aroma. On the palate it's dense, rich and chewy, with a tight focus to the wild berry and the blackberry fruit. Hints of anise, fresh earth and sage fold in nicely, and despite its tannic muscle, there's a suppleness to the tannins. Decant. Drink now through 2012. 352 cases made."

San Diego Magazine's March issue quoted winemaker Jac Cole describing SMV: "It's like making wine in a national park." Brett Anderson gives the 2001 Elivette a rave review highlighting that "aromas of wood and spice meld with blackberry and bright cherry, as well as a dusty mocha. On the palate, this wine is rich and ripe...ending on silky tannins."

In February, our local St. Helena Star featured SMV's unique vine trellising method, Vertical Gobelet. SMV is the only winery in the U.S. to use this ancient system that increases fruit quality through lower tonnage. Vineyard Manager Ron Rosenbrand and Winemaker Jac Cole were both interviewed and agree that, despite Gobelet's labor requirements, "it is all about the fruit."

Luxury magazine, Robb Report featured SMV in its February Car of the Year issue. Racy shots of a Bentley Continental GT and the Fisker Tramonto with SMV's ivy covered winery as backdrop and test drive quotes from Vineyard Manager Ron Rosenbrand prove that sexy cars and sexy wine go together!

Wine Spectator's Ultimate Buying Guide highlighted the top wine scores of 2005. Drum roll please! ...the 2002 Elivette scored 93 Points! (No, you didn't miss this vintage – we haven't released it yet!)

SMV Events

Save the Date!
2002 Elivette Release Event

Saturday, September 16th
Stay tuned for more details.

- April 22: "Guardsmen Gala Dinner & Auction," San Francisco, CA
- April 28: "Carlton Hotel Winemaker Dinner," Pittsburgh, PA, www.thecarltonrestaurant.com
- May 6: "UNLVino Grand Tasting," Las Vegas, NV
- June 2-3: "Auction Napa Valley" – Live Auction event, Meadowood, St. Helena, CA, www.napavintners.com
- June 4: "Afternoon Delight," Wine Club and Auction NV attendees only. SMV, St. Helena, CA

- June 16-18: "Aspen Food & Wine Classic," Aspen, CO
- June 24: "Vintage Albuquerque-Fine Wine & Art," Albuquerque, NM
- July 20-22: "25th Annual Sun Valley Wine Auction," Sun Valley, ID, www.sunvalleycenter.org/wine.html
- August 20-21: "Family Winemakers of California: San Francisco Tasting," San Francisco, CA



We invite you to visit us. Daily tours and tasting by appointment. You may contact the winery toll free at 877-769-4637 or locally at 707-967-4188. You may also email us at office@springmtn.com or go online at www.springmountainvineyard.com to make your appointment.



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