

Under the Radar

On a recent visit to Napa Valley, I had lunch with Stu Harrison, a thirty year veteran of the California wine industry. Stu is again working with members of the Mondavi family to promote *Continuum*, a “first-growth” Napa cabernet that debuted earlier this year to a great deal of praise, including a 95+ score from Robert Parker, and reestablishes Tim Mondavi as one of the world’s premier winemakers.

Along with Stu and Carissa Mondavi - Tim’s daughter, who manages the sales and marketing for Continuum - we tasted and talked a lot about the wine, including the 2006 vintage to be released later this year. A huge, young wine, I found the ’06 promising to be even better than the award-winning inaugural 2005 release. Stu, in his affable and understated style, also happened to mention his own first effort at producing a classic Napa Valley cabernet, named *Trivium*.

This week I had the opportunity to try the wine. *Trivium*, a Latin term for “*a place where three ways meet*,” is 100% cabernet sauvignon, from grapes grown on “*Les Iverettes*” a block of the historic Lewelling Vineyards.

Stu started this project with two neighbors, wine industry veterans, fifth-generation grower Doug Wight, and winemaker, Jack Stewart. The three, grape grower, winemaker and wine marketer, were long time friends, staying busy with their individual careers and raising families before getting together a few years ago to produce this small-lot, single-vineyard cabernet.



The 2005 *Trivium*, the partners first release, is grown on Wight’s vineyard, made by founding Silverado Winery winemaker, Jack Stewart, and the wine is marketed by Stu. While attending Business School in Germany, Stu worked in a cellar in the Rheingau region, before returning to the Napa Valley where he helped launch Opus One and Domaine Chandon, and later worked with Naples’ winter resident Clarke Swanson, of Swanson Vineyards.

With close to a century of wine experience among them, a stellar 2005 growing season, and a prime vineyard location, west of St. Helena, on hillside vines above Sulphur Creek, it's no surprise that the wine is being compared to a top-growth Pauillac.

When it arrived on my doorstep a week ago, I intended to lay my bottle of *Trivium* down for a few years to give it time to develop. That lasted about eight days. Hopeful that it survived the bottle shock of the 2900 mile journey from Napa to Naples, suspense got the best of me and I uncorked it. My one regret was that it was my only bottle! As difficult as it was, I "babied" my bottle, drinking it over three days and it really did just keep getting better. While the wine is still firm, it is intensely rich, sweet, smoky, spicy, well, you get the idea.

I think of this wine as what classic Napa cabernet aspires to when grown and produced in the right hands. It is a gorgeous wine that yes, you'll want to drink it now and you can, but I recommend buying the six-bottle case and having the patience to lay some down and follow the wine as it matures. With proper storage, you will be richly rewarded over the next 10 - 20 years.



Only 318 cases of the 2005 *Trivium* was made and the 2006 will not be released until early next spring. Serious collectors and wine lovers alike, will want to experience this world-class cabernet that is still very much under the radar. It is easily on a par with some better known cult wines selling for three times *Trivium*'s current \$60 price.

Restaurateurs too should add this gem to their list. This is a wine likely to become highly sought after.

Trivium is not yet available in Florida stores, but you can order the wine directly by contacting Stu at:

707.968-5400

e-mail @ info @triviumwine.com.

www.triviumwine.com

Cheers, and remember...

Eat, drink and be merry!

Bruce