

The joy of tasting “Napa Valley White Wines”

On a pleasantly cool and overcast Sunday afternoon, Napa Valley Wine Library members came to Napa for our forty-third Annual Wine Tasting, and again the grove of handsome oaks on the golf course at Silverado Country Club and Resort provided a most appealing venue.

82 Napa Valley wineries poured 20 white wines. Many of the wines they offered were in limited production, made in lots of 300 cases or less, and available only at the winery. 58 wineries poured just one varietal: 39 poured Chardonnay and 19 Sauvignon Blanc. Of the remaining 24

wineries, 13 poured Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc; three poured Chardonnay and Viognier; Stony Hill, sold out of its White Riesling, poured Chardonnay and Gewürztraminer and was pleased with the response; Carneros Creek, sold out of its Vermentino, poured Chardonnay with many apologies about the Vermentino (a varietal from the Liguria region of Italy); Long poured Chardonnay and its unique “Patricia”, a blend of Chardonnay and Johannisberg Riesling, Bob Long thought would go as well with food as his Pinot Grigio had. (Editor’s note: all American Johannisberg Riesling bottled after 31 December 2005 must be called Riesling or White Riesling.) Cosentino, Hendry and St. Supery poured *three* wines: Cosentino poured Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer and their white meritage, “The Novelist”; Hendry poured Chardonnay, Pinot Gris



and their Rosé, a *saignée* of Cabernet Sauvignon; St. Supéry poured Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and their white meritage, “Virtú.”

At the start of the Tasting, members thronged Schramsberg for its sparkling Blanc de Noirs. One member was overheard to say, ‘Champagne is great at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of any event.’ Robert Pecota poured splits of the unctious “Moscato d’Andrea”, a Muscat Canelli; other wineries pouring a single variety other than Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc were Ballentine with Chenin Blanc; Havens its Albariño; Robert Sinskey with Pinot Blanc; Luna and Swanson both with Pinot Grigio; Venge its “Bianco Spettro”, a blend of Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and Marsanne; Volker Eisele Family’s “Gemini”, an estate blend of Semillon and Sauvignon Blanc—the ‘Bordeaux twins’; and Niebaum-Coppola its estate-grown “Blancaneaux”, a blend of Marsanne, Roussanne and Viognier, in





celebration of that winery's 125th birthday.

The sweet French bread was from Model Bakery, St. Helena; the cheeses were from Genova Delicatessen and John Raymond Cheeses, Napa. The eponymous John Raymond thoughtfully provided a selection of California cheeses he felt went particularly well with white wines. He brought cheeses from Winchester, Modesto and Sonoma. These included a San Joaquin Gold John says pairs well with Chardonnay; a peppery sheep's milk Pepato from Bellwether Farms, Sonoma; a cow's milk medium Gouda from Winchester and a cow's milk Messo Secco from Sonoma. Crystal Geyser again donated and poured sparkling water—

plain or with lemon, as well as samples of its Tejava and Juice Squeeze. Silverado had provided umbrellas for shade and dressed its tables in red wine-colored cloths. The wineries provided many grace notes of their own. We noted orchids and decorative linen at Laird Family's table, roses on Freemark Abbey's, an informal bouquet of garden flowers at Ballentine, and a strikingly formal one at Napa Wine Company. V. Sattui fastened a portrait of its winery to a tree. We also noted many of the next generation of vintners pouring, including Alexander and Catherine Eisele at Volker Eisele Family Estate, and Lily Oliver and Jon Berlin's eight month-old daughter, Clementine Olivia Berlin, practicing at El Molino.



Gary Long, 2005 Lamborn Scholar and NVWL president, Julie Dickson