

THE WINE PRESS

Gold Medal Wine Club Newsletter: Vol. 9 No. 5

Monte Volpe Winery Edition

In This Issue

MONTE VOLPE
WINERY
Page 1

THIS MONTH'S
WINES
Page 2

SPOTLIGHT PROFILE
Page 5

WINE WIZARD
Page 4

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
Page 6

JUDGE-THE-WINES
Page 7

REORDERS
Page 8



"With Gold Medal Wine Club,
The Road to Great Wine
Begins at Your Door."

www.goldmedalwine.com

MONTE VOLPE WINERY LEADS CAL-ITAL CHARGE

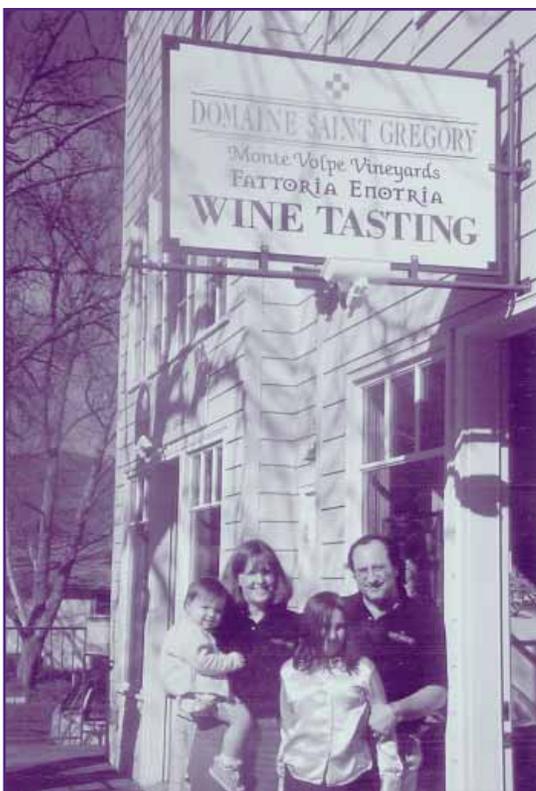
It's *Cal-Ital* month at Gold Medal Wine Club!! In case you are not aware of the *Cal-Ital* craze yet, (where have you been?) the catch phrase refers to the popular resurgence in the classic, flavorful, and vibrant wine varietals of Italy, grown and produced in California. The *Cal-Ital* phenomenon has been literally growing for years. During the past decade, consumer demand for Italian varietals has compelled many grape growers to start shifting from traditional California cash crops to classic Italian varieties. Italian varietals such as Sangiovese, Nebbiolo, Dolcetto, Barbera and Pinot Bianco

are squeezing into vineyards normally reserved for mainstream crops like Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Merlot and Zinfandel. As these vineyards catch up to the demand, you'll see more and more *Cal-Ital* wines hitting the store shelves. If you haven't yet experienced Cal-Ital, you're in for a treat! This month

featured winery, Monte Volpe, is at the top of its class, specializing entirely in the production of award-winning Italian varietals.

If anyone can claim title to "*Cal-Ital* King", you'd have a hard time denying Monte Volpe owner, Greg Graziano. His Italian ancestors

Continued on page 4



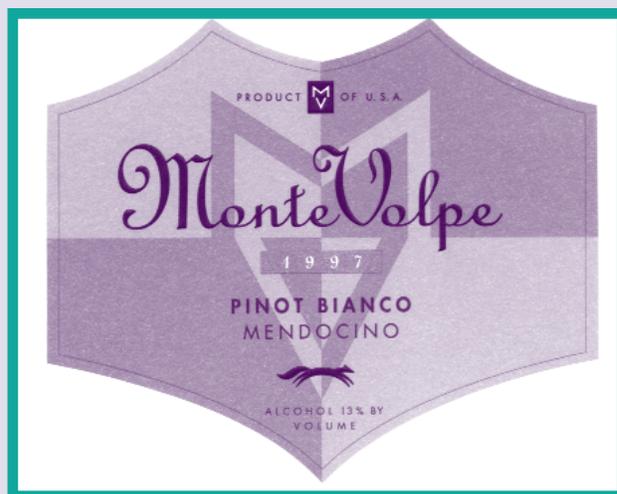
*The Graziano Family at the entrance of their new tasting room in Hopland.
(Greg and Trudi, with their kids Isabella and Alexandra.)*

Gold Medal Wine Club features two wines each month from only the best small wineries of California. Featured wines include those which have earned medals in the top wine-industry competitions or have been highly rated by a respected national wine publication. On occasion we feature a wine which is of high medal-quality, but due to its very limited availability or by preference of the wine producer, may not be submitted to these venues for review. Each and every selection is a superb wine made in small quantities and with limited distribution. There are over 800 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



1995 NEBBIOLO

The Nebbiolo grape is responsible for some of the finest wines in Italy. Monte Volpe's Gold Medal winning Nebbiolo wine comes from the Ukiah valley in Mendocino, where the soil and climate are ideal for growing this particular grape. The 1995 vintage is an exotic wine with dark garnet hues with ripe concentrated aromas of cherries, violets and smokey vanilla. Integrated forward flavors of ripe cherries and violets are accented by toasty oak and supported by just the right balance of acidity and firm tannin. Enjoy this wine now with rack of lamb, grilled chicken sausages or wild game or cellar for the next several years.



1997 PINOT BIANCO

Pinot Bianco is the Italian name for Pinot Blanc. It is a widely planted grape throughout northeastern Italy primarily in the Friuli region. Monte Volpe's medal-winning Pinot Bianco comes from 44-year-old vines off the Redwood Valley vineyard in Mendocino County. It is 100% organically grown and one of the only remaining Pinot Bianco sites remaining in the county. This wine shows intense aromas of fruit and up-front flavors of luscious tropical fruit with a soft echo of peach on the finish. It's a beautiful wine, fragrant, good acidity and possesses character far beyond a Chardonnay. "The 1997 Pinot Bianco is our best yet," says winemaker Greg Graziano. Have fun with this wine! Pair it with your favorite poultry, seafood and especially shellfish creations.

WINE CREDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

1995 VINTAGE: *Gold Medal*—Mendocino County Wine Competition (This is the only competition that the winery enters).

LEGACY: This is the 3rd vintage for Monte Volpe's Nebbiolo. Each vintage has set new standards for other Italian wine producers to emulate.

Just the facts:

pH	3.63
Total Acid64 g/100 mls
Alcohol	13.2%
Cases Produced	549
Aged in American & French Oak	24 Months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2004+

1997 VINTAGE: *Silver Medal*—Mendocino County Wine Competition (This is the only competition that the winery enters).

LEGACY: Produced by Monte Volpe since 1991. A medal winner virtually every year.

Just the facts:

pH	3.31
Total Acid77 g/100 mls
Alcohol	13.4%
Cases Produced	1,397
Aged in American & French Oak	5 Months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2002

GOLD MEDAL SPOTLIGHT

Greg Graziano

“It always seemed like a lot of work,” Greg Graziano remembers as he was growing up and working long hours on the family vineyard in Mendocino County. “My dad’s passion was grape farming, but he discouraged my brother and I from becoming farmers because he knew how tough it could be at times.” So, by the time Greg went to college, the titles of Grape Grower and Winemaker were far down on the list of career choices.

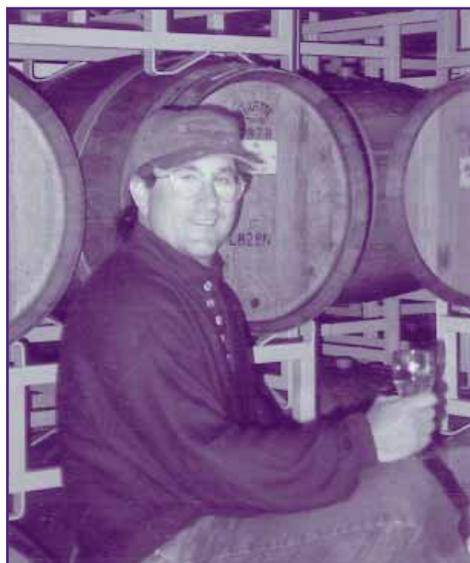
At college, though, something happened. “There I was at school, not really into it and with no real direction,” he remembers vividly. “The only thing that made sense to me was growing grapes and making wine. That’s what I had been doing most of my life. That’s what I was most comfortable doing. So having a winery was the logical, sensible thing.”

Greg transferred immediately to the University of California at Davis, where all the wine gurus get their start. He already knew the basics, having grown up with on-the-job-training. At Davis, he simply wanted to get an academic point of view. After a year at Davis, at the age of 21, he and a friend opened up a winery called Milano.

In 1982, Greg sold his part of the winery and moved on. He had gained enough industry knowledge by then to offer his expertise to

other wineries that were trying to get off the ground. So, for several years, he consulted, made wine for other wineries, helped in the vineyards, and built himself a solid reputation within the industry.

Three years later, Greg took the position of Assistant Winemaker at La Crema Winery when a friend who was the winemaker convinced him to come on board. The following year, his friend left and Greg took



Owner and winemaker, Greg Graziano checks the progress of a wine still in the barell.

over as winemaker. He was there for five years until the winery was sold to industry giant Kendall-Jackson. During that time, Greg guided La Crema’s production from 10,000 to 100,000 cases.

As winemakers are often allowed to do, Greg started his own label of wines called Domaine Saint Gregory, in 1988 while he was still La Crema’s winemaker. When La

Crema was sold, his own brand was not yet mature enough to stand on its own, so he accepted the position of winemaker for Hidden Cellars, one of the operations he helped establish years earlier.

In the early 1990s, Greg also took on winemaking duties for two other wineries, Martin Ray and Yorkville. Then in 1991 he and his wife Trudi, started Monte Volpe Winery, specializing exclusively in Italian varietals. And a couple of years ago, he accepted the challenge of producing one of the country’s first *biodynamic* (certified organic) line of wines for a new winery called Fox Brook. This year he added yet a third brand of his own called *Fattoria Enotria*, also devoted to Italian wines

You may have surmised by now that Greg likes to keep busy. “Basically, my strategy has been to make wine for other wineries to help finance and grow my own brands,” he says. Today, with Monte Volpe wines leading the Italian charge, Greg’s operation is solid enough to stand on its own. But he still has a hard time saying “no” to people seeking his help and advice. “I’m the kind of person who likes to have a lot of challenges,” admits Greg. “I enjoy helping wineries get started and sharing what I know, but every situation also adds to my knowledge and understanding, so it tends to work both ways,” he says philosophically. 🍷



**WINE
WIZARD**

- 1) Which country produces more wine: Italy, France, or the United States?
- 2) Since we're on the subject of Italian wines, do you know the difference between Chianti and Chianti Classico?
- 3) The U.S. has A.V.A.'s and Italy has D.O.C.'s. What are they?

Continued from page 1

have been grape growers and winemakers for generations. And with the establishment of Monte Volpe Winery in 1991, Greg has not only continued his family's legacy of Italian winemaking, but in the process has earned immeasurable praise and top medals for his wines. In fact, he just may be the single most important reason that *Cal-Ital* fever is rising so quickly.

"It just kind of hit me," recalls Greg Graziano who, in 1982, visited family in Italy where his roots go

back hundreds of years. "All of a sudden it made sense that I should be making Italian wines. It's a big part of my heritage."

Greg remembers well the stories of his grandfather, Vincenzo, who immigrated to the United States in 1908. Vincenzo left behind famine and depression in Italy in search of a better life, like so many who passed through Ellis Island in that era. His goal was to work his way to California's Mendocino County where he heard the climate and terrain was much like that of his native land in Piemonte, Italy. Vincenzo worked the Pennsylvania coal mines for several years before finally heading out west. He landed in Sausalito where he worked as a gardener for several more years, saving enough money to allow his fiancée Angela, who was still in Italy, to join him.

In 1918, Vincenzo and Angela's brother Frank, who immigrated also, bought 100 acres of land near the town of Calpella in Mendocino County. They immediately started planting a vineyard on the property to Italian varietals, Muscato, Barbera and Carignane. In 1920, Prohibition hit the U.S., but many grape growing operations, including Vincenzo's and Frank's, survived the period. They were able to dodge the restrictions by selling to buyers back east who purchased the grapes for "medicinal purposes."

Vincenzo's son, Joseph (Greg's father), literally grew up in the vineyards and dutifully followed the same path of grape growing and winemaking. In 1940, Joseph and his dad founded the Mendocino Grape Growers Coop, creating an important entity among grape growers in the area. Also that year, they purchased 100 more acres two miles down the road at Redwood Valley Ranch.

"I grew up working in the vineyard just like my father and *his* father," says Greg, recalling some tough days of hoeing and pruning. "My dad was proud of the work he did, but at the same time wanted my brother Marcus and I to try something different. I think he wanted us to study law or medicine," he continues. "I remember we had basically three choices while growing up—play sports, work on the ranch, or get a job. I chose sports," Greg quips.

In the early 1970s, not unlike most kids fresh out of high school, Greg went off to college with no clear sense where his life was heading. It finally dawned on him that it made perfect sense to continue his family heritage of grape growing and winemaking. He quickly transferred to wine super-school, U.C Davis to learn the textbook side of the business. After all, he had already grown up with a lifetime of practical experience.

After a year at Davis, Greg was ready. He and a school buddy boldly started a winery of their own which they named Milano Winery. Conveniently, “Mil” and “ano” was a shortened combination of their last names, plus it had an Italian flair to it. A half-dozen successful years later, Greg was ready to move on to other challenges. In 1982, his partner’s dad bought out Greg’s portion of the business.

During the 1980s, Greg continued making his mark and building his reputation within the wine industry. As a consulting winemaker, he helped establish several wineries, including: Baccala, Tyland and Olson. It was during this stretch of time that Greg decided to visit his grandfather’s

Italian homeland. While discovering his roots, he made a startling revelation that he, too, should be making Italian wines and furthering his family’s legacy. However, the idea met with great skepticism upon his return to California. “Everyone thought I was crazy,” he remembers. “First of all, virtually no one is growing Italian varietals in California and secondly, who’s going to buy them?” they all said. So, logically he put the thought aside for the time being and continued on with his career.

Years later, Greg was driving by a vineyard near Ukiah in

Mendocino County, where he spotted a small patch of the Italian varietal, Nebbiolo. It was growing on a tiny outside portion of a 40-acre vineyard called Fox Mountain, owned by local grower Lowell Stone. Sensing an opportunity to finally pursue his Italian wine concept, Greg convinced Lowell

Continued on page 6



Greg hauls another bin of hand-selected grapes to the crush pad.

ANSWERS TO WINE WIZARD

1) *If you thought this was a trick question, it wasn't. Italy and France actually run neck and neck in terms of volume of wine produced each year. Both countries put out about 1,600 million gallons annually, compared to about 500 million gallons in the United States. That puts the U.S. in the number five spot among producers. Italy has more land devoted to vineyards than anywhere in the world with the exception of Spain. Unlike either Spain or France, in Italy you will find vineyards virtually everywhere, from the Alps in the north to the islands in the south. A steady diet of bread, olive oil and wine has been a way of life in Italy for centuries.*

2) *Chianti is a fairly large area within Tuscany comprised of seven different zones: Chianti Classico, Chianti Montalbano, Chianti Colli Fiorentini, Chianti Rufina, Colli Senesi, and Colline Pisane. If a wine just has "Chianti" on the label, it can be from any of the seven regions. The better zones are thought to be Classico and Rufina and usually the label will brag about that. Chianti Classico wines use an official emblem of a black rooster on the label. Chiantis have changed a lot in the last 20 to 25 years. They used to be thin and fruity and not that interesting. Now winemakers are making deeper, darker, more intense Chiantis with more body. It probably didn't help Chianti's reputation either that the straw basket used to encase a lot of Chianti bottles is called a "fiasco"!*

3) *A.V.A. stands for American Viticultural Area and D.O.C. is the Italian equivalent. They both refer to designated areas sanctioned by the government to denote a common **terrior**. In other words, each district or A.V.A. tends to produce wines having similar characteristics that can be attributed to its soil and climate conditions. If you really want to impress your friends, D.O.C. literally stands for "Denomimazioni di Origine Controllata," but don't ask us to pronounce it!*





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Trudi and Greg Graziano offer these family favorites for you to try with their Monte Volpe wines . . .

GREEN OLIVE PESTO

1 cup pimento-stuffed green olives
1/3 cup pine nuts
1-4 garlic cloves
1 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons freshly grated parmesan

Drain olives, rinse well and pat dry. In a food processor, puree the olives with the pine nuts, garlic and parsley. While the food processor is still on, add the oil in a stream and add the parmesan. Blend the mixture well. Serve the pesto with 1 pound of pasta, cooked and drained. Sprinkle the pasta and pesto with additional pine nuts. Or serve the pesto as a spread with crackers. Makes about 1 1/2 cups. Enjoy with a glass of Monte Volpe!

CHICKEN PICCATA

4 Chicken breasts
6 tablespoon Butter
3 tablespoon lemon juice
1/3 cup dry white wine
1 teaspoon Grated lemon peel
1/4 cup capers or to your taste

Pound chicken breasts until thin. Season with salt and pepper, then flour. Fry in olive oil and butter until brown. Remove chicken from pan and keep warm. Add remaining ingredients, cook until sauce has reduced. Add chicken to sauce, warm and serve with pasta noodles. This is also good substituting the chicken with pork. It's even better when enjoyed with a glass of Monte Volpe Pinot Bianco!

Continued from page 5

to let him use an old abandoned hop kiln on the property as a makeshift winery. It was perfect. There he could start a new winery and be right at the source of the grapes he needed.

As it turned out, the Nebbiolo grapes needed a few years of care and attention before they up to the standard of quality Greg wanted. As he was bringing the Nebbiolo vines up to speed, Greg pursued another direction, using the old hop kiln facility to make Chardonnay and Pinot Noir with fruit that was also growing on the Fox Mountain property. He labeled the wines under the name Domaine Saint Gregory—a Burgundian sounding name—with the strategy of keeping the production focus on Burgundian-style wines.

As Domaine Saint Gregory was getting off the ground, Greg also searched for additional sources of Italian grapes to supplement what was on the Fox Mountain property. By 1991, the timing was finally right to launch his line of Italian style wines. The first vintage produced a thousand cases of two varietals, Nebbiolo and Muscato which he labeled “Monte Volpe,”—Italian for Fox Mountain.

“It was tough starting out back then,” Greg admits. “We knocked on a lot of doors until things finally started to gel.” Whether Greg was a catalyst or if it was simply fortuitous timing in the marketplace, *Cal-Ital* wines have mushroomed in popularity during this decade. “Consumers are getting tired of the mainstream Chards, Cabs and Merlot,” Greg

states, trying to explain the *Cal-Ital* movement. “They’re discovering too, that the Italian wines are more food friendly.”

Currently, Monte Volpe Winery produces 18,000 cases a year. Amazingly, there are over a dozen different wines, all of which are produced in very small quantities. Greg admits that with so many different wines, all Italian, and for the most part unfamiliar, it may be a bit confusing to retailers and consumers. To help make sense of it all, he has added another brand he calls *Fattoria Enotria* that will group together the varieties that have their origins in the Piemonte region of northwest Italy. Those include varieties such as Barbera, Nebbiolo, Dolcetto and Muscato. The *Monte Volpe* brand will showcase Italian

JUDGE-THE-WINES RESULTS

In this section we publish the cumulative, on-going tallies of the Judge-the-Wines Scoresheets which are provided in each delivery of wine and mailed back in by Club members. We believe it is fun as well as educational to think about and record the different characteristics of the wines you sample. No matter how acute you think your palate is, the person next to you will probably have a different thought or opinion about a certain characteristic of the wine you are sampling. It can also prove beneficial to record your impressions of the wine for reference at a later date.

Below are the most recent tallies of the Scoresheets returned. Gold Medal Wine Club specializes in featuring small-sized wineries and small-production wines. Depending on availability from the winery, all members may not receive every wine that is listed below. The Scoresheet results which are printed in green indicate the wine selections that as of press time are still available for reorder.

Rabbit Ridge—1996 Zinfandel

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	93%	6%	1%

Rabbit Ridge—1997 Reserve Chardonnay

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	96%	4%	0%

Smith & Hook—1995 Cabernet Sauvignon

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	91%	5%	4%

Smith & Hook—1997 Viognier

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	88%	7%	5%

Smith & Hook—1995 Merlot

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	5%	5%

Eos Winery—1996 Cabernet Sauvignon

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	89%	7%	4%

Sandstone Winery—1996 Merlot

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	92%	6%	2%

Sandstone Winery—1997 Chardonnay

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	90%	6%	4%

The above wines were recently featured. Due to space limitations the entire list of available wines is not listed—please call to inquire about other previous favorites.

■ Indicates wine is still available

varieties from the areas of Tuscany and Friuli—wines such as Sangiovese, Pinot Grigio and Pinot Bianco.

This year Greg opened his first tasting room in the quaint wine town of Hopland where he showcases all three of his labels. And recently, his entire production operation moved into the picturesque and historic Fetzer Estate in Redwood Valley. “I have plenty of room to expand now,” says an obviously pleased Greg Graziano. Judging from the quality of his wines, we have a feeling he’ll need plenty of room! 🍷



THE GRAPEVINE

Comments from us and Club members

It seems like we just did this! The time has arrived for yet another quarterly drawing. The winner for the first quarter of 1999 is . . . **Teresa Dias** of California! Teresa informed us she has faithfully sent in her Scoresheets since joining in 1997. "Fantastic! Wonderful!" was Teresa's response upon learning she had won. "My husband & I are enjoying the Club very much," she went on to say. We also found out that May 1st is Teresa's birthday, so the timing is perfect. Congratulations and Happy Birthday, Teresa! Enjoy your bonus half-case of Rabbit Ridge Zinfandel. As for the rest of you, keep at it, you could be next!!

[The 1997 Rabbit Ridge Reserve Chardonnay is] Rich! Extraordinary! Hands down favorite! Best Chardonnay we've had!

—Robert B. Hutchins, Score 52

We enjoyed identifying the many subtle flavors of this complicated [1995 Smith e3 Hook Cabernet Sauvignon]!

—Bob Kolas, Score 47

[The 1996 Sandstone Merlot was] The best wine my wife and I have ever had. I must have more for those special occasions!

—Jeffery e3 Kristin Fleming, Score 51

[The 1995 Smith e3 Hook was the] Smoothest Merlot ever! A taste that glides down your throat. Superb!

—Nicole Latorre, Score 46

[The 1997 Rabbit Ridge Reserve Chardonnay is] Rich, smooth with a lingering fruity aftertaste. A perfect opener for lunch on a sunny day or before dinner!

—Roger R. Weiber, Score 54

[The 1995 Smith e3 Hook Merlot]—What a great experience!

—E. Wilson Davis, Jr., Score 52

Maximum score is 55. Members who send in their wine ratings on the provided Scoresheets are eligible to receive a bonus half-case of any Gold Medal Series wine that is in stock if your name is drawn. Drawings are held 4 times a year at the end of each quarter. (Maximum of one Scoresheet per wine per membership)...GMWC

R E O R D E R

The taste of Italy, grown right here in California's Mendocino County! For the past decade, Monte Volpe owner, Greg Graziano has excelled in the fine art of *Cal-Ital* wines. Nebbiolo is the king of red wines in the Piemonte region of northwest Italy. Pinot Bianco is a widely planted and popular grape grown in the Friuli region in the northeast. These two wines are superb and production is extremely scarce.

MONTE VOLPE WINERY	Retail Price		Club Price		Club Price	
	Winery-Direct		2-Bottle Members		4-Bottle Members	
1995 Nebbiolo* Mendocino County	Half Case-6	\$96	\$75	(22% Off)	\$70	(27% Off)
	Full Case-12	\$192	\$141	(27% Off)	\$129	(33% Off)
1997 Pinot Bianco* Mendocino County	Half Case-6	\$74	\$59	(20% Off)	\$55	(26% Off)
	Full Case-12	\$148	\$109	(26% Off)	\$99	(33% Off)

Reorder Hotline: 1-800-266-8888

Reorder Faxline: 1-800-266-8889

*Reorder Alert: Availability is extremely limited.

Note: Tax e3 shipping are not included in the above prices. Call for details.