

THE WINE PRESS

Gold Medal Wine Club Newsletter: Vol. 14 No. 3

Cobble Creek Vineyards Edition

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

www.goldmedalwine.com

COBBLE CREEK WINES, ANOTHER SUCCESS STORY FOR THE UDSSEN FAMILY

Those of you who have been with us for a few years may remember a feature we did on Castoro Cellars, located in Paso Robles within California's thriving central coast growing region. The wines we featured from Castoro were a huge hit and sold out very quickly. So when winery founder Niels Udsen called us last year asking us to evaluate and perhaps present to our members a new brand of wines he was launching, naturally we were more

than willing. The featured wines this month are a result of that evaluation and represent the best of Cobble Creek Vineyard wines.

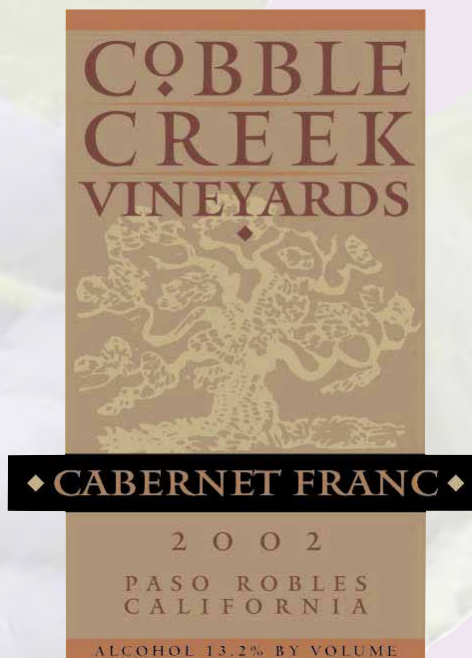
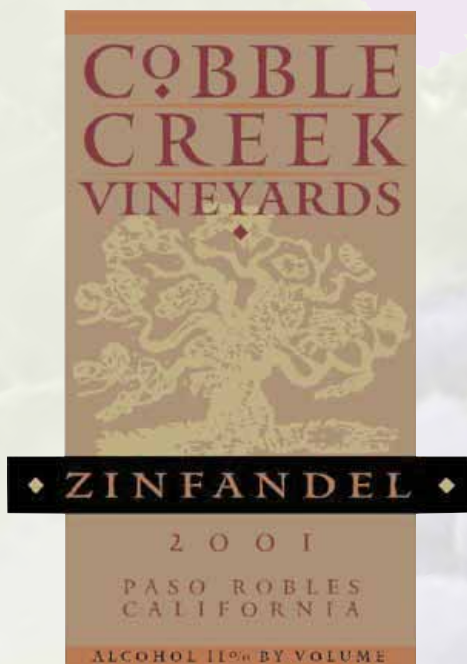
For our relatively new members, here is the amazing story of Niels and Berit Udsen. Members who have read their story a few years back will surely enjoy reading their story once again.

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Early morning central coast fog shrouds the beautiful Cobble Creek Vineyard that surrounds the winery.

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 1,200 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



2001 ZINFANDEL

Some of the finest California Zinfandels are produced in the Paso Robles region of central California. And it just so happens that Zinfandel is a specialty of winery owner Niels Udsen. The Cobble Creek Zin is a wine with ripe, well-fruited, and spicy aromas evident from the very first sniff. Its flavors deliver a well-composed blending of ripe blackberry and raspberry fruitiness with edges of dried spices and hints of chocolate. Fairly deep and framed by a minimal amount of tannins, it shows nice strength and structure. The mouthfeel is smooth and supple and the finish shows a lengthy sense of berryish fruit. Try pairing it with a hearty beef stew or a juicy pork loin roast. 100% Zinfandel.

2002 CABERNET FRANC

Genetic research has indicated that Cabernet Franc is actually the parent of Cabernet Sauvignon. For those of you who have never tried a Cabernet Franc, it is a lighter and fruitier wine than Cabernet Sauvignon. The Cobble Creek Cabernet Franc has a nose full of violets and raspberries, and bright berry fruit. The flavors are supple and openly fruity, with rich appealing spicy cherry and wild berry notes. Finishes with finesse and polish, with mild integrated tannins. Try the Cobble Creek Cabernet Franc with sharper, stronger vegetables such as eggplant and zucchini (though not cabbage). It holds its own with red meats and game, such as duck or venison. 100% Cabernet Franc.

WINE CREDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

2001 VINTAGE: Gold Medal Exclusive— Available only at the winery tasting room and through Gold Medal Wine Club. This wine is entered into the major wine competitions this spring and summer so no medals have been awarded as of yet.

LEGACY: This is the first vintage of Zinfandel under the Cobble Creek Vineyard label.

Just the facts:

pH	3.67
Total Acid	.63 g/100 mls
Alcohol	13.9%
Cases Produced	1,242
Aged in American Oak	11 Months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2008+

2002 VINTAGE: Gold Medal Exclusive— Available only at the winery tasting room and through Gold Medal Wine Club. This wine is entered into the major wine competitions this spring and summer so no medals have been awarded as of yet.

LEGACY: This is the first vintage of Zinfandel under the Cobble Vineyard Creek label.

Just the facts:

pH	3.58
Total Acid	.58 g/100 mls
Alcohol	13.5%
Cases Produced	1,134
Aged in French Oak	9 Months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2008+

GOLD MEDAL SPOTLIGHT

Niels Udsen

"I had no idea what I wanted to do," Niels Udsen candidly says about his career plans. "Until one of my last classes in my final year of college." At the time, Niels was a student at California Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo, studying Agriculture. That particular course required him to do a marketing project and vineyard feasibility study for nearby winery, Zaca Mesa. "From that point on I knew I wanted to be in the wine business," he says.

Niels was born and raised on California's central coast, in the city of Ventura. His father came over from Denmark in the late 1940s with a dream to be an American farmer. "I spent a lot of summers in the field," Niels groans. His father's dream turned into a highly successful business that produced bulk-seeds for use by farmers and packaged-seeds for consumers.

When Niels was a teenager he went to live in Denmark with the family of his father's best friend. The trip proved to be a fortuitous event

in Niels's life. While he was there he met his future bride, Berit. He also learned to make wine, taught by his father's friend. Not yet knowing the impact that visit would have on his life, Niels returned to California to finish high school and college. He and Berit kept in touch through

"cellar rat" before graduating to various other duties. "I did a little bit of everything while I was there," he recalls. "It was a good a way to learn the business."

And learn he did. While he was there, the winery had begun to lease their facilities to independent wine-makers who were producing their own private-label wines. Niels figured he could do that as well, so he too began making wine. He stayed at Estrella River for five years, until 1986 when his own winemaking venture required his full attention.




Winery owners Niels and Bimmer Udsen have the smiles of success.

the years and when Niels went back to Denmark after college they got married.

When the newlyweds returned to California, Niels was willing to take on just about any job that would get him into the wine business. After knocking on the doors of dozens of wineries throughout the state, he was hired by Estrella River Winery. Ironically, it was located very near to San Luis Obispo where he attended school. There he paid his dues as a

Niels and Berit (or "Bimmer" as her friends call her), live about a half-mile from the Castoro Cellars tasting room just off Highway 46, near Templeton. They have two boys, Max and Luke. Oh, and by the way the name "Castoro" is the Italian word for *beaver*, which was Niels's nickname as he was growing up. He learned that fact while on an extended trip in Italy after he finished high school. He always liked the name *Castoro* and it seemed an appropriate name for his "dam fine wine!" 🍷



WINE WIZARD

- 1) Roughly how much wine can a winery expect to yield from one ton of grapes?
- 2) Wine enthusiasts sometime refer to an enjoyable wine as having very good “balance.” In wine terms, what is “balance?”
- 3) True or False. Grapes have the highest sugar content of all fruits.

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Owners Niels and Berit Udsen actually began their winery in 1983 while Niels was still working at Estrella River Winery. Gaining valuable experience in just about every phase of the business, he would make his own wine on the weekends and his wife, Berit, would go out and sell it. “At first we just wanted to make a few barrels of wine for our friends and family,” recalls Niels. “Everyone thought it was great wine so we started selling to area restaurants and stores. We just kept making more and more each year.”

By 1986 things got to be more than Niels could handle on a part-time basis, so he quit Estrella River to devote full time to his own venture. “We had no employees,” states Niels. “It was just me and my wife doing everything.” Out came a thousand cases, then two the next year, then three the year after that. “We made a little bit of a lot of different wines for a winery of our size,” admits Niels. Aside from the red Zinfandel that a lot of wineries were giving up on in the mid-1980s, Niels crafted small batches of Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and White Zinfandel.

Niels owned no vineyard or winery building in those days so he purchased grapes from dozens of different vineyards and leased facilities to make the wine. “I’ve bought grapes from over 40 different vineyards,” says Niels. “It has given me great flexibility in producing a consistently good product every year.” And that consistency has paid off. Throughout the 1980s they methodically carved a small but comfortable niche in the wine market.

Niels developed another niche during that period. He recognized that wineries on the central coast needed readily available “custom-crush” services. A lot of wineries like his were still too small to have their own crushing equipment. And even more

wineries did not have on-premise machinery to bottle the finished wine. Consequently, Niels purchased a large Europress for these small wineries to have available to lease. He also developed a mobile bottling line that could be transported right to the winery site. Now, instead of having to transport grapes and/or finished wine to other parts of California, wineries had a local source. With less handling and faster turn-around time a potentially better quality wine could be made.

By the early 1990s there were no facilities available on the central coast that were big enough to house his rapidly growing custom-crush operation *and* his own ever expanding wine business. So in 1991 the Udsens found a permanent facility for their enterprises— an old abandoned winery building located in the same area, situated on 200 acres of land. The land surrounding the building is potentially good soil for establishing vineyards but as of yet none have been planted. Instead, Niels took advantage of yet another opportunity by purchasing two separate vineyards in the area that came up for sale. He knew they were excellent vineyards because he had been buying fruit from both locations for a number of years.

Niels and Berit have come from making a few barrels of wine for their friends in a rented corner of someone else’s winery to developing

a 65,000 case custom-crush operation and a 25,000-case winery. And they are now in their own building, with their own equipment, using grapes from their own 125-acres of vineyards! Quite an accomplishment.

The Udsens actually acquired *two* vineyards, one named *Hog Heaven* after the wild hogs that used to roam the property, and the second, named *Blind Faith*. The latter vineyard got its name when the opportunity to buy the vineyard came up while Niels's wife was in



The winery tasting room is an inviting venue for visitors seven days a week.

Denmark. Collectively, the two made a quick decision to buy the property based on blind faith. Now with their own vineyards to use,

Niels estimates the fruit takes care of about half the fruit he needs. "We're still doing the same thing we always

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ANSWERS TO WINE WIZARD

1) *The conversion factor is far from absolute. One ton of grapes will usually yield between 550 and 750 liters of juice. Normal sized wine bottles contain 750 milliliters, so between 60 and 80 cases of wine can be produced. The actual yield will depend on the size of the berries, what type of press is used and how heavily they are pressed.*

2) *A wine is said to have good balance if there is an equilibrium created by roughly equal amounts of fruitiness and acidity. A wine that lacks fruit is said to be thin; if it is all fruit with no crispness, the wine is considered "flabby." The degree of balance will differ somewhat from person to person, partly due to differences in physiological threshold for various substances, and partly due to experience (or lack thereof).*

3) *True. The sugar content of grapes is substantially higher than that of sugar beets or sugar cane, which will peak out at 12 to 14 percent sugar. Grapes will peak at 20 to 24 percent sugar. In grapes dehydrated to raisins, the sugar content may reach 50 to 75 percent.*





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Winery owner Niels Udén: "This one is popular and everyone's favorite. I learned it in Italy and it put me through college!"

COBBLE CREEK SHRIMP

- 1 1/2 cup orzo
- 6 slices of bacon (crumbled)
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 cup thinly sliced celery
- 1/4 cup chopped green onions
- 1 1/2 cup cooked (al dente) mixed veggies — peas, carrots
- 2 tablespoon tomato paste
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 12-16 ounces frozen small to medium shrimp tails off, thawed and drained

Prepare orzo. In a large skillet cook bacon remove and drain. In same skillet heat oil, add celery and onions, cook until translucent then add veggies. Cook until done add the tomato paste, crumbled bacon, shrimp and orzo. Mix, season and heat through and through. Garlic lovers — feel free to add as much as you like! Sit down and enjoy with a glass of Cobble Creek Cabernet Franc.

SPAGHETTI ALA CARBONARA

- Essential ingredients:
- High quality olive oil
 - Parmesan cheese from Parma.
- Don't bother making it unless you have the real cheese!*
- Other ingredients
- Large onion
 - 1 pound pancetta or good quality bacon
 - White wine - The Viognier would work great
 - Pepper
 - 3 eggs
 - 1 pound Spaghetti or tagiatelli

Get the water going! Dice the onion and bacon (trim the some of the fat off) and sauté with a couple of tablespoons of olive oil. Grind some pepper over. Once the onions are tender, add a cup of wine and cook it down. Repeat. Put the pasta in the boiling water.

Grate a cup of parmigiano in serving bowl, add the eggs, generously grind pepper on top and mix well. Set aside until pasta is ready. Drain the pasta and pour over the egg mixture mixing well, this will cook the eggs. Top with the onion bacon wine reduction. Mix gently.

Aromas will abound, as will the smiles of the diners. Serve with grated parmigiano. Finish the Viognier while cooking and then crack open the Zinfandel. Serve with baguettes and finish with a light mixed green salad. This is simple, fun and always a bit. It's so easy to do while chatting and enjoying wine. The cooking becomes part of the total experience. Great with a glass of Zin!



Bottles of Cobble Creek Cabernet Franc whirl around on the bottling line.

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have— buying fruit from a number of different vineyards to ensure a consistently good quality product. Only now, we just happen to own two of those vineyards.”

Currently, the winery’s principal varietal wines include Zinfandel, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, White Zinfandel and

to a lesser extent, Sauvignon Blanc. They also bottle three to four tasting-room-only wines such as Cabernet Franc and Viognier in very small quantities. “We’d like to build up production on all of these wines,” admits Niels. “But we’ll do it like we always have— by ramping up slow and easy.” Maintaining quality while increasing production has always been a challenging task for small wineries. They are fortunate to have had the same

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.

Red Hill 2001 Reserve Merlot

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	97%	3%	0%

Red Hill 2002 Reserve Chardonnay

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	93%	5%	2%

Lions Gate 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	92%	4%	4%

Lions Gate 2002 Chardonnay

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

Madroña 2000 Zinfandel

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	91%	6%	3%

Madroña 2002 Mèlange de Trois

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

Madroña 2000 Reserve Syrah

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


Handley Cellars 2000 Pinot Noir

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

expert production team since 1990. Wine-industry veterans Tom Myers and Mikel Olsten are key players in the hundreds of awards earned over the years.

The latest creation of Niels and his team, Cobble Creek Vineyard wines, prove once again that quality does not have to be expensive. We are very pleased to be a test-market of sorts for Cobble Creek wines that are currently available only at the winery tasting room and through Gold Medal Wine Club. 



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THE GRAPEVINE

Comments from us and Club members

If you haven't yet used our website to reorder more wines, it's both convenient and easy to use. It is a **members-only** site so you cannot get there directly from our Home Page. Only customers currently receiving wine are eligible to get the aggressively discounted Club prices. From time to time you may also find **unadvertised special offers** on the reorder site. The direct link is: www.goldmedalwine.com/reorder. You may want to save the direct link as one of your Favorites in your web browser for easy access.

We now need to catch up on announcing the winners of the current and previous two month's winners of our Grapevine drawing for a free half-case. **January's winners** are **Matt and Rachel Buchanan** who decided on Lions Gate Cabernet for their complimentary half-case. **February's winners** are **Ken and Alma Mathis**, who opted for the Madrona Zinfandel and Pozzan Cabernet; and the **March winner** is **Harry Gattey** who preferred the Pozzan Cabernet Sauvignon. Congratulations to all three! Your wine is on its way.

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 each month. (Maximum of one Scoresheet per wine per membership)...GMWC

R E O R D E R

Located in Paso Robles on California's central coast, Cobble Creek Vineyards offers very appealing wines at incredible values. Based on the reorder activity of the past few months, we are certain these wines will be quick sellouts. So if we sold out of a previous wine you wanted, we urge you to call as soon as you can or simply go on line to reorder anytime.

COBBLE CREEK VINEYARDS	Retail Price		Club Price		Club Price	
	Winery-Direct		2-Bottle Members		4-Bottle Members	
2001 Zinfandel* Paso Robles	Half Case-6	\$96	\$72	(25% Off)	\$66	(31% Off)
	Full Case-12	\$192	\$135	(30% Off)	\$119	(38% Off)
2002 Cabernet Franc* Paso Robles	Half Case-6	\$96	\$72	(25% Off)	\$66	(31% Off)
	Full Case-12	\$192	\$135	(30% Off)	\$119	(38% Off)

Reorder Hotline: 1-800-266-8888

Reorder Faxline: 1-800-266-8889

www.goldmedalwine.com/reorder

**Availability is very limited.*

Note: Shipping and tax (if applicable) not included in the above prices. Call for details.