



Diamond Wine Club

JANZEN Napa Valley

By even the sophisticated standards of Napa Valley, Claus Janzen is a most unique asset to the valley's wine community.

Born in Germany, Claus and his family moved to Canada in his infancy. Claus attended school in Canada and immediately after college, moved to Switzerland where he worked in a number of high caliber hotels. During his stint as an hotelier, Claus became interested in wines, and in particular, the great Burgundies and Rhones of France.

After moving back to Canada, he eventually received the equivalent of a master's degree in business. Next, Janzen entered the family real estate business in Winnipeg, where he spent a number of years. The city asserted itself as a perfect setting for Janzen's continuing interest in wines and great food. His experience in Europe and his natural palate made him a serious oenophile and eventually the top wine taster throughout all of Canada.

During all this time, Janzen continued his periodic visits back to Europe and to his favorite wine regions in France. He became particularly enamored with developments in Southeastern France where a close friend had produced the first Cabernet Sauvignon/Syrah blend that was to astound wine critics everywhere and have an important affect on Claus Janzen's upcoming wine career.

Sometime in the mid to late 1980's, Janzen and his family were introduced to Napa Valley. Napa compared favorably to the bucolic French countryside the Janzens loved and the decision was made to move to Napa. Janzen was soon introduced to Caymus Vineyards' owner Chuck Wagner, and a marvelous friendship quickly ensued.

"I was invited to be able to take part in the 1988 harvest at Caymus," explained Janzen, "but, I must say it was absolutely the hardest work I had ever experienced. I had been around a number of harvests in France, but actually working one made it all come together."

Janzen credits Wagner and his late father

Charlie Wagner with providing him in 1994 with the opportunity to establish him in the wine industry. Wagner offered Janzen a job in helping to launch Caymus' international marketing and reputation. Janzen quickly agreed and spent the next eleven years in Caymus' employ.

About a year into the working relationship, Chuck Wagner asked Janzen what he wanted to do with his life. When Janzen implied he wanted to start a winery, Chuck Wagner was eager to help his friend as long as the new entity didn't compete directly with Caymus.

"We actually took some Sangiovese that had been blended with Petite Sirah and started the process," Janzen added. "When I also added some additional Cabernet Sauvignon in a manner that was similar to what I had seen in France, the actual groundwork for the first Bacio Divino wines was laid."

Utilizing his marketing skills, Janzen opted for an Italian name with a cache that he felt would ensure acceptance. *Bacio Divino* is literally "Divine Kiss" in Italian; a synonym for the experience the blend of grapes has on the palate of anyone tasting the wine.

Bacio Divino Cellars began with only 800 cases for its initial release in 1993, and the number has grown only minutely to its present level of around 2,000 cases. Once more, Claus Janzen has no intention of increasing production.

"I am completely satisfied with the static level our winery enjoys at present," he stated. "At this present level, I can completely control everything I need to insure complete quality. And, after all, isn't that the most important aspect any winemaker can demand?"

Bacio Divino owns a ten-acre parcel in Henry Canyon and also buys a relatively large amount of grapes from another fifteen or so growers dispersed throughout Napa Valley. This accessibility to a wide selection of grapes and differing soils and climates allows Janzen to

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DIANE & CLAUS JANZEN,
OWNERS

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pick and choose the fruit he wants to utilize for his wines.

Janzen also credits another Napa Valley icon Bill Smith, former owner of La Jota Vineyards and Winery, with being instrumental in his early winemaking decisions. “Whenever I had a question as to good or bad, Bill was there to help,” finalized Janzen.

Bacio Divino has now grown to include four wine labels, including *Pazzo* (a Sangiovese/Cabernet Sauvignon blend), *Vagabond* (an old-world styled Syrah and Petite Sirah), *Janzen* (vineyard-designate, small-lot premium Cabernets), and *Lucie*, the newest addition, and name for Bacio Divino’s Russian River Valley Pinot Noir.

This year, Janzen and his wife Diane celebrate twenty five years of Bacio Divino Cellars with continued critical accolades and marvelous ratings by the wine community.

Janzen 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cloudy’s Vineyard, Napa Valley

188 CASES PRODUCED

96 POINTS — *Robert Parker’s The Wine Advocate*

“Even better is the 2014 Cabernet Sauvignon, Cloudy’s Vineyard, which ratchets up the level of concentration to something even beyond Beckstoffer with notes of graphite, crushed rock, white flowers, blueberries, black raspberries, camphor and subtle oak. It is deep, full-bodied and multidimensional with sweet tannins and low acidity.”

95 POINTS — *Wine Enthusiast magazine*

“This remarkable wine offers soft luxury between its balance of fresh red cherry and cassis and the velvety grip of tannic concentration. Spiky persistent acidity guides a freshness of forest floor, sage and tobacco, the power entirely graceful in the glass.”

94 POINTS — *JamesSuckling.com*

“This has a linear edge through the middle of the wine that gives the bright fruit and firm tannins form and beauty.”

Consulting Winemaker’s Notes - Kirk Venge

“This wine is rich and layered with opulent blue fruit and notes of graphite, violets and spice. Aromatics of a floral nature with lots of nuance are heightened by a rich mouthfeel and a surprisingly delicate tannin structure.”



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This month’s Diamond *Plus!* Featured Wine:

Frias 2015 ‘SMD’ Spring Mountain Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

94 Points - *Robert Parker’s The Wine Advocate*

94 Points - *Jeb Dunnuck*

500 CASES PRODUCED



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