

In This Issue

RED HILL VINEYARD
Page 1

THIS MONTH'S WINES
Page 2

SPOTLIGHT PROFILES
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

CENTURY-OLD WINERY REVIVES RED HILL RESERVE

Few companies in the United States can claim to be nearly a hundred years old. And in the wine industry, those entities with over a century's longevity can be counted on one hand with a finger or two to be spared. Each surviving entity possesses unique circumstances, but only one or two has actually achieved icon status.

Such is the case with revered Sebastiani Vineyards, the time-tested,

family owned and operated winery complex located within the city of Sonoma in Northern California. The company was founded in 1904 by Samuele Sebastiani, who emigrated from his native Tuscany around 1895 and sought work as a stonemason. He quarried the Sonoma Hills for cobblestones that were used to build the famous streets and boulevards of nearby San Francisco.

Continued on page 4



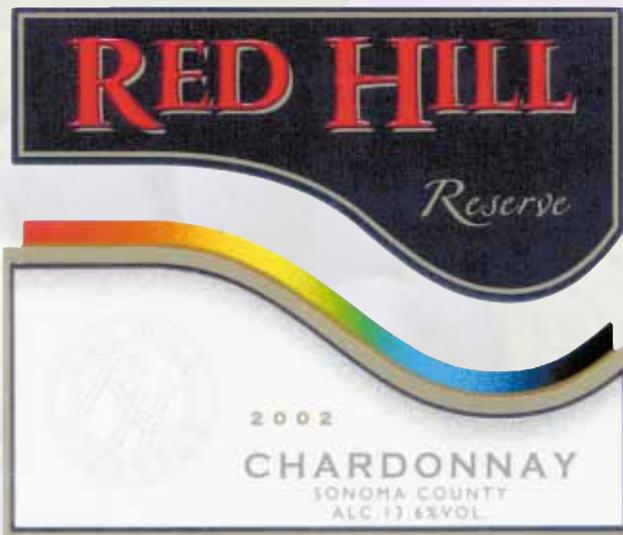
Red Hill Reserve wines are produced from some of the finest grapes grown in Sonoma Valley.

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 1,000 wineries in California producing thousands of different wines. Only wines fitting the above criteria are considered in choosing the featured selections each month.



2001 RESERVE MERLOT

This enjoyable Merlot sports a generous dose of juicy, black cherry and blueberry scents with a noticeable vanilla oakiness tinge. The flavors parallel with the aromas, offering beautiful shades of ripe berry fruit mixed with vanilla accented by a lovely mix of oak and chocolate. It is supple and nicely balanced with a slight bit of tannin that lends the proper amount of firmness. While eminently drinkable right now, this wine should continue to improve over the next couple of years and remain very enjoyable for several years thereafter. Try pairing with the Meat Loaf suggested in this issue's recipe section.



2002 RESERVE CHARDONNAY

The Red Hill Reserve Chardonnay shows very appealing, up-front aromas of citrus with hints of sweet oak. Nicely structured, the wine is straightforward, bright and youthful with a central core of citrus and green apple fruit. Lightly toasty oak serves as an attractive accent to the citrus flavors as it shows a nice sense of balance from start to crisp and clean finish. A classic seafood wine, it has the firm structure of wine that should improve on its already lively fruitiness for another year or two. While not intended for long aging, it is nonetheless a wine worth buying by the armload. 100% Chardonnay.

WINE CREDENTIAL HIGHLIGHTS

2001 VINTAGE: Gold Medal Special Selection—Available only through the Gold Medal Wine Club, winery direct and select northern California restaurants. Due to very small production, Red Hill Merlot was entered in very few competitions. Immediately upon release from the winery, this wine won a *Silver Medal* at the San Francisco International Wine Competition and a *Silver Medal* at the Long Beach Grand Cru Wine Competition.

LEGACY: This is the first release of Red Hill Merlot after a hiatus of ten years.

Just the facts:

pH	3.50
Total Acid	.60 g/100 mls
Alcohol	13.6%
Cases Produced	1,400
Aged in French & American Oak	15 Months
Drink Now or Up to Year	2008+

2002 VINTAGE: Gold Medal Special Selection—Just released in late summer of 2003, this Chardonnay was entered into only the Sonoma County Fair Wine Competition where it won a *Silver Medal*. As with its Red Hill counterpart, only a small number of cases were produced and the wine was not distributed to retail stores.

LEGACY: The 2002 vintage represents the resurrection of Red Hill Vineyard wines.

Just the facts:

pH	3.51
Total Acid	.50 g/100 mls
Alcohol	13.4%
Cases Produced	1,000
Drink Now or Up to Year	2007+

GOLD MEDAL SPOTLIGHT

Marc Cuneo

At the tender old age of 27, Marc Cuneo is one of the driving forces behind the reemergence of Red Hill Reserves. Marc is the fourth generation of his family in the wine business and speaks fondly of his present calling.

After graduating from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA, with a real estate major, Marc decided to try his luck living in San Francisco. He secured a position with a large wine distributor and spent the next two years learning the wine business. While he found the marketing position challenging, Marc eventually realized that he missed his Sonoma roots and finally decided to return to his family's business.

"When I first came back," he declared softly, "I was put into the position of crush oenologist, checking the different loads of grapes that we were crushing. That was back in 2000, and I guess we crushed about three thousand tons. We had already started downscaling, so the amount wasn't even close to the 15,000 tons we had crushed before."

Marc admits to having worked in the winery as a youth putting together six packs for the tasting room and later during high school as a member of the winery's quality control team.

"The fact is I'm basically a country kid at heart," he admitted.

"I enjoyed San Francisco enough but I really love Sonoma, and this is where I want to live."

Marc's current position as director of grower relations puts him in a perfect position to guide Red Hill's reincarnation. He considers the project one of his main goals and firmly believes the timing is right for Red Hill's reemergence.

"Things have changed a lot since Red Hill Reserve was first introduced in the early 1990s," he stated flatly. "Back then it was believed that many consumers were interested in single vineyard designates of really high quality. Fact is, it seems that this has become a reality only during the past few years. We've come a full 360 degrees from the early nineties. In retrospect, I really believe we were ahead of our time when Red Hill was first introduced."

Red Hill Reserve's current production is around 2,400 cases, a level that Marc Cuneo expects to exist for the immediate future. The design is to keep Red Hill as an exclusive, small appellation wine that appeals to the serious wine drinker.

"By carefully selecting the grapes that go into Red Hill Reserve," he explained, "we are able to show the consumer what's really behind the wine. When you deal with larger production and the ensuing blending that naturally arises... well, you are just unable to do what we can do on this small scale."

Cuneo also credits the almost magical volcanic soils of Northern Sonoma County for producing the quality that is evident in Red Hill

Reserve. He strongly believes that great locations make great wines, and the Red Hill area is among his favorite locales.

*Continued on
page 6*



Marc Cuneo is the son of Sebastiani president and CEO Mary Ann Sebastiani Cuneo and is among the fourth generation of Sonoma Sebastianis to take a leadership role in the winery.



**WINE
WIZARD**

- 1) Can you name three main factors that affect the *rate* of blood alcohol concentration in humans?
- 2) If someone you know bought a *Methuselah*, what would that mean?
- 3) In viticulture, what is meant by the term *veraison*?

Continued from page 1

But Samuele's heart was truly bound to the grape and the natural similarities of Sonoma and Tuscany caused him to finally buy some land and plant the first grapes that would eventually lead to today's far reaching wine empire.

After his death in 1944, Samuele's son August and his wife Sylvia purchased the winery from the estate and began the expansion of its facilities. With a decided vision to the future, the product line was also expanded, adding new varietal wines and proprietary blends. Accolades followed and August was

soon acknowledged as one of California's most skilled and innovative winemakers of his time. Along the way he also utilized many of Sonoma's skilled craftsmen by initiating the now famous hand-carved barrels, many of which are still displayed at the winery.

After August's death in 1980, the winery continued an expansion process that saw it delve into a number of different facets of the wine business. A number of significant new brands were developed, including: Talus, Vendage, Nathanson Creek, Heritage, La Terre and Farallon.

Sometime in 2000, a major change in ideology saw the Sebastiani wine empire begin a major downsizing. Large pieces of the company were sold in favor of a more streamlined approach to the new millennium. Family members and company insiders made a unique decision to alter their company's future by focusing on quality at the expense of their hard earned case volume.

Our gold medal selection for the month, Red Hill Reserve, was one of a number of significant projects that had originated with the confines of the Sebastiani Winery almost eleven years before the company's fateful decision to downsize. Around the end of 1989, a decision was made to make use of some particularly exquisite fruit that was found in the northern part of Sonoma County.

The soils in that particular area were mostly volcanic in nature, and bore close resemblance to Tuscany's native soils, where founder Samuele Sebastiani had left some one hundred-plus years earlier. Once top sample after top sample had arrived, it was decided to put these excellent grapes into good use and create a new single vineyard designate brand. The only name ever given to these fantastic grapes was Red Hill and the name somehow stuck.

First production of Red Hill Reserve was a mere 1200 cases, with most of the production going to a number of area restaurants that could adequately promote the small brand. Even though Red Hill Reserve might have been a bit ahead of its time, it nonetheless did quite well and the entire production process was repeated for the next three years.

A corporate assessment sometime around 1994 saw the focus on Red Hill Reserve and certain other brands change and for a time Red Hill Reserve ceased to be made.

When the major decision to downsize Sebastiani was made in 2000, a spark of life was given to the hibernating Red Hill. Since the marvelous source of grapes had not changed, it was decided to give Red Hill another chance. A particular set of circumstances in the Sonoma Valley and Alexander Valley had

produced some exceptional fruit that subsequently was made into Red Hill Reserve Merlot. A similar situation in the Northern Carneros and Russian River growing areas produced some exceptional Chardonnay and the Red Hill Reserve Chardonnay was officially born.

Red Hill Reserve wines will always continue to be produced on a limited and exclusive basis. Those who are fortunate enough to experience these wines will find them also to be of exceptional value. With little or no marketing or overhead costs involved, the consumer is again the main beneficiary.

We know you will enjoy this month's Red Hill Reserve wines. 🍷



Red Hill Vineyards winemaker, Mark Lyon, was named "Winemaker of the Year" for 2005 by industry publication Restaurant Wine.

ANSWERS TO WINE WIZARD

There are actually four principal factors that affect the rate at which alcohol is absorbed in the human body. 1) Alcohol concentration of the beverage 2) The amount of food consumption immediately before or while drinking 3) Whether the beverage is carbonated or still 4) Gender. The first and second factors listed are fairly obvious, while the third and fourth factors may be surprising to some. It is a fact that the alcohol in carbonated or sparkling beverages is absorbed at a higher rate than in still beverages. It is also a fact that gender makes a difference. When alcohol intake is adjusted for body weight, women reach a higher blood alcohol concentration. Women have lower activity of the alcohol-metabolizing enzyme ADH in the stomach, causing a larger proportion of the ingested alcohol to reach the blood.

*2) A **Methuselab** is the name for a large format bottle that holds 6 liters (8 bottles) of wine. Traditionally it is used to bottle Champagne or Burgundy wines. In Bordeaux, a Methuselab-sized bottle is known as an **Imperial**. A **Nebuchadnezzar** is regarded as the largest size used to bottle Champagne or Burgundy.*

*3) **Veraison** is the onset of the grape berry ripening. At this stage in the grape growing cycle, the berries change from the hard, green state to their softened and colored form.*





FOOD FOR THOUGHT

RED HILL MEAT LOAF

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/2 cup oatmeal (quick type)
- 1 small onion, chopped fine *
- 1 clove garlic, pressed
- 4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 teaspoons chopped parsley
- 1 8-ounce can tomato sauce, divided
- 3 tablespoons Red Hill Merlot
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 egg, beaten

Combine all ingredients, using only three-fourths of the tomato sauce. Shape into a greased loaf pan and pour remaining tomato sauce over loaf. Bake for 1 hour at 350°.

* Instead of the chopped onion, half package of Lipton Onion Soup mix may be used. If you use the soup mix, reduce the amount of salt to 1/2 teaspoon.

SONOMA VEAL SCALLOPINE

- 1-1/2 pounds Veal scallops,
cut 3/8 inch thick and pounded until 1/4 inch thick
- 1/2 teaspoon sage or 2 leaves fresh sage
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Flour
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 3/4 cup Red Hill Chardonnay
- 1 small can button mushrooms, liquid included
(if you like mushrooms, use a larger can)
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 4 tablespoons chopped parsley

Season veal with sage, salt and pepper. Dip in flour and shake off excess. In a heavy skillet, melt butter with oil. Add veal, 4-5 scallops at a time and sauté them about 2 minutes on each side until they are golden brown. Transfer scallops to a plate. Pour off almost all fat from the skillet, leaving only a thin film on the bottom. Add wine, mushrooms, lemon juice and parsley, and boil briskly 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly. Scrape any browned bits clinging to the skillet. Return veal to skillet. Cover and simmer 10-15 minutes until veal is tender when pierced with the tip of a sharp knife. Serves 4.



Winery principals Richard Cuneo and Sylvia Sebastiani (sitting); Marc Cuneo and Mary Ann Sebastiani Cuneo (standing).

Continued from page 5

“My family has known about the red hill grapes for many, many years. It’s nice that we are finally able to do something about producing wine from some of their better crops.”

What about the possibility of a really bad crop from the area?

Cuneo feels that he will cross that bridge when it happens, but isn’t immune to the idea that no wines would be produced under

such conditions. He believes that if great fruit is available, then it is his mission to produce some really great wines. He is also the realist, should the opposite occur.

It seems that Marc Cuneo’s energy and philosophy fits neatly into the future plans for the Red Hill Reserve that his family has brought back to life. Marc is very willing to take his time with regard to growth and flexible concerning the years ahead.

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.

Madroña 2000 Zinfandel

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	94%	5%	1%

Madroña 2000 Reserve Syrah

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

Handley Cellars 2001 Pinot Noir

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

Bighorn Cellars 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon

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

Madroña 2002 Mèlange de Trois

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	93%	4%	3%

Handley Cellars 2000 Pinot Noir

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

Handley Cellars 2001 Chardonnay

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

Bighorn Cellars 2000 Chardonnay

MEDALS:	GOLD	SILVER	BRONZE
RESULTS:	91%	5%	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

He looks forward to next year and his family's celebration of its 100 years in the wine industry. While Red Hill Reserve is but a small percentage of the 180,000 cases his family produces, Red Hill Reserve's present and future are most important to him.

He sees more exclusive arrangements in the upcoming years and is most willing to meet the challenge, provided, of course, he is able to secure his precious fruit from Red Hill. 🍷



"Not much—just flushing out my arteries."

©cartoonbank.com

THE GRAPEVINE

Comments from us and Club members

At the beginning of each year, we like to reminisce about the fabulous wines that were enjoyed during the previous year. As usual, it's tough to leave out *any* wine, but due mostly to space limitations, we traditionally cut the list down to the Top Ten Wines of the Year. The top ten list is not decided by us, but rather by *you*. It is a compilation of the average scores you sent in using the Wine Tasting Scoresheets that are included in each month's newsletter packet. In case of ties, the ranking was based on the total number of Scorecards received.

Starting with **#10) Greenwood Ridge 2000 Merlot #9) Ventana 2000 Cabernet Sauvignon #8) Bighorn 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon #7) Enotria 2000 Barbera #6) Red Robin Lane 2000 Sangiovese #5) Madroña 2002 Mèlange de Trois #4) Cloninger 2000 Pinot Noir #3) Baileyana 1999 Zinfandel #2) Madroña 2000 Zinfandel and the **Number One Wine of the Year . . . Greenwood Ridge 2001 Pinot Noir!****

Early indications are that the recently featured **Lions Gate 2001 Cabernet Sauvignon** is destined to land on the Top Ten List. The Scorecards received so far on this wine suggest that it will be a strong finisher. **Stay tuned, more great wines are ahead in 2004!**

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

What could be more appropriate than to start the New Year with the revival of Red Hill Vineyard Reserve wines? This month's featured selections represent the official return of high-quality, low-production Red Hill Vineyard specialty wines. These excellent wines are an incredible value— available on a limited basis only and not distributed to traditional retail stores. Time to stock up!

RED HILL VINEYARD	Retail Price Winery-Direct	Club Price 2-Bottle Members	Club Price 4-Bottle Members
2001 Reserve Merlot Sonoma County	Half Case-6 \$114 Full Case-12 \$228	\$84 (26% Off) \$155 (32% Off)	\$75 (34% Off) \$139 (39% Off)
2002 Reserve Chardonnay Sonoma County	Half Case-6 \$114 Full Case-12 \$228	\$82 (28% Off) \$149 (35% Off)	\$72 (37% Off) \$128 (44% Off)

Reorder Hotline: 1-800-266-8888

Reorder Faxline: 1-800-266-8889

www.goldmedalwine.com

**Availability is very limited.*

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