

Santiam Wine Company is please to feature Phelps Creek Vineyards at the wine tasting on Wednesday, August 26th from 4-7pm

Cost is only \$10. Here are the wines we will be pouring:

2007 Phelps Creek Celilo Chardonnay \$22.

2007 Phelps Creek Oak Ridge Gewurtraminer \$18.

2007 Phelps Creek Alexandrine Pinot Noir \$45.

In the NEWS!

Northwest Palate Magazine--July/August 2009 Pick of the Palate

"Our choice of an intriguing winery you should know about." "Phelps Creek is building a solid reputation as a quality-focused Columbia Gorge AVA winery. Rather than trying to be all things to all wine consumers, they focus on Pinot Noir with a few succulent side trips to Chardonnay and Gewurztraminer-land. Robert Morus founded the winery and with the help of Heather Staten and Rich Cushman as Director of Winemaking, Phelps Creek is producing exciting wines.... A recent consulting arrangement with Burgundian winemaker Alexandrine Roy adds an intriguing dimension to their Pinot Noir program." Cole Danehower--editor NW Palate

Read More in *NW Palate Magazine* July/August 2009

Gorge takes on a French accent

by Katherine Cole, special to The Oregonian

Tuesday May 05, 2009, 12:02 AM

WINE NOTES

Brian Robb Photography The stellar pinot noir made by Rich Cushman at Phelps Creek is helping the Columbia River Gorge region emerge from the shadow of the Willamette Valley. In recent years, the quality of Columbia River Gorge wines has gone from pretty good to downright delicious.



But many aficionados have had trouble taking the region seriously as an oenological appellation.

Sure, its tasting rooms offer breathtaking scenery, but when it comes to high-quality wine grapes, the prevailing view is that the Willamette Valley is where it's at.

To these connoisseurs, let me just say this: *Les Francais sont arrives!*

As we know from the Willamette Valley's Domaine Drouhin and Cayuse in Walla Walla, local wine regions gain major credibility when the French start sniffing around, buying vineyards and crushing grapes.

Consider Alexis Pouillon, who has apprenticed in France at the revered Chateau de Beaucastel, where the "mistral" winds whip down the Rhone River in a way that would be very familiar to the daring kiteboarders and windsurfers on the Columbia.

When Alexis and his wife, Juliet, decided to launch their own estate, they headed for Lyle, Wash., where they make Rhone-style wines at Domaine Pouillon. Their value-priced red, the 2007 Columbia Valley "Black Dot" (\$17.50), is a wine you'll keep coming back to. A blend of seven grapes, it's like a rustic Châteauneuf-du-Pape with a dollop of Italian exuberance and a dash of gorge terroir. The palate is juicy, fruity and spicy, while the nose has undeniable undercurrents of ponderosa pine, sagebrush and grassland. (Find it at Haggen Oregon City and Sip D'Vine.)

Or consider the case of Alexandrine Roy, a young Burgundian whose family label, Domaine Marc Roy, is a cult classic among Francophiles.

Invited by Phelps Creek Vineyards to bring her French know-how to a consulting winemaker gig in the gorge, she puts her own spin on Phelps Creek's high-elevation fruit with her 2007 "Cuvee Alexandrine" Columbia Gorge Pinot Noir (\$47). Wild with tart raspberries and brambles on the palate and a haunting floral perfume, this is a leaner style of wine that's made to last; fascinating now, it could be a knockout in a decade.

Longtime Willamette Valley vigneron Rich Cushman was lured back to his hometown of Hood River to direct winemaking at Phelps Creek, and he crafted the Estate Reserve Columbia Gorge Pinot Noir (also \$47), which is made from practically the same grapes that went into its fraternal twin, the Cuvee Alexandrine.

Cushman's polished pinot is a drink-now potpourri of ripe cherries, raspberries and vanilla accented by bright acidity and spice. Yum.

I don't normally cover such costly wines, but I think it's worth noting that if a gorge winery is able to sell not one but one but TWO top-notch \$50 pinot noirs made by two respected winemakers, the gorge oeno scene must be more than just a pretty place.

Splurge on the pair -- a gift to yourself or Mom on Mother's Day -- and you'll receive an instant lesson in the delightful differences between the Old World and New World styles of winemaking.

And for dessert ... Phelps Creek's Cushman also produces his own label, named Viento (Spanish for "wind") after the mistral that blows through the Columbia Gorge. After enjoying his dry table wines, such as his sangiovese, for many years, I was pleasantly surprised recently by Cushman's dessert wine, the 2007 Late Harvest Riesling (\$20). With its delicate honeycomb-honeysuckle nose and light, spritzy, lavender-accented palate, it's a balanced piece of proof that just about any grape can thrive in the gorge

Cheers,

Debbie Rios / Owner
Santiam Wine Company
1930 Commercial Street SE
Salem, Oregon 97302
503-589-0775
debbie@santiamwine.com
www.santiamwine.com