



AURIC PACIFIC

*“selling wine with passion!”*

## **Auric Pacific Fine Wines**

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### **2004 Rhone Revisit**

Tanzer has released his final thought on 2004 Rhône. Here are the points worth considering if you are looking to buy any of the following offers.

The early report has shown more promising for Southern Rhône rather than Northern Rhône in 2004. However, Tanzer is equally optimistic with 2004 northern Rhône, despite it will inevitably under the shadow of 2005, which almost across-the-board in France, produces exceptional wines. Unlike the 2003, which wines are influenced by the heatwave (especially the hot southern region, which was more affected by the drought and produces extreme wines) that offers juicier and more obvious ripeness. 2004 is considered by many growers as a classical vintage, with better freshness in fruit, structured, more focused wines.

Obviously, the media world are today divided into two distinctive camps. Those who led by Parker, which favoured obvious ripeness, textured, size (richness & weight) and the opposite, Tanzer, which access his wine based on the principle of burgundy in mind. He look for balance, details (result of well buffered natural acidity) and structure in wines, that is so called classical style. There is obviously no right or wrong here, but rather the matter of preferences. Fan of more immediate gratification and seeking for richness and weight can well follow Parker's advice. Likewise, Tanzer's reviews are for those with patience, those who believe food is the meaning of wine, rather than wine is food itself.

Regrettably, I am unable to provide my tasting note as I have not tasted any of the following wines. All the tasting notes below are re-printed from Tanzer's International Wine Cellar issue 130 and Robert Parker's Wine Advocate issue 163.

#### **Domaine Auguste & Pierre-Marie Clape**

36 bts. 2004 Cornas Renaissance (S\$88.00 each): Medium red. Intense floral and red berry aromas are bright and pungent. Supple and juicy, with fresh raspberry and cherry flavors, silky tannins and a long, lush finish. A late-arriving smoked meat quality and lingering sweet red berry tones add complexity to this distinctly suave Cornas. **rated 91 points by Tanzer**

2004 Cornas (S\$125.00): Ruby-red. Classic Cornas on the nose, with strong scents of red berries, cherry, blackcurrant, smoked meat, candied violet, anise and minerals; this has all the syrah food groups covered. Dense and sweet, with impressively concentrated red and dark berry flavors, bright minerality and fine-grained tannins. Finishes sweet and long, with strong fruit and just the slightest hints of game and earth. Clape describes this one as "delicate, but absolutely Cornas." **rated 93 points by Tanzer**

#### **Domaine René Rostaing**

2004 Côte-Rôtie (S\$98.00): Medium red. Spicy, energetic red fruit aromas are precise and mineral-driven. Juicy, open-knit raspberry and cherry flavors are supported by delicate tannins. This very pure wine drinks well already. **rated 89 points by Tanzer**

2 bts. 2004 Côte-Rôtie La Landonne (S\$138.00 each): Medium red. Intense, spicy red fruit aromas- especially raspberry-complicated by dried flowers and pungent herbs. Silky and suave, with sweet red berry flavors and the lightest hint of mocha. The youthfully taut, fresh finish shows a persistent raspberry tone. **rated 92 points by Tanzer**

12 bts. 2004 Côte-Rôtie Côte Blonde (S\$150.00 each): Bright red. Explosive, intensely perfumed bouquet encompasses smoky red and dark berries, cherry, fresh and dried flowers and an intriguing minerality. Deep in concentrated blackberry and raspberry preserve flavors but also boasts superb freshness and clarity. The bright, tangy finish doesn't want to quit, throwing off notes of floral pastille, graphite, tobacco and sweet red and dark berries. The wine's tannins are overwhelmed by sweet fruit. **rated 94 points by Tanzer**

24 bts. 2004 Domaine de Marcoux Châteauneuf du Pape (S\$125.00 each): Medium red. Ripe red fruits and minerals on the nose; like a Burgundy in its aromatic profile. Very fresh and elegant, with precise strawberry and redcurrant flavors, impressive focus and a long, juicy finish. This is absolutely delicious now but has the balance for cellaring. **rated 93 points by Tanzer**

36 bts. 2004 Domaine Pierre Usseglio Châteauneuf du Pape Cuvée de Mon Aïeul (S\$130.00 each): The 2004 Chateauneuf du Pape Cuvée de Mon Aieul, which spends 90% of its time in tank and 10% in old barrels, has turned out even better in bottle than it performed from cask. Basically 100% Grenache in 2004, this is clearly better than the 1999, which I own and drink frequently. It exhibits a deep ruby purple color and a wonderful sweet nose of black cherry, raspberry, licorice, spice box, and roasted herbs. Voluminous for a 2004, with full body, beautiful texture, a long, heady finish, and loads of fruit, glycerin, and decent acidity, this wine should drink beautifully for 12-15+ years. There was no 2004 Reserve des Deux Freres as all of that wine was put into the Mon Aieul. **rated 94 points by Parker**

## The Story of Wine



from movie 300

The highly anticipated movie "300" is probably the visually most stunning movie I've ever watch. This epic movie that inspired from Frank Miller's (yes, the same author for Sin City) graphic novel not only makes every scene capable of being a painting in the ceiling of Palais de Versailles, even the violence blood spreading (more like a drop of rose petal) battlefield, the dead corpses sculpted wall were all work of art, beautiful as poetry, and who can forget the erotic dance of the most beautiful Greece maiden. Despite all the six-packs, perfect body-sharp of the Spartans, the flawless CG effect, it was however underscored by a strong and convincing story that made this movie worthwhile.

Interestingly, wine share the similar path of success. All great wine almost inevitably has a great story behind. Whether is it a grand tale, or sometimes more humble, but like movie, they can emotionally move the audience and make them part of the movie. We all heard about the fascinating story of such great vineyards like Romanée-Conti, La Tâche, La Romanée., the up and downfall (some later resurrected, others just disappeared) of such historical families like Liger-Belair, Comte George de Vogüé, Marey-Monge...etc. Both their wines and story have lived through the history, tested by time, and continue to inspire the rest till these days. Are there similar example in California? The answer is yes!

Anyone who is familiar with the wine history of America heard about the legacy of **Inglenook Vineyard**, which during then, was the only quality-driven winery in Rutherford. It was founded in 1879 by Gustav Niebaum. In the hand of his grandson, John Daniel Jr., it has achieved the quality height that's unparalleled by others. Today, the original estate is sold to famous Hollywood filmmaker, Francis Ford Coppola that renamed it as Rubicon. The Inglenook vineyard, Napanook was later sold to Christian Moueix of Château Pétrus, which form the Dominus Estate. The daughter of John Daniel Jr., Robin Lail went on to co-found the **Merryvale Vineyard** with Bill Harlan and others. She later departed the partnership and started her own **Lail Vineyard** with the help of Philippe Melka, the same winemaker for Bryant Family.

How was this story for a start? Let me tell you another highly inspiring story of **Harlan Estate**.

In some angle of Harlan, he reminded me a lot of Clint Eastwood, that no-bullshit, that focused look, with his pair of hawk's eye that can almost read through your mind. That was my first impression when I first met the giant himself. The real-estate developer of Pacific Union has always had that keen eye and foresight for many good things to come. Whether is it from his early training days in the real estate business, or his natural instinct. His decision to start a high profile boutique hotel called Meadowood in the middle of wine country (at Silverado Trail) has proven to be a real success. When he was first beaten by the wine bug and joined founded the **Merryvale Winery**. He realized ahead of him, will be another fascinating journey, but what he didn't know, he was actually making history while persuading his dream.

Harlan was always fascinated by those great Châteaux in Bordeaux. With the help of his new found acquaintance, Bob Mondavi, he took a trip to Bordeaux and Burgundy, that is where he learn that, all great wine lies on it's vineyard, not on the hand of man, that the great vineyards are to be found not to be made. Upon returning from France, he and winemaker, Bob Levy started to search for the site. During than, when self-expression was better appreciated by the American critics rather than the site, winemaking become more important then where the wine is grow, and hiring star consultant winemaker like Tony Soter, Helen Turley, Heidi Peterson Barret has become the short path for success. Out of sudden, like winter saffron, there are new "cult" wine appearing in every new vintage. Little do people notice that, it was in fact the uniqueness of vineyard that contributed to the success of those flying consultant. Tony Soter became notice because of his work in **Spottswoode**, Helen Turley becoming hot commodity due to her involvement with **Bryant Family**, Heidi Barret must be grateful to have her name associated with **Grace Family** vineyard. Look at today, after they have all left those vineyards, have their quality disappeared with them? Harlan is fully aware of that, he started looking back history, and soon he discovered, two particularly areas - Rutherford & Oakville, were in the past, the best quality Cabernets found it's best there. He later acquired a hillside vineyard in 84s at western Oakville , overlooking Martha's vineyard, where **David Abreu** was put in-charged of constructing the vineyard from scratch. Due to the steepness of the vineyard (the steeper slopes at 45-degree angles), only hand-harvest is employ. Despite the first grape was harvested in 1987, and first wine was bottled in 1989. But the perfectionist Harlan has patiently waited till 1990 vintage to show the World his First-Growth Cabernets of Napa Valley. Over the years, Harlan Estate has proven itself for not just another come and gone Cult Cabernets. It has continue to deliver the unique nuances and that combination of European wine's graceful and elegant in addition to that luxurious ripen Californian Cabernet fruit quality. When compare Harlan Estate among the rest of the "loud" (big fruit, big oak) Cult Cabernets, one could easily spotted which is the real "First-Growth"! (**Harlan & Bond 2003 releases will be announce shortly. Don't miss!**)

### **Recent Vintage - A shift of Americanization Palate**

I have previously said about the influence of media & press. However, what really causes the industry shake up was in fact two wine-focus movies. The Frenchmen Jonathan Nossiter's documentary "Mondovino" and the Alexander Payne's Sideways. **Mondovino** has put the global-trotter wine consultant, Michel Rolland on the trial, questioning him for globalization of wine style. Rolland in his recent interviewed by Tanzer was forced to half-demote himself for consultant winemakers to master blender to avoid being ask how he could possibly make 400 different wines in 33 countries, 3 continents in one given vintage (easy done! u need a laptop with well calculated formula and a cellular phone). **Sideways** on the

hand, has taken away the American beloved Merlot to replace the earth's vocal Pinot Noir grape. And out of sudden, the usual Americanization palate, which they previously celebrate wine of instant gratification, wine of obviousness (big fruit, extreme ripeness, oak toastiness, alcohol) and now, we start hearing the emphasis of balance, varietally accurate, clearer site character and better preservation of natural acidity. This new move can be further witnessed from our friends in Wine Spectator. Previously, 1996s and 1997s where vintages were under the similar influence of extreme heat, despite the condition might have been better with 1997s (crops were larger), with both vintages receiving a much higher score by Wine Spectator (1997 went on to win the vintage of the century by Wine Spectator) than the current two heat-laden vintages of 2003s & 2004s. Is there really such a huge difference, or simply those folks have evolved their palate since? U be the judge! **2003s and 2004s vintages** in California (North Coast to be precise) was characterized by heat-spikes and September east winds that concentrate the wine through dehydration. Obviously, such ripening is easily cause the soaring sugar to outrace the phenolic ripeness. But the best sites with their low-yields were able to ripen the sugar more thorough and evenly, produces wines of immediate sexiness and voluptuous personality. As a rule of thumb, 2004, due to its small crop, fruit can be more extreme (more rapid growth due to excess energy distribution of vine), which can be witness from the slightly jammy fruit profile and one of the higher alcohol in record. 2003 despite equally ripe, are somehow fresher, more precautious, with number of example even shown good tannin and acidity, which translated to better freshness and equilibrium.

### **Current Releases from California**

- 2002 David Abreu Cabernet Sauvignon Madrona Ranch at 680.00 nett (RP 98 points)
- 2002 David Abreu Cabernet Sauvignon Thorevilos Vineyard at 685.00 nett (RP 100 points)
- 2003 Corison Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley at 125.00 nett (ST 89+ points)
- 2002 Corison Cabernet Sauvignon Kronos Vineyard at 178.00 nett (ST 91+ points)
- 2004 Forman Cabernet Sauvignon, Howell Mountain at 140.00 nett (ST 91-94 points)
- 2003 Jones Family Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley (by Heidi Barrett) at 285.00 nett (RP 90 points)
- 2004 Pahlmeyer Jayon's Red, Napa Valley at 108.00 nett (WS 92 points)
- 2004 Pahlmeyer Merlot, Napa Valley at 165.00 nett (RP 90 points)
- 2003 Pahlmeyer Proprietary Red, Napa Valley at 195.00 nett (RP 94 points)
- 2004 David Ramey Claret, Napa Valley at 81.50 nett (RP 89 points)
- 2004 David Ramey Larkmead Proprietary Red at 145.00 nett (RP 95 points)
- 2004 David Ramey Pedregal Proprietary Red at 145.00 nett (RP 95 points)
- 2004 David Ramey Jericho Canyon Proprietary Red at 195.00 nett (RP 94 points)
- 2003 Spottswoode Lydenhurst Cabernet Sauvignon at 90.50 nett (RP 90 points)
- 2003 Spottswoode Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley at 160.00 nett (RP 94 points)
- 2002 Philip Togni Cabernet Sauvignon Tanbark Hill at 125.00 nett (WS 92 points)
- 2004 Philip Togni Cabernet Sauvignon Spring Mountain at 208.00 nett (WS 95 points)
  
- 2005 Au Bon Climat Pinot Noir La Bauge Au Dessus at 75.00 nett
- 2004 Au Bon Climat Pinot Noir Le Bon Climat at 80.00 nett (ST 88 points)
- 2004 Au Bon Climat Pinot Noir Knox Alexander at 95.00 nett
- 2004 Au Bon Climat Pinot Noir Isabelle Morgan at 105.00 nett (ST 90 points)
- 2005 Beaux Freres Pinot Noir Willamette Valley, Oregon at 105.00 nett
- 2005 Beaux Freres Pinot Noir Beaux Freres Vineyard, Yamhill County, Oregon at 158.00 nett
- 2005 Beaux Freres Pinot Noir Upper Terrace, Oregon at 185.00 nett
- 2005 Cristom Pinot Noir Mt. Jefferson Cuvee, Oregon at 68.00 nett
- 2004 Cristom Pinot Noir Louise Vineyard, Oregon at 93.50 nett (BH 87 points)
- 2004 Cristom Pinot Noir Jessie Vineyard, Oregon at 93.50 nett (BH 88 points)
- 2004 Cristom Pinot Noir Sommers Reserve, Oregon at 88.00 nett (BH 89 points)
- 2004 Cristom Pinot Noir Marjorie Vineyard, Oregon at 93.50 nett (BH 89 points)
- 2004 Cristom Pinot Noir Eileen Vineyard, Oregon at 93.50 nett (BH 90 points)
- 2005 Martinelli Chardonnay Russian River at 75.00 nett
- 2005 Martinelli Pinot Noir Bella Vigna at 88.00 nett
- 2005 Martinelli Pinot Noir Zio Tony Ranch at 105.00 nett

2005 **Martinelli** Zinfandel Giuseppe & Louisa at 105.00 nett (RP 94 points)  
2005 **Pahlmeyer** Chardonnay Jayson at 85.00 nett  
2004 **Pahlmeyer** Chardonnay Napa Valley at 130.50 nett (RP 91 points)  
2005 **Pahlmeyer** Pinot Noir Jayson at 125.00 nett  
2004 **Saintsbury** Chardonnay Brown Ranch, Carneros at 82.00 nett  
2005 **Saintsbury** Pinot Noir Toyon Farm, Carneros at 90.00 nett  
2005 **Saintsbury** Pinot Noir Lee Vineyard, Carneros at 90.00 nett  
2005 **Saintsbury** Pinot Noir Stanly Ranch, Carneros at 90.00 nett

## **Weather or Not?**

For those who are not interested in golf, please skip the first section.



Tiger Woods has won another World Golf Championship last week at CA Championship in Doral. He has so far won 13 out of the 24 WGC events since it was renamed in 2000, which was previously known as World Cup of Golf. Despite Woods talent, he does not capture every single event he plays, not as frequent as Roger Federer did in Tennis. The reason for that (not because he is less talented than Federer, however, I think the reverse is true), is he has to contend with the biggest force on earth - weather. As a simple physics logic will give you, things that are further away from your body, smaller the object, is harder to control and manipulate. Golf requires a big physical movement but the hitting object is as small as it targets, which demands tremendous accuracy and physical ability, not to mention the talent required and a lot of imagination. For those who think golf is a waste of land with few golfers chasing a small ball in a big field? Dude! you are missing one of the most challenging game in all games! In golf, you will never play the same situation twice despite the same course being played. Apart from the common target that will be shifted each time you play (target hole is moved each day), you have to contend with your own physical ability, but the most challenging of all - the weather. You can be playing in the condition whereby it is either wet or sunny (which will affect the course, particularly the speed of the green), but the worst of all, if the winds are gutsy, you have to alter your swing, the ball-flight trajectory to off-set the wind direction. Another word, you might not be swinging your usual swing path.

By the way, I am not here to promote the game of golf (despite I am equally passionate about it), but rather to emphasize that, weather is the hardest thing to contend, which nothing can be consistent under the influence of mother nature.

Now, let discuss about consistency in wine. Where is the most consistent wine region in the world? I think no one would agree is Australia. Why make Australian wine so consistent, while, apart from the weather, which they enjoy adequate sunlight to ripen their grape. One of the biggest advantage is - there is no rule of blending, where grape source could literally coming from anywhere! Take Aussie nation pride - Penfolds Grange for example, it is known today as a multi-district blend that fruit could possible coming from

anywhere in South Australia. The goal for Grange is no longer about vineyard, site, but rather the wine style that the house is trying to portrait, much like the way the Champagne houses are doing. There is no question about the consistency, year-in-year-out Penfolds Grange has displayed, having had the advantage to blend more than a dozen of fruit-source stretching from Eden Valley to Coonawarra. Obviously, you could come up some sort of concoction to counterbalance the deficiency of each source of the grape. Even the worst vintage, Grange is way up the top of the league! So, what is problem with wine like that? While, to me, they are too predictable, they lack the excitement (no offend to the Grange lovers out there)!

What made wine so fascinating apart from the well-site vineyards that are capable of delivering the "sense of place", it was in fact the vintages that create those excitements, those diversity. Take European vineyard for example, their weather variation are obviously much greater. As a result, vintage signal is more obvious when compared to wine from the sunny California, Australia (my Euro-beautiful syndrome!). Weather can potentially affect the yield (drought, hail storm, humid - which promote wine diseases) the quality (overripe or underripe), the wine style (featured more acid or sugar ripeness), which creating a range of vintage character in a single given wine. Especially if the wine came exclusively from one single vineyard source, even more so, one single grape variety. Like color, the more you mix, more bluer it gets! If you blend multiple fruit sources, not only is the uniqueness of each vineyard destroyed, and since each source may receive different weather treatment (due to their various location, terrain, harvest time) despite coming from the same vintage. The characteristic of the vintage can also potentially be altered. To give a good example on how vintage (weather) dictate the wine style. Take the recent vintages of Bordeaux for example (all Bordeaux-Chateau are wines made exclusively from their own estate-grown vineyards), 2003 featured extreme weather, thus resulting atypical fruit profile, featuring more jammy, darker, cassis-liqueur fruit. To balance such a lush personality, many Chateaus opt to increase the wood treatment to provide some sort of grip and structure to balance the acid-deficient year. 2004 being an delay vintage (cool), which feature sounding acidity, purity and wine details is the extreme opposite of 2003 heat-laden year. Very elegant, plenty of red fruit and as transparence as one gets from Burgundy. 2005 is perhaps unusually a combination of both vintages characters, with richness without compromising the acidity, full, yet equally details, obvious alcohol, but with unusually high-pitched. The best I have seen since my short three years en primeur tasting experienced. All those vintages are the testament of what weather can do to your bottle of wine. Added to that, there are no bad wines made these days, since the knowledge of science and modern technique have taught us how to control the winemaking. These days, is the choice of preference, the mood of drinking, the occasion...etc. I would drink 2003 Bordeaux anytime, anywhere (anyone), and need not to have a fancy dinner to crack a bottle. 2004 I will drink with a delicate meal, a comfort and quiet place, with someone equally appreciative of elegant, details and purity. Is like listening to classical music, to hear every subtle pitch of each musical instrument, whispering in your ear...nice! 2005, is the "Grande", since it will not come cheap (by the time it releases), you need to find yourself a reason to open, especially your life-time companion is not a wine drinker (and why she/he is not invited - don't waste!), but definitely drink across a long meal, decant them, slowly see the wine evolve, see the wine interact with various dishes, and obviously, those are privileged to be invited, must be some of your closer buddies - What else do you want in life?

**All prices are subjected to 5% GST charges.**

All prices quoted for per bottle in Singapore dollar. Prices indicated "in red" are inclusive of 5% GST.

Free delivery for purchases of S\$350 and above, otherwise S\$15 per delivery will apply.

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