

Couple Grows Wine Grapes in Alsea; Makes Pinot Noir

A red wine with “quiet elegance” made from grapes grown in Alsea? It’s true: In 2005 Barnaby and Olga Tuttle of Portland planted two acres on Honey Grove Road with about 2400 cuttings. They harvested their first crop in 2008, took it to a winery in Carlton where Barnaby was assistant winemaker for the past two and a half years, and produced about 52 cases of Pinot Noir. 2009 yielded a small crop, but this year they hope the “Alsea Vineyard,” as their label calls it, will produce 75-100 cases.

Barnaby says the Alsea wine is an excellent complement to food, especially venison, duck, and game. (The label depicts a pheasant for that reason.) He describes the pinot as having “high minerality,” which he calls the “Holy Grail” of wines—the result of soil rich in minerals. He has had a decades-long intense interest in German wines, which he has researched extensively. He thinks they are especially good because they’re grown in cool climates where soil is the most important factor. The Alsea wine is also reminiscent of “freshly-cracked pepper and strawberry,” says Olga. It has “finesse, low alcohol (11.5%), and a lasting finish.”

The vineyard hasn’t been an easy undertaking, although the results are inspiring. The Tuttle were told that the plants wouldn’t need to be irrigated, but in fact they did need water that first year. The couple credits Scottie and Greg Jones, who own the neighboring farm, with saving the plants by setting up their own irrigation



pipes. By now the roots have been forced deep into the soil and don’t need further irrigation.

Other hard work is involved as well: the plants are genetically weak because they’ve been propagated from cuttings for centuries. They are susceptible to mold and mildew, so Barnaby sprays by backpack once a week. He uses a “cocktail” of organic ingredients, including sea kelp and whey. Trellising was also a challenge, but Barnaby says their dream “bridges farming and philosophy. There’s some madness behind it,” and “stubborn” determination.

Of course there’s a story behind all this. The Tuttle were at a dinner in Portland where Gisela Green was also a guest. Barnaby was talking about their dream of planting a vineyard and about his passion for German wines. Gisela offered to let them use her Honey Grove property, and within two weeks they had begun. (Many Alsea residents will remember the Greens’ farm. The Joneses bought most of that farm, but the Greens still own some acreage.)

The wine label reads “Schöne Schlucht,” which means “Beautiful Grove” in German.

One of the most heartening things about Barnaby and Olga is their enthusiasm about the possibility of collaborating with other Alsea farmers (see related story on facing page).

The Tuttle saw that sense of collaboration when John, Eileen, and Matt Clark invited them to host a wine-tasting for their wines at the Mercantile in mid-July. The Clarks have a goal of featuring Alsea products, so the local wine fit right in. (They had samples of Alsea Acres goat cheeses along with the wine.) The Alsea Pinot Noir is still available at John Boy’s for \$29, as well as a Riesling for \$16 that they make from grapes grown elsewhere.

Learn more about the Tuttle’s business at their website: teutonicwines.com

-by Bonnie Hill



Tuttles Encourage Alseans to Raise Meat, Honey, Grapes; Would Help Market in Portland and Eugene Areas

(Editor's note: With the economic recession in full swing, some Alsea residents might want to consider supplementing their incomes by raising meat or poultry, producing honey, or growing grapes. Read on to learn about the Tuttles' optimism about marketing those products in Portland or Eugene.)

Barnaby and Olga Tuttle have lots of restaurant connections in the Portland area, and they say they'd love to collaborate with Alsea farmers who are interested in producing certain products. They have ideas about what will sell in those areas and how to market it.

For example, Barnaby is certain that animals raised under specific conditions would sell well in specialty stores and high-end restaurants. He would be glad to share those desirable traits with Alsea farmers and help market the meat effectively. (Many people are interested in eating organically-raised meat produced on sustainable farms from free-ranging animals, for example.)

Barnaby worked for years at Papa Haydn's restaurant in Portland and now works full-time for his and Olga's own business, Teutonic Wines

Company outside of Oregon City. He and Olga sell their own wines at Papa Haydn's, other high-end restaurants, some Fred Meyer stores in Portland, and Market of Choice stores in Eugene.

He has spoken with Carver

Farms four miles west of Alsea, where they raise Brookshire pigs. He feels sure that rabbit meat or game birds such as quail or pheasant would also sell, as would local Alsea honey. Produce is trickier because of transportation and freshness.

If anyone were interested in growing wine grapes, he would be willing to discuss buying their fruit for making into wine, or to provide information if they wanted to grow and sell independently. He says Alsea "has the ideal climate to grow the kind of grapes we want to use for our wines." Alsea also has a "bellpine" type of soil--a reddish volcanic soil high in the minerality Barnaby and others like.

If enough people were interested, he would set up a workshop here in Alsea and bring in experts from OSU and other seasoned vineyard managers. He says he and Olga have learned a lot from their mistakes over the past few years and are willing to share their experiences with others.



A grape-growing operation is expensive to get started, however, and yields results slowly. If someone already has access to farm equipment such as a tractor and a post-hole digger, that cuts down on the costs, but they're still significant. The grafted cuttings themselves cost about \$3 each, and you need 1,000-2,000 plants per acre. (You can get plenty of ungrafted cuttings for free, but the grafted roots will protect the vines from a root louse that can quickly devastate a vineyard.) Trellises and wire cost about \$3,500 per acre. Once the vines are established, annual costs for spraying and wear-and-tear are about \$700 per acre minimum.

An acre produces about two tons of grapes, which sell for \$2,000 to \$2,500 per ton. According to Barnaby, the maximum return per acre would be about \$5,000. It would definitely be a supplementary income, as it is for the Tuttles. (Olga works for the National Psoriasis Foundation, a non-profit organization.) *(continued on page 9)*



(Alsea Products, cont'd. from pg. 7)

If enough Alsea growers were interested, they could approach the American Viticultural Association and try to get certified as an American Viticultural Area. This would increase the value of both their grapes and of Alsea property in general.

Barnaby welcomes questions from anyone interested in growing grapes or other products mentioned here. Feel free to email him at info@teutonicwines.com. He and Olga come to Alsea at least once a week, and they would be happy to visit with people at the Honey Grove vineyard as well.

-by Bonnie Hill