

## PICK & CHOOSE

**JUST RED? JUST WHITE?  
JUST CALIFORNIAN?  
JUST ITALIAN?  
HOW ABOUT A  
COMBINATION?**

### CALIFORNIA WINES

Artisan Series – \$29.50/month, a red and a white  
Winemaker Series – \$59.50/month, 2 reserve reds  
Artisan red–Winemaker red – \$46/month

### ITALIAN WINES

Artisan Series – \$32/month, a red and a white  
Winemaker Series – \$62/month, 2 reserve reds  
Collector Series – \$112/month, 2 collectable reds  
Artisan red–Winemaker red – \$48/month  
Winemaker red–Collector red – \$87/month

### CALIFORNIA–ITALIAN COMBINATIONS

CA Artisan red–IT Artisan red – \$33/month  
CA Artisan white–IT Artisan white – \$29.50/month  
CA Winemaker–IT Winemaker – \$62/month  
Alternate CA & IT Artisan Series – \$29.50/\$32/month  
Alternate CA & IT Winemaker Series – \$59.50/\$62/month

### DOUBLE UP

You can also receive more than two bottles per month. California sales tax is included. Shipping is extra.

brain. If you try to give a little baby coffee, the baby will not like it. Learning to like bitterness, is something that you learn to do. Liking sweet things is an inherent biological thing because sweetness means ripeness and a good food source and a good energy source. Bitterness in general means alkaloids that are very often poisonous.

Residual sugar in wine, your first sip, your first glass, is pretty OK, but after a while, that overt sweetness becomes cloying, and it just doesn't have any interest any more. The hallmark of some truly great wines is that they actually taste sweet, but they have no residual sugar. You can get that impression of sweetness because the fruit is so perfectly ripe that it mimics sweetness. That's really an important and subtle concept.

#### But you can cross a line where you get ripe fruit flavors, but the acid disappears.

Monterey County is one of the coolest grape growing areas in California. It's cold here. Yes, we get the ripeness, but it's cold at night. Warm nighttime temperatures cause grapes to respire acidity. That's why the central valley of California doesn't make good wines. It's so hot at night that all the acid goes away. Yes it's warm during the day, so you get sugar production, but at night it cools off to retain the acid. We have way longer hang time on the vine before the fruit ripens, and there's much higher natural acidity.

#### Do you think your wines have mass appeal, or are you making them for a particular part of the market?

Believe me, I can take a neophyte wine

drinker and say, "Which one do you like more? Don't tell me why you like it. Just pick one that you like more." And that's easy for people. "I like this one more. It just tastes better." That's a simple concept. And I think I give people those wines that just really make them go "Now, that's good. It's rich. It's ripe. It's balanced. It just tastes good. It makes me feel good." It passes the empty bottle test. If you have six bottles of wine at a brown bag tasting, the one that's empty first almost always wins. That's the highest praise. And that's what Morgan wines are doing. People are saying, "They taste good. They just simply make me want to have another glass." And again some people are saying, "Well is that kind of selling out and making wine for the masses?" No, no, no, that has nothing to do with anything. I'm making wine that really tastes good, that satisfies people. I'm not building a monolith to myself. I'm not building wines, constructing wines that need ten years in the cellar to come around. That's not a hallmark of greatness, has nothing to do with it. Age-ability is a fantasy. Let's go back to balance for a second. If you have a wine that's so incredibly tannic and takes 30 years for the tannins to become smooth enough to drink, in 30 years there'll be no fruit flavors left. So that's inherently an out-of-balance wine. The intersection of tannic structure and fruit concentration never crossed. There's never that meeting point of "OK now it's alright." That's a definition of out of balance. The French say that the great wines of all times were drinkable from the time they were pressed out of the vat. They might be incredibly tannic, but their incredible fruit intensity made it OK. And as they aged, the tannic nature and the fruit nature came down together. Balance is key. ■



YOUR ACCESS TO OUTSTANDING WINES FROM CALIFORNIA AND ITALY

## Winery of the Month

Daniel Morgan Lee, owner of Morgan Winery and co-winemaker together with David Coventry, whom we interviewed for this article



## The Push Toward Excellence Morgan Winery

David Coventry is the kind of winemaker we all dream of meeting. Funny, articulate, and highly accomplished, he could tell us anything we ever wanted to know about winemaking, from how he works together with Daniel Morgan Lee, owner of Morgan Winery, to what makes a wine taste great. At 35 years old, David has had a relatively short winemaking career, having worked as a biochemist and a rock band manager before embracing grapes. But his accomplishments so far predict a brilliant future for Morgan Winery, which already has a reputation as one of the finest wineries in Monterey County. In December 2003, the San Francisco Chronicle named Daniel Morgan Lee "Winemaker of the Year," and together with David Coventry, the two of them expect to push Morgan Winery to even greater heights. The winery specializes in the great wines of Burgundy, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. But they also make Syrah, Sauvignon Blanc, and Pinot Gris. We've edited only slightly for clarity. ➤



CelebrationsWineClub.com

Anna Maria Knapp, Owner  
75 Pelican Way G1  
San Rafael, CA 94901

1-800-700-6227

celebrate@  
celebrationswineclub.com

March 2004

## SEND A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

to family, friends, business associates, and clients for any number of months that you prefer.

### CHOOSE:

- California Artisan Series \$29.50/mo.
- California Winemaker Series \$59.50/mo.
- Italian Artisan Series \$32/mo.
- Italian Winemaker Series \$62/mo.
- Italian Collector Series \$112/mo.
- Or select from "Pick & Choose" above & write here:

Prices include 2 bottles of glorious wine, the newsletter, and CA sales tax. We include a gift card with your personal message. Shipping extra.

Send this form to: Celebrations Wine Club  
75 Pelican Way G1  
San Rafael, CA 94901

Or call 1-800-700-6227 or fax this form to 1-415-457-3362  
Or order from our website at www.celebrationswineclub.com

Anna Maria, please send a gift subscription to the following person:

Recipient's name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone no. \_\_\_\_\_

Message \_\_\_\_\_

No. of months \_\_\_\_\_  Please bill me monthly.  Please bill total.

My name \_\_\_\_\_

Credit card billing address \_\_\_\_\_

My phone no. (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge my  Visa  Mastercard  Discover

Card number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Cut 1.5 inches exactly off this side of the sheet.

Cut 1.5 inches exactly off this side of the sheet.

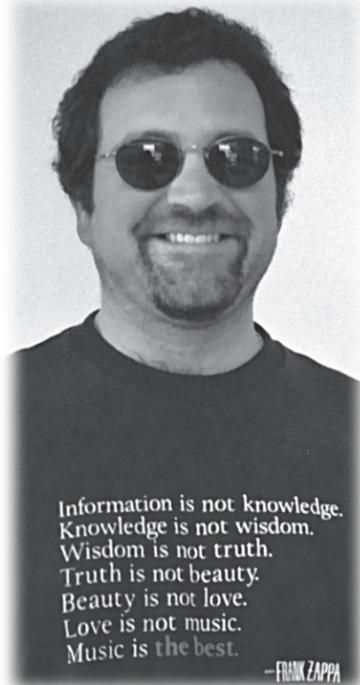
**You've worked with Dan Lee for only a couple of years. How do the two of you cooperate?**

We're a team. When one person is in charge of making wine, you risk making monochromatic wines. You need two different heads, two different tastes, two different palates, so we can bounce stuff off each other all the time. But there has to be some level of meshing of personalities too. When Dan Lee and I first started talking about the wines, he laid, "Look, Morgan has an established style." And I said, "Of course, but when you hire me, I want you to hire me because you think we can make the wines better, not because we can keep them the same." There's an old adage that goes, "If you make the wine of your dreams, you didn't dream big enough." You constantly want to be moving forward, improving the quality and consistency of the wines. At that point, the

discussions that we had for almost a year were philosophy. What's the hallmark of greatness? What are examples of great wines? When you decide the style of wine that you want to make, the actual mechanics of getting there are quite simple, but the key is to decide what it is you want to make. So you have to have a philosophical discussion to develop that archetype, that wine that you're trying to shoot for. In my first year here, we made a lot of changes. Not to say that the wines that were made previously weren't good. They were fantastic. But we were pushing the envelope to make them even better. Dan was able to step well out of his comfort zone on numerous occasions and said, "I trust you. Go for it. It sounds good." And that is a brave man and a good businessman, who occasionally takes those risks, because he knows that we can't just rest on our laurels. You have to push to be better, and he was willing to do that. And that was a beautiful position to put me in, for a winemaker to be given every tool that I need to make great wine, good barrels and good fruit. My job is a pretty plush one.

**So have the wines changed?**

The wines that the panel at the San Francisco Chronicle tasted that gave us that wonderful "Winemaker of the Year" accolade were excellent wines, but what makes Dan and I and Brad Martin, our marketing manager, giggle is that the wines they tasted are a pale shadow of the wines that we're producing now. In the last two or three years, we have tuned up the vine-



David Coventry, co-winemaker at Morgan Winery, is never without sunglasses

yard sources and the winemaking techniques to the point where the best wines that have ever been made at Morgan are being made right now. We firmly believe this. So if those previous wines garnered those accolades, our future truly does look bright because we're working that much harder on the wines we're making now.

**What is your definition of great wine and how do you work toward achieving it?**

Let's take it from the beginning. If I'm the winemaker, Dan is the wine grower. He doesn't even farm grapes. He farms flavor. And that's a conceptual thing. He doesn't farm grapes, because grapes are food. He farms flavor, and the grape is just a convenient little packet that transports flavor from the vineyard to the winery. He tries to farm in such a way that I get the perfect flavor that I'm after. When the grapes come to the winery, I try to translate that flavor into the wine and into the bottle. There's that old song, "Try to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, and don't mess with Mr. In-between." Making wine is that way. You try

to accentuate the positive character of the area. Eliminate any sort of negative characteristics, and don't do anything middling, because that's just no fun. As a winemaker, if I have a problematic wine with a variety of problems, I'm given a toolbox full of tools with which to work on that wine. Some winemakers out of hand throw tools out of their toolbox. "I don't like to filter. I don't like to acidify. I don't like to do anything." Well how are you supposed to craft something if you don't have a selection of tools? But always choose the right tool for the job. Don't reach for a sledge hammer to drive a little finishing nail. The choice of tool is important.

**What tools are you referring to?**

There is the temperature of fermentation, probably the most important tool. Some winemakers ferment cold. Some winemakers ferment hot. I'm a hot fermenting guy for Pinot Noir. My analogy is this: Have you ever tried to make coffee with cold water? It kind of doesn't work. You need some heat to extract out of the grape skins what they have to offer. There's choice of barrel, no oak, lots of oak. There's a choice of forest for the barrels; Allier tastes different than Nevers tastes different than Trancais taste different than Limousin. And all these little things are subtleties. If you imagine that winemaking is 100 little knobs. Some are big knobs like the day you pick and the heat of the fermentation and the yeast and the barrel. But there are some very small knobs, and they're all

used to tune the wine into being exactly what you want it to be. Sadly, some people think "They're new tools. I want nothing to do with them." No, if you don't continue your education and continue to learn, you're doomed. Your mind is like a parachute. If it's not opened, it can't work. There's an old joke. "God makes vinegar, people make wine." So these winemakers that go, "I'm completely non-interventionist. I don't do anything." Then why do you have a job? The fact that we plant grapes in a row is interventionist. The fact that we pick them is interventionist. We de-stem them. That's interventionist. You put wine in barrels. Don't get on my case about this non-interventionist thing. Wine-making is an interventionist pursuit by definition.

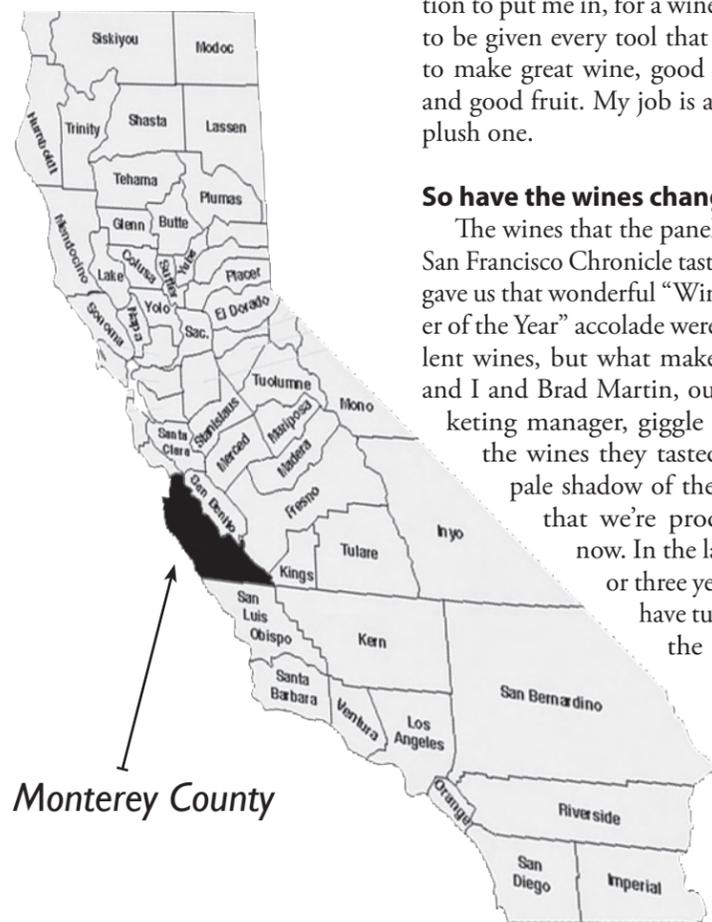
**How do you anticipate the finished wine?**

I'll say this. Wine flavors are like a seesaw. The fruit concentration of the wine is the fulcrum point that everything balances on. A wine can have a lot of acidity and a ton of oak if it has the fruit intensity to balance these elements. A lot of the great wines of the world are aged in 100% new oak. Oak is not a bad thing. Like every First Growth Bordeaux you'll ever have, a lot of the great Pinots, every great La Monrachet you've ever had are in 100% new oak. My point is this. Most wines are not over oaked or under wined. There's just not enough fruit concentration there. Things like oak and acidity and ma-

lactic fermentation and all these things, they're all completely neutral concepts. They're neither good nor bad. How they're applied to the wine by the winemaker can be good or bad. How deftly we apply these tools in our craft says something about whether or not they're good or bad. So balance is the inherent thing about a wine that makes it great, and you can take a balanced wine and make it a bigger package, more intense, richer without losing balance. But you get these 16% Zinfandels that have a lot of residual sugar, and they're out of balance. You get a Port wine that's 20% alcohol and 20% residual sugar, and it's in balance. These wines technically are very close together. But somebody can lose track of what the balance point of a wine is.

**How do you think a lot of California wines fall off the balance cliff?**

I think many winemakers are interested in making monuments to themselves and not necessarily crafting good wines. They want to make something so big and so gnarly it'll rip your head clean off, high alcohol, lots of oak, very buttery, all these intense flavors that are quite obvious. But a lot of what makes wine great has to do with subtlety and seduction and elegance so that your first sip is good, but after the last sip in the bottle, you go "Wow, that was great." It just holds your interest and even increases it. There's a little part of the human brain that responds to sweetness. It's a very primordial part of the



**JOIN THE CLUB**

Each month we send to your table, two or more different bottles of hand-crafted California or Italian wine made by gifted wine makers who are passionate about producing outstanding wines.

Select wine options from the "Pick & Choose" menu on the back page.

Prices include our newsletter and California sales tax, shipping extra.

Call toll free 1-800-700-6227 or email celebrate@celebrationswineclub.com

**RECOMMEND US**

to family members, friends, business associates, and clients whom you think would appreciate Celebrations Wine Club.

**RECEIVE** a complimentary third bottle of outstanding wine with your regular shipment of two bottles, when they join Celebrations Wine Club.

Send this form to: Celebrations Wine Club  
75 Pelican Way G1  
San Rafael, CA 94901

Or call: 1-800-700-6227

Anna Maria, please send information and a complementary issue of our newsletter to the following people. Please mention my name.

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_