

A Magical Blend of Wine, Love and Friendships

THE LANCASTER WINE CLUB'S ANNUAL VINTNER'S DINNER IS A 16-YEAR, BLACK-TIE TRADITION. AT THIS YEAR'S EVENT, THE SOUND OF POPPING CORKS HAD A SPECIAL JOÏE DE VIVRE AS THE CLUB'S MEMBERS AND GUESTS WITNESSED THE WORLD PREMIERE OF SEVERAL WINES THAT WERE PRODUCED BY TWO OF THEIR FELLOW WINE LOVERS—THE CLUB'S FOUNDING MEMBERS, AMY AND JACK THORN.



The husband-and-wife team of Jack and Amy Thorn has a track record of successes: a 22-year-old son, a 20-year-old daughter and the ownership of a supply-chain management think tank that serves 50 of the world's largest corporations. After 25 years of working, playing and planning together, they share many of the same interests, and none more passionate than their mutual loves of wine and travel. It seemed only natural, then, that the ambitious Lancaster County couple dreamed of establishing a winery, through which they would create and bottle unique wines under their own label. The search for the perfect wine-growing property took 10 years. And, that was only the beginning!

Amy and Jack were instrumental in founding the Lancaster Wine Club in 1994. "The club began with one fundamental rule: no rules," Jack recalls. With a simple mission for gaining education about wines in a social setting, the 35-member club continues to enjoy the process. "There are no wine snobs here," says Dennis Jeff, membership chair. "We all love wine,

especially when it is presented in a relaxed, convivial setting."

The club holds nine meetings each year, usually in members' homes, where the hosting couple selects the theme. The meetings are a group effort; guests often bring hors d'oeuvres, while the hosts provide wines and offer the tasting and presentation. Conversely, members are occasionally asked to bring a wine



according to the declared theme. "Being a member," notes Dennis, "has been an educational process." The club also supports community-outreach programs to assist chosen non-profits in their fundraising. Both Wheatland and the Fulton Opera House are past beneficiaries of the club's events.

The highlight of the year is the annual Vintner's Dinner, a more formal evening where the wines of an individual winery are enjoyed throughout a multiple-course dinner held at an area restaurant or club.

The stars were aligning for the club's 2010 Vintner's Dinner to mark the launch of Thorn Hill Vineyard's wines. Five years ago, Amy and Jack had found their ideal mix of elevation, soil and weather in a gravelly meadow above Napa Valley. While Jack applied his educational background in biology and botany toward the viticultural aspects of the winery, the Thorns got a head start on production by contracting premium grapes from nearby growers, which they harvested in 2007.

Amy personally supervised every aspect of the wine production – the hand-harvesting, crushing, fermentation, barreling, blending and 20 months of aging in French oak barrels. "Amy is the winemaker," explains Jack, who handles the growing of the grapes. "Women winemakers have excellent taste and smell for wine, while men are often the technicians. But, women are the 'Julia Childs' of winemaking." On



Clockwise from top left:

"One of the joys of creating Thorn Hill Vineyards has been working together as a family on each step of the process," says Amy Thorn, here with son Jonathan, Jack and daughter Rachael, on the vineyard's heavy machinery.

Amy and Jack Thorn's quest for the perfect growing conditions for their grapes led them to the Red Hills of California, between Mount Konacti and Mount St. Helena, just above Napa Valley.

Lancaster Wine Club members Carole and Dr. Bruce Silverstein toasted the Thorns' success during the Vintner's Dinner Champagne reception. Photo by Erin Fisher.

Opposite: A jubilant Amy and Jack Thorn (left) enjoyed sharing the fruits of their labors with their friends and members of the Lancaster Wine Club including Sandy Bricker and Keri and Dr. Michael Palasz. Photo by Erin Fisher.

August 27, 2009 (Jack's birthday), Thorn Hill Vineyard's first unfiltered, pure-varietal wine was bottled.

Ideally, wine should be allowed to rest for six months after its bottling to recover from the agitation of the bottling process, avoiding the dreaded "bottle shock" and allowing its bouquet to develop. The timing was perfect when the Lancaster Wine Club members and guests arrived at Armstrong Manor earlier this spring for the premiere launch of Thorn Hill Vineyard's labors of love. Ron Wenger, executive chef and property manager for Armstrong Manor, created a six-course dinner to complement the wines.

The membership was impressed. "I think both wines are quite good," noted Dr. Bruce Silverstein of the Cabernet Sauvignon and Petite Sirah. "They will both improve with age and although very delicious now, careful aging should make them even more outstanding. The Cabernet had definite notes of blueberry and plum. I could detect dark chocolate, as well. The Petite Sirah is balanced and has big blueberry fruit, with some nuances of tobacco. Petite Sirahs generally age for many years and this should, as well. I think that the Thorns are to be commended for such quality in their first releases." Beverly



Gooch says, “‘Exceptional’ describes the Thorns’ wines. The Merlot is unlike any I have ever tasted.” And, Jane Callahan Honig, a wine writer who flew from Paris to be part of the event, says, “Their wines are absolutely top-notch, five-star.”

At the end of the evening, Jack reflected on its significance: “We have spent many years as wine critics and speakers, which drove us to create our own wines that have fewer chemicals

and demonstrate world-class characteristics – rich, full-body, fruit-forward wines with longevity from the best locations for the key varietals, the Napa area. After all these years, we finally had achieved our dream with our 2007 vintage and were able to share this dream with the wine-collecting community of our dear home, Lancaster. When the entire audience of Lancaster wine people stood up and said, after tasting Thorn Hill Wine,

‘job well done,’ it was a moment we will remember for all time. After all, though the winemakers in the Napa area love our wine, to win favor with knowledgeable people from our home – people who we respect and care for – means even more to Amy and me.”

Amy concurred, “The greatest gift you can give as a winemaker is to create a bottle of wine that is the purest expression of each varietal, a wine that is a combination of nature and nurture. The greatest gift you can receive is when people drink it with appreciation. When the Thorn Hill Cabernet Sauvignon was initially served, the first tables to receive it stood up in a spontaneous standing ovation. That moment will always be a hallmark memory and we are grateful to everyone who was there that night to commemorate the occasion.”

The Thorns will continue their quest for growing grapes and producing outstanding wines, as they recently purchased 50 additional acres in California’s Lake County, adjacent to Napa Valley. “The region’s volcanic soil produces great grapes that are good for a bold, rich Cabernet or Semillon,” explains Jack, his eyes gleaming in anticipation. Future plans also include adding a Chardonnay and Sauvignon Blanc to round out Thorn Hill Vineyard’s selections.

The couple is grounded, however, in their goals. “We’re first concerned with producing a good wine,” says Jack. “We want to remain affordable, in the mid-\$30 range.” As for growth, he says, “We don’t intend to build a wine empire. We have no sights on becoming the next Mondavi.” Their plans are to keep production small, with a goal of producing 5,000 cases – a significant increase, however, over their inaugural yield of 1,000 cases. Even at this level of specialized production, the process involves a tremendous amount of grapes, endless energy and a devout commitment to a centuries-old craft.

But, the rewards already have been worth the effort, Amy reassures. “It has been a joy to watch over the years how many of our friendships have been formed and nurtured through our mutual love of wine. There’s a quote I like that says, ‘Wine is bottled poetry,’ but in this instance, I would say it’s bottled friendship.” ❖



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Welcome

Thorn Hill Vineyards specializes in hand-crafted artisan wines of exceptional quality.

Located in the Red Hills in California, Thorn Hill Vineyards is nestled between Mount Konacti and Mount Saint Helena just above Napa Valley. The micro climates and gravelly volcanic soil offer the ideal topography for harvesting premium Cabernet and other top quality red varietals.



Thorn Hill Vineyards focuses on limited production of red Bordeaux varietals and small lots of Chardonnay, and Shiraz. Thorn Hill is committed to hand harvesting and hand sorting each grape cluster prior to crushing. This is a meticulous and labor-intensive method, but it ensures that only the finest, fully matured grapes are used in the wines. This approach includes small lot whole cluster pressing, destemming, cold soaking, extended maceration, barrel-to-barrel racking and bottling without filtration.

Video Introduction Artistry of Fine Winemaking



Thorn Hill is committed to quality with a guiding principle that all their wines reflect their distinctive terroir while embodying the hallmark characteristics of each varietal. One of Thorn Hill’s trademarks is their choice of single vineyard lots with carefully selected clones known to produce ultra premium fruit.

Thorn Hill Vineyards
Red Hills AVA, Lake County, CA
Proprietors: John & Amy Thorn
Phone: 717-299-3688
Email: info@thornhillvineyards.com

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