

Goose Ridge Estate Vineyard

THE TASTING PANEL takes a gander at one Family's passion for wine

by David Gadd



Involvement in farming and cattle ranching in Eastern Washington State for four decades, The Monson Family planted their first wine grapes in 1997. Arvid Monson worked with Dr. Walter Clore, the father of the Washington wine industry, and scouted out 3,500 acres of land on Goose Hill which is tucked between the Columbia Valley's Red Mountain and Horse Heaven Hill sub-appellations. Dr. Clore is responsible for picking many of the premium growing sites in Washington State.

"My dad and Dr. Walter Clore studied the property for hours and hours," recalls Arvid's son Bill Monson, who runs the company today with his father and sisters Molly and Valerie. "They mapped out what varieties would benefit most from each block's soil, elevation and drainage." Planting began in 1998 on the sandy Warden loam soils.

Chateau Ste. Michelle, Washington's largest wine producer, also saw the potential in the land and took an early contract on grapes from the new property, dubbed Goose Ridge Estate Vineyard. When the grapes came into production, the Monsons decided to build their own winery and vinify some of the fruit themselves.

"It really started as a test project," explains Bill. "We have a large vineyard and didn't want to lose touch with the quality of grapes grown and shipped to other wineries. We established Goose Ridge to concentrate on small lots of grapes, showcasing the unique characteristics of our vineyard."

While Ste. Michelle is still the Monsons' major client, around ten percent of the 1,400-acre vineyard's grapes are kept for the family's Goose Ridge label, which is now available in more than 42 states. A second label called Stonecap was added four years ago, an entry tier of fruit-for-

ward, food-friendly wines. Stonecap refers to the rock-topped mountains—products of the last ice age—that surround the vineyard.

Veteran Columbia Valley winemaker Charlie Hoppes has been with Goose Ridge since the beginning. He crafts a highly-rated line of single-varietal wines, including three whites, Riesling, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay (SRP \$14-\$16), and three reds; Merlot, Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon (\$20-\$26). The Goose Ridge portfolio also includes the G3 (Generation 3) Red Wine (\$15) and a Reserve line consisting of Syrah (\$40), Malbec (\$40) and Cabernet (\$50). Goose Ridge also has two proprietary blends: the bold, Australian-inspired Cab-Syrah-Merlot



The Monson family in the Goose Ridge cellar (left to right): Molly, Valerie, Suzanne, Arvid and Bill.

called Vireo (\$37) and an impressive Bordeaux-style blend, Sol Duc Meritage (\$50).

While still farming and ranching, Bill Monson, the winery's self-styled "make sure everything gets done guy," would definitely rather talk about grapes than apples, cherries or cattle. The family has found a new love over the past ten years, and it comes in a bottle. As Bill Monson puts it, "What started as quality control evolved into a passion." ■

Goose Ridge and Stonecap are available from Vintage Point, Sonoma, CA.