



The California Wine Club
Proudly Presents Our

Signature Selections

Only the Rarest, Most Coveted Wines From California's Best Artisan Wineries VOL. 16 · ISSUE 9

Imagine a rollicking Greek family dinner, where guests have been asked to come up with a name for the winery some family members are creating. Choices are batted about; none of them stick, until a venerable uncle toasts the gathering by saying, "Yasou Levendi!" *Levendi* is a Greek word meaning celebration, hard work, achievement and life.

Thus, Levendi's founders—a father, a son and a friend—discovered the name for their tiny, 5500-case, Napa Valley enterprise. James Gianulias, his son David, and friend Todd Rustman produced their first Levendi wine in 2001. Together, they create a unique business blend, with each providing particular skills, experience and passions. James brought his Greek heritage of home winemaking to the table. He and his three brothers grew up growing grapes for the family wine, and for 30 years, he oversaw vineyards in the Napa Valley before going into real estate. His son, David, inherited that love for wine. A marketer by nature and by profession, David sees "wine as art in a bottle. It is something that is global and cross-cultural. You can share wine with anyone, anywhere." His friend, Todd, also a wine buff, brought to the blend his years of professional financial expertise.

That expertise proved important because "from the start, this was a business, not a hobby," explains David. "Todd and I did our due diligence." They explored all aspects of the winemaking enterprise, from grape sources to labels to sales. "We started with the 2001 vintage, and could not have had a better chance for success right out of the gate." Levendi's first effort was a deep, rich Cabernet that "sold out in six months. Restaurants called it a 'velvet bomb,'" David recalls.



Levendi founders from left: James Gianulias, David Gianulias and Todd Rustman.

produces Chardonnay and a late harvest dessert Chardonnay.

Though the wines are currently produced at a custom-crush winery in the Napa Valley, Levendi will soon have its own Rutherford winery on Hwy. 29 across from Grigich Hills. James and David plan an artisan cheese-making facility on-site, so that visitors can taste the cheese, watch how it is made and enjoy wine too. A tall tower will give guests an unusual vantage point to see the geography of the Napa Valley with views of Diamond Mountain, Howell Mountain and more. Also in the works are a dining room with multiple fireplaces, guest chefs, education about cuisines and wine.

"Super ripe and exotic, with layers of rich tropical fruit and hints of apple, pear and pineapple...." —92 points, Wine Spectator (June 2007)

He should know. As the winery's chief marketer, he spent "27 out of every 30 days" wooing restaurants to buy Levendi wines. In a savvy move, he started at the top with places like Spago in Beverly Hills, Valentino in Santa Monica and The Ritz in Orange County. Once one fine restaurant bought the wine, others followed.

Soon, Levendi was making four different 100% Napa Valley Cabs, all handcrafted by longtime California winemaker Alison Doran, who worked with famed California wine pioneer Andre Tchelistcheff for 20 years while directing winemaking at wineries such as Firestone and Lewis Cellars. "Alison has such a zest for life," David says. "Her passion is in the bottle." Levendi also

produces Chardonnay and a late harvest dessert Chardonnay.

Though the wines are currently produced at a custom-crush winery in the Napa Valley, Levendi will soon have its own Rutherford winery on Hwy. 29 across from Grigich Hills. James and David plan an artisan cheese-making facility on-site, so that visitors can taste the cheese, watch how it is made and enjoy wine too. A tall tower will give guests an unusual vantage point to see the geography of the Napa Valley with views of Diamond Mountain, Howell Mountain and more. Also in the works are a dining room with multiple fireplaces, guest chefs, education about cuisines and wine.

Hmmm... great wines, fun family winery ... it sounds like cause for celebration, doesn't it? Let's raise a glass to *Levendi*!

— Continued on Page 2

*Signature Series® wine inventory is extremely limited.
Please consider placing orders early.*

800-777-4443 • www.cawineclub.com

Levendi Estates

2003 "Sweetwater Ranch, Napa Valley"
Cabernet Sauvignon

THE WINE

Dark chocolate on the finish, silky tannins, and delicious flavors of blueberry and mint join together in this stellar Napa Cab. Tannins are a smooth whisper that says, "Pour more!"

THE AWARDS

Silver Medal, Los Angeles County Fair Wine Competition

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

Cabernet Sauvignon is a signature wine for Levendi, and what better place to make it than in the Napa Valley. Winemaker Alison Doran produces four Levendi Napa Cabs: Symphonia, Stagecoach, Hillside and our Signature Series® selection, Sweetwater Ranch, located in the Oak Knoll District, about a mile and half south of Yountville. This foothill-oriented vineyard is owned by family friends of the Gianulias' who also own the facility where the family produces its wines.

The 2003 growing season was mostly cool, with some heat spikes here and there. "That year brought in beautiful cherry fruit. From the beginning this was a gorgeous wine," says Alison. "This Cab is like coming home and getting a hug when you open that bottle. Every time I open one, I just go 'ahh!'"

After fruit was hand harvested, it was carefully sorted, gently pressed, then fermented in stainless steel before going to French oak (45% new) for 20 months. "I have a collection of about eight coopers that I use. The types of barrels I order depend on whether the season was cool or warm and other factors. A variety of barrels is a good tool box to have."

How long to hold this wine? "The '03 in particular has such lovely fruit. If you like the fruit, I would suggest you not hold the wine too long, no more than five years. It certainly has a beautiful structure and ripe tannins so that it can last far longer, but the fruit will change."

Brix at harvest: 25°
Alcohol: 14.5%
Total Acidity: 0.39gm/100ml
pH: 3.80
Cases Produced: 1,500
Bottling Date: June 2005
Release Date: November 2005

REORDERS

The Levendi 2003 "Sweetwater Ranch, Napa Valley" Cabernet Sauvignon normally retails for \$51. Signature Series® members may purchase half and full cases for \$43 per bottle. Please call 1-800-777-4443 to place your order.

Levendi Estates

2005 "Red Hen, Napa Valley" Chardonnay

THE WINE

Layers and layers of butterscotch and vanilla flavors entice you to savor this charming Chardonnay. The mouthfeel is oh-so-rich and buttery, this wine is like a luxury cruise! The finish is a soft goodbye.

THE REVIEWS

92 points, *Wine Spectator* (June 2007): "Super ripe and exotic, with layers of rich tropical fruit and hints of apple, pear and pineapple. The fruit dovetails to hints of citrus and melon, all while keeping it at the forefront ..."

WINEMAKER'S NOTES

All of the fruit for this Chardonnay comes from the Red Hen Ranch in the Oak Knoll appellation of the Napa Valley, just north of Napa where the cool marine influence of the San Pablo Bay moderates temperatures. This vineyard is planted to the Wente clone that produces small berries of great flavor.

"It was a pretty cool year, with a heat spike, but pretty cold through the year, which is great for Chardonnay," notes Alison. After hand harvest, fruit was delivered to the nearby custom crush winery where Alison gently pressed it to stainless steel tanks for fermentation. Next, it went to French oak barrels (50% new) where it underwent malolactic (secondary) fermentation and remained on the lees for 10 months.

"This vineyard tends to produce Chardonnay that is fairly tropical, with pineapple, honey and coconut flavors. It's a contrast to the Levendi Chardonnay from Cold Creek Vineyard closer to the Carneros district. That one has more apple and lemon," says Alison. "I put a lot of oak on it to knock that fruit back a bit, as it can become too opulent a wine."

This vineyard designate, 100% Chardonnay can be enjoyed now or held through 2010.

Brix at harvest: 25.5°
Alcohol: 14.5%
Total Acidity: 0.59gm/100ml
pH: 3.55
Cases Produced: 975
Bottling Date: May 2006
Release Date: January 2007

REORDERS

Only 975 cases were produced of the Levendi 2005 "Red Hen, Napa Valley" Chardonnay, so supplies are limited. This wine normally retails for \$35. Signature Series® members may purchase half and full cases for \$31 per bottle. Please call 1-800-777-4443 to place your order.

SIGNATURE SERIES® UPDATES

Upcoming Selections

- Bargetto 2001 La Vita Red Table Wine "Santa Cruz Mountains, Regan Vineyards"
- Signorello Vineyards 2005 "Las Amigas Vineyard, Carneros" Pinot Noir
- Hartwell Vineyards 2003 "Stag's Leap District, Napa Valley" Merlot
- Gnelow Campus Oaks Magna Cum Laude 2002 "Amador County" Old Vine Zinfandel

Save up to 70% and stock up
for the holidays!

Wine Sale going on now!