Bergstr□m, Old Stones Chardonnay 2009 Oregon

7 Jun 2012 by Jancis Robinson

From $25, £29.95

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Here in Europe we see far too few fine American wines. As Alder lamented in his recent article Exporting America - the pitfalls, relatively few US producers and European importers have found the magic key to making this work. But an extensive tasting of London wine merchant Roberson's current selections reminded me just how much we are missing. As outlined in Roberson's tastearound, there were fine wines from all over Europe here, but for me the single most outstanding producer was Bergström of Oregon.

(Okay, the trio of Didier Dagueneau 2009s was stunning, and it was particularly reassuring to see how well this domaine is being run by the next generation after the late, lamented Didier - but they cost two to three times as much as the Bergström wines. As someone who visited Pouilly Fumé said to me recently, why don't more growers there go the extra Didier Dageneau mile? They would be rewarded for it. But that is another story…)

I have consistently been impressed by the Bergström family's wines grown just outside Dundee in Oregon's Willamette Valley. As Purple Pagers can see by searching our nearly 70,000 tasting notes, they have consistently scored highly - except when Richard tasted this wine earlier this year when it was clearly still a bit tightly wound and he gave it only 15.5. (Today he is taking the last of this year's three tasting papers in the Master of Wine exams - we wish him and the *97* other candidates the very best of luck.)

What I love about **Bergström, Old Stones Chardonnay 2009 Willamette Valley** is its confidence and the fact that it is evolving relatively slowly. It is much funkier and more interesting than the average American Chardonnay, but much brighter fruited than many a white burgundy. (Have I insulted enough wine producers with these incendiary comments?) Unlike so many Chardonnays, it is not excessively sweet, nor too leesy, nor too austere. I tasted it a year ago as well as a month ago and it still seems delightfully well named. But there is not just the suggestion of the mineral sort of stoniness, there's something of stone fruits about it too - perhaps a hint of the bitterness that Richard found off-putting.

But the Bergströms are Pinot Noir specialists really, and certainly the hugely ambitious **Bergström, Bergström Vineyard Pinot Noir 2009 Willamette Valley** and the **Bergström, Cumberland Reserve Pinot Noir 2009 Willamette Valley** blend, the only two of their Pinots I have tasted recently, are truly excellent - exuberant yet complex - wines, costing a bit more than the Chardonnay. The wines are made by Josh Bergström who managed to pick up not only a diploma but also a French wife in Beaune. Viticulture is notably hands-on (see below), winemaking hands-off, and they have been Demeter USA certified biodynamic since 2004.

I commend this particularly interesting Chardonnay, that I expect to continue to develop for another three or four years, as evidence that Oregon is not a one-grape state. And I salute the Bergströms for managing to retain that accent on the O.

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