

**Spring-Summer 2003**

**NEWS FLASH! (THE END OF THE STORY)**

SPRING OF 2003 BRINGS TO A CONCLUSION the Saga of the 1998 Cabernet Sauvignon. On March 21st, three hundred and fifty five days after its release, the last pallet was shipped off to Las Vegas.

How do you spell relief ? 1999 is how.

On March 27th, I was in Chicago working with our most excellent distributor showing the 1999 Cabernet Sauvignon for the first time. After talking up the Chardonnay and the Merlot, it was time to describe the '99 Cabernet. The salesperson wanted to hear about the wine, our broker wanted to here the new story, and of course, the wine buyer for the wonderful restaurant where we were, wanted to hear all about it. I simply said, "Look, I have just finished the most exhausting year of my sales career praising the spectacular merits of the 1998 Cabernet and maybe five percent of the wine buyers listened to me because of the tremendously negative pall that the Wine Spectator (this is the third newsletter in a row that I have mentioned this publication--could be a trend!) cast over the entire vintage, so it really doesn't matter what I say. The Wine Spectator says that the '99 is a great vintage so you would be an absolute moron not to buy it!" Fortunately laughter filled the room, and the astute wine buyer for the fabulous restaurant ordered two cases of '99 Cabernet and a six-pack of Mernet (only 80 are left of 300 cases!). Then he asked if I would come back in the fall and do a winemaker dinner. I guess they like the blunt approach in Chicago.

Back in California, the restaurants that were pouring the '98 Cab by the glass were fighting over the few remaining cases in our broker's warehouse. All that remain at the winery are a couple of cases of half bottles, two cases of magnums , and nine 3-liter bottles. Nine months ago, who would of thought that at the end of March people would be fighting over the 1998 Cabernet?

Other signs of the impending apocalypse include the current (May 15th) issue of the (drumroll please!) Wine Spectator. Noted savant and indefatigable discernor of truth, Matt Kramer, has said that we are once again a "contender" (I always wanted to be!) and that our Merlot is one of the best that he has ever had!

Let the dancing spill into the streets!

--Michael Keenan