

MEDALS FOR THE MOUNTAINS
2005 SF Chronicle Competition Results Look Good for SCM Appellation
By Laura Ness

The results of America's largest wine competition are in, and the Santa Cruz Mountains appellation did itself proud. Like Modern Edens (to paraphrase a Charles Sullivan book title on the area), Santa Cruz Mountains wineries are returning to their previous glory. With an unprecedented 10 gold medals, this region has proven its moxie and its mettle in an increasingly thorny and difficult competitive landscape. The wineries in this region, and the consumers who have most immediate access to them, should be thrilled. While you won't find many "bargains" among the winners, you will find solid values at every price point.

But let's first unveil the three overall competition winners, all from better-known AVAs—but not for long, at the rate Santa Cruz Mountains is going. It might be worth noting here that the Sweepstakes Winners, the wines that march straight to the Judge's overall hearts and palates, included the 2003 Earthquake Petite Sirah from Lodi for Best Red (\$28). To have a Petite take the sweepstakes is a good sign of life for this big bad boy. It's also good to see a Sauvignon Blanc (Charles Krug, Napa Valley) make the grade as Best White for the third straight year. I suppose it's refreshing that the overall bubbly winner was a Korbel Brut Rosé: tried and true. Your wallet will be pleased to know that Ballatore's Rosso Spumante for \$6 was a Gold medalist in the sparkling category, as was a Mumm Blanc de Noirs (\$18), arguably the sexiest type of champagne, with lovely aromas of strawberry fruit and plenty of sizzle. Perhaps even more gratifying to see was the Double Gold Best of Class for Thomas Fogarty's 2003 Gewürztraminer (\$15 – now, there's a bargain!). Not a shy varietal by any means, this one has all the stuff you want in such a wine: enormously spicy aromas, racy acidity and a crisp, palate-cleaning finish. It's not wonder it was a hit. Try it with Dungeness crab tossed with mangos, sweet peppers, radish sprouts, sobon noodles, and hot chili oil. Divine.

Bring on the Blends

It looks like Bordeaux Blends are really coming into their own, with the Byington '01 Alliage garnering Best of Class in the \$20 to \$30 category, where Silver Mountain's well-known Alloy (01 Vintage, not yet released), took a Bronze. In the \$30 and up category, it was Burrell School Winery's 02 Valedictorian, a heady head of the class blend of all Santa Cruz Mountains fruit, took a solid Gold. Storrs scored Silver for the BXR in the same category. Note to winemakers: please make more of these elegant and complex wines.

Pinot Paradise

And we'd be remiss not to mention how well represented the appellation was in the Pinot Noir category: this is, after all, an ideal place to grow Pinot Noir. In fact, you might call it a Pinot Paradise. Speaking of which, all Pinot lovers should mark you calendars for April 10, 2005, when the Santa Cruz Mountains Winegrowers Association will host the inaugural **Pinot Paradise** event, featuring Pinot Noir from winemakers in the SCM appellation. The event will be held at Testarossa Vineyards in Los Gatos, from 1-5pm. Call 831-479-9463 for tickets.

Santa Cruz Mountains Wineries: Medal Highlights

Double Gold Best of Class

Thomas Fogarty Winery	2003	Gewürztraminer	Monterey	GBOC	\$15
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Gold Best of Class

Byington Winery	2001	Cab Sauv/BB	Sonoma Alliage	GBOC	\$24
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Double Gold

Bargetto Winery	2003	Pinot Grigio	California	GG	\$16
Soquel Vineyards	2003	Pinot Noir	Partners Reserve SC	GG	\$35
Hunter Hill	2002	Syrah	Arroyo Grande	G	\$25

GOLD

Burrell School	2002	Valedictorian	Estate Bordeaux	G	\$44
Muccigrosso Vineyards	2002	Zinfandel	Central Coast "Lynzin"	G	\$20
Savannah-Chanelle	2002	Pinot Noir	Laetitia Vineyard	G	\$25
Thomas Fogarty	2001	Pinot Noir	Santa Cruz Mountains	G	\$25
Windy Oaks Estate	2001	Pinot Noir	SCM Estate Reserve	G	\$36

Silver and Bronze Medal Winners**WHITES**

Byington Winery	2003	Sauvignon Blanc	Central Coast Liage	B	\$20
Bargetto Winery	2004	Gewürztraminer	Monterey	B	\$16
Storrs Winery	2002	Gewürztraminer	Viento Vineyard	B	\$14
Cinnabar Vineyards	2002	Chardonnay	Santa Cruz	S	\$25
Ahlgren Vineyard	2003	Chardonnay	Monterey Ventana Vineyard	S	\$20.00
Byington Winery	2002	Chardonnay	Santa Cruz Mountains	S	\$22
Bargetto Winery	2002	Chardonnay	Santa Cruz Mountains	B	\$20
Picchetti Winery	2003	Chardonnay	Leslie's Estate Vineyard	SCM	\$24.95
Roudon Smith Winery	2003	Chardonnay	Russian River	B	\$20
Silver Mountain Vyds	2001	Chardonnay	Santa Cruz Mountains Estate	B	\$20
Storrs Winery	2002	Chardonnay	Ben Lomond Mountain	B	\$20
Thomas Fogarty Winery	2002	Chardonnay	Santa Cruz Mountains	B	\$24

REDS**PINOT NOIR**

Savannah-Chanelle Vineyards	2003	Pinot Noir	Russian River Valley	S	\$22
Savannah-Chanelle Vineyards	2002	Pinot Noir	SLH Gary's Vineyard	S	\$29.99
Savannah-Chanelle Vineyards	2002	Pinot Noir	Sleepy Hollow	S	\$29.99
Windy Oaks Estate	2002	Pinot Noir	SCM Estate Blend	S	\$24
Storrs Winery	2001	Pinot Noir	Santa Cruz Mountains	B	\$24
Storrs Winery	2002	Pinot Noir	Wildcat Ridge	B	\$26
Trout Gulch Vineyards	2002	Pinot Noir	Santa Cruz Mountains	B	\$24
Burrell School Vineyards	2002	Pinot Noir	Reserve SCM	S	\$34
Byington Winery	2002	Pinot Noir	Sonoma	S	\$30
			Van Der Kamp Vineyard		
Hunter Hill Vineyard & Winery	2003	Pinot Noir	Sonoma Coast	S	\$30
			Hellenthal Vyd		
Muccigrosso Vineyards	2002	Pinot Noir	Santa Cruz Mountains	S	\$30
Bargetto Winery	2001	Pinot Noir	Regan Vineyard	SCM	\$30
Sonnet	2003	Pinot Noir	York Mountain,	B	\$36
			Kruse Vineyard		
Windy Oaks Estate	2002	Pinot Noir	SCM Estate Reserve	B	\$36

SYRAH

Savannah-Chanelle Vineyards	2002	Syrah	Monterey Coast View Vineyard	B	\$18
Burrell School Vineyards	2003	Syrah	Santa Cruz Mountains Pichon	S	\$24
Cooper-Garrod	2002	Syrah	Finley Estate Vineyard	S	\$24

PETITE SIRAH

Storrs Winery	2002	Petite Sirah	Rusty Ridge	S	\$23
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ZINS

Alexander Cellars	2001	Zinfandel	Central Coast	S	\$23
Storrs Winery	2001	Zinfandel	Rusty Ridge	S	\$28
Storrs Winery	2002	Zinfandel	Lion Oaks Vineyard	S	\$32

Alexander Cellars	2000	Zinfandel	Central Coast	B	\$23
Beauregard	2002	Zinfandel	Beauregard Vineyards	B	\$25
Bonny Doon Vineyard	2003	Zinfandel	Cardinal Zin	B	\$20
Burrell School Winery	2002	Zinfandel	Ryan Oaks, Amador	B	\$24

CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Cooper-Garrod	2000	Cab Sauv	George's Estate Vinyd	S	\$30
Cooper-Garrod	2000	Cab Sauv	Lone Oak Estate	B	\$28
Cooper-Garrod	2000	Cab Sauv	Valley View Estate	B	\$28
Cinnabar Vineyards	2001	Cab Sauv	Santa Cruz	S	\$40
Ahlgren Vineyard	1999	Cab Sauv	Santa Cruz Mt Bates	B	\$30
Thomas Fogarty Winery	2001	Cab Sauv	Santa Cruz Mountains	B	\$55

CABERNET FRANC

Burrell School Vineyards	2002	Cabernet Franc	Santa Cruz Mountains	S	\$30
Ahlgren Vineyard	2000	Cabernet Franc	SCM Bates Ranch	B	\$26
Cooper-Garrod	2001	Cabernet Franc	Francville Estate	B	\$24

BORDEAUX BLENDS

Cinnabar Vineyards	2002	Bordeaux Blend	Mercury Rising	B	\$18.50
Silver Mountain Vineyards	2001	Bordeaux Blend	Alloy Santa Cruz Mtns	B	\$24

RHONE BLENDS

Storrs Winery	2002	Rhone Blend	Two Creek Vineyards	S	\$24
Bonny Doon Vineyard	2002	Rhone Blend	Le Cigare Volant	B	\$32

OTHER BLENDS

Muccigrosso Vineyards	2002	Italian Blend	Syrah Sangiovese Blend "Macchia"	S	\$20
Bargetto Winery	1999	Italian Blend	"La Vita"	B	\$50

PORT

Savannah Chanelle	2002	Port	Monterey	S	\$28
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About the Competition

The San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition is the single largest American wine competition. More than 3,200 entries from over 900 winery brands were entered in the competition and evaluated by 55 professional wine judges from throughout the United States. The judging of wines from California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho took place between January 25 and January 28 in Sonoma County, California.

Your Turn to Taste the Medalists

The medal winners will be pouring from 1pm til 5pm at Fort Mason Center, San Francisco on March 12. This wine tasting event is open to the public. Tickets are available at www.ticketmaster.com or 415-345-7575.