



THERESE AND BRIAN SCHAFER  
OF TEBRI VINEYARDS

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# The Sun Also Rises

A crop of new wineries grows in sleepy little Monroe BY LANCE SPARKS

The Broadleys' home, a dark, beveled-cedar single-story, sits near the top of the hill above their vineyards. From the front deck, the south Willamette Valley is revealed to the east — lush, green with farms, fields and stands of oaks and firs. On clear days, snow-capped peaks of the Cascades gleam in the sunlight, from Mt. Hood in the north to the Three Sisters in the south.

In front of the house, the **BROADLEY VINEYARDS** are just beginning to flush with new growth; especially enticing is the set of north-facing vines that produce the grapes for Claudia's Choice, Broadleys' premier bottling, their prize-winner.

The Broadleys pioneered this area, displacing Christmas-tree farms and goat ranching (Morgan Broadley has brought back goats) and proving that wine grapes, *vinis vinifera*, could thrive here and yield world-class wines. Thirty years of successful growing blazed a trail to Monroe, and others have followed.

Now, just downslope from the Broadley homestead and southerly around the hill along Orchard Tract Road, a handsome wrought-iron gate, painted a shade of celadon, marks the entry to **WHYBRA VINEYARDS**. Nothing here invites visitors, especially not the slinking German shepherd who tracks the car just outside the driver's door. At the end of the steeply sloping crushed-basalt driveway sits a trailer under trees, a few sheds and outbuildings nearby.

Christi Alvarez — in broad-brimmed hat and blue rubber gloves — stays here with her two watchful hounds. She actually lives in Sun River and comes over to carefully tend her 11.5 acres of pinot noir. The vineyard was planted

in 1992, but wines wearing the Whybra label didn't appear until 2007. Whybra 2009 Pinot Noir is not widely distributed but can be found at the Longbranch Saloon, just across the highway from the Broadley tasting room in Monroe.

Downslope, around the bend and up another crude driveway, we find the pole building that Brian and Therese Schafer converted to an apartment for themselves and a winery for their newly established **TEBRI VINEYARDS**. They've just released their 2009 pinot noir, a palpable hit.

Before he retired, Brian had been fire chief in Lake Tahoe but concluded "firefighting at age 60 is not a good idea." How good an idea was it to start a vineyard?

"What the hell was I thinking? A vineyard? Gimme a break." No breaks; Brian built the house by hand; Therese turned it into a comfortable, attractive home.

In the attached winery the Schafers keep a camp tent set up for when the (fully grown) kids and grandkids come to visit. The Schafers are a strikingly attractive couple, fit and lively, who "always loved wines."

When Brian's retirement approached, they started shopping for land, someplace sweet, someplace they could explore "life after fire": "The further south we got, the more we liked it." That included the wines; then they tasted Broadley Claudia's Choice.

Now, Brian says, "Our goal is to make pinot noir that stands up not only to the best wine in the state but is also one of the best in Monroe." Holding hands, Brian and Therese amble down a grassy lane to introduce us to their neighbors.

Just across the field from TeBri, Phil and Nancy McCullum, both retired educators, have launched **SWEET EARTH VINEYARDS**. They bought their five acres

in 2005, with 3.5 acres of pinot noir and pinot gris that had already been planted in 2003. They bottled their first vintage in 2009 and have been winning prizes since: Sweet Earth 2010 Estate Pinot Noir won Gold and a Grand Award of Excellence at this year's Oregon Wine Awards; the SE 2011 Rosé of Pinot Noir took Gold at Newport's Wine and Food Fest. Their tasting room is ready to open on weekends during the coming season, Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Further downslope, making a couple of curves along Coon Road, we roll into **LONE OAK VINEYARDS** to meet Dave and Yvonne Miller. Their house faces south, looking across four acres first planted in 1999, now growing pinot noir, pinot gris, syrah and even one row of Sangiovese. Yvonne retired from Elmira High School; Dave's retired, a "machinist by trade," but still working.

Dave says they started the vineyard "to supplement our health insurance." He opens the doors to their two-car garage, revealing "maybe the world's smallest winery" — fermenting tanks, barrels and all in a space that could hold two compacts. Lone Oak 2008 Pinot Noir Reserve, however, is seriously good wine, top-shelf quality but accessible price, and the next vintages should be exciting.

More vineyards are being planted around Monroe, even in this wobbly economy. The Broadleys' success, the successes had by Steve Girard at Benton-Lane Vineyards just a couple miles south of Monroe, even the successes of the area's newbies, all these have viniculturalists and their agents scouting the warm slopes of the eastern edge of the Coast Range foothills.

There's no doubt anymore: This is wine country — damn good wine, too. ❖