

THE RHONE RANGERS

Climate concerns get vintners planting ahead

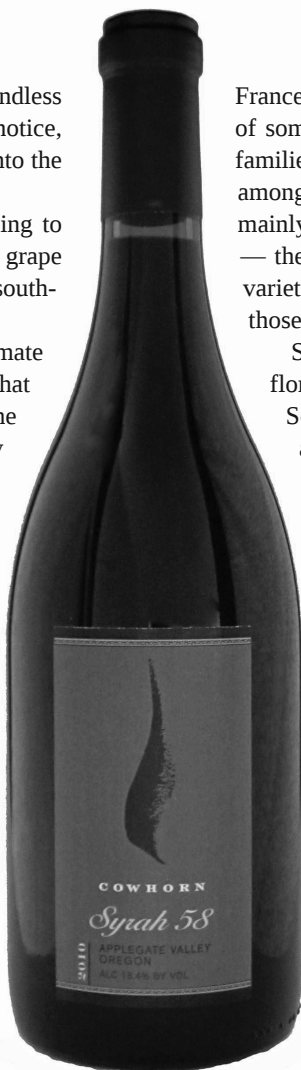
Spring? This was no stinkin' Oregon spring. We were dry, warm; no endless days of sog and rain. Even the worst climate-change-deniers had to notice, even if no idiot thought to bring a snowball (or a bucket of water) into the Legislature.

Last year, around this time, we sat in a UO lecture hall, listening to paleobotanists tell us that, due to climate change (i.e., warming), Oregon grape growers should re-plant their acres in warm-country grapes, like those of the southern Rhone Valley of France.

Oregon has made its global wine-rep with wines made from cool-climate grapes, particularly the pinot family of grapes (blanc, gris, noir), grapes that really dig our damp climate. Oregon pinot noirs, particularly, have hit the heights. Until now. Lately, Oregon pinot noirs have emerged from warm, dry vintages and have been characteristically big, juicy wines — yummy, f'sure, with the wines from 2012 and 2014 just da shizzle — still distinctly vibrant and fresh but sometimes diminished on the delicacy and finesse usually desired from pinot noir. If the warming trend continues (seems likely), we might be seeing the sunset of Oregon pinot noirs fairly soon (in wine-time).

So: Oregon syrah? Sure. Actually, growers have already started to make their run, well ahead of the academics (shocking, right?). California vintners years ago jumped the gun, spurred by some renegades calling themselves Rhone Rangers (now an established group with over 100 members). Too, wily Washington vintners have vigorously planted Rhone varieties — mainly syrah and grenache among the reds, plus viognier, marsanne and roussanne among the whites — on prime sites in their best grape-growing valleys, the Columbia of course, but also around Yakima and Walla Walla. And they're having some success; Oregon's better, though.

Oregon's growers have been developing Rhone varieties for a couple decades, whites first but also big reds. Quick review: When the Romans were conquering all of Europe, they planted their wine grapes as they went. Nobody wanted to drink the water. Still don't, for good reasons. In southern



France, they planted all sorts of grapes — we're still sorting out the genetic heritage of some varieties — but among the vines were progenitors of some superb grape families. Among the whites, we like viognier, roussanne, marsanne, several others; among the reds, syrah, grenache, mourvedre and petite sirah get the most attention, mainly because they yield really tasty juice. Oregon growers in our warm valleys — the Columbia, Rogue, Umpqua — have been cultivating strong vines of these varieties. Our local growers round up the best of the grapes they can get, vinify those, and some of the wines are simply outstanding.

Some fine whites: **J. Scott Roussanne**, any vintage, all excellent (about \$18), floral without being flabby; same is true of **J. Scott Viognier** (\$19). Jonathan Scott Oberlander is clearly a talented vintner with an acute palate for wines to accompany foods.

Other notable Rhone whites from Oregon: **Agate Ridge 2011 Aléash** (\$16.50), a blend of Rhonish whites; another fine such, **Cliff Creek Cellars 2012 MRV** (\$22), marsanne (for body), roussanne (for bright fruit), viognier (aromatics). In the cozy, warm Applegate Valley, Rhone varieties thrive, and Herb Quady encourages them; **Quady North 2013 "Pistoleta"** (\$19) lovingly blends marsanne, roussanne and viognier. Quady can be trusted for any wines wearing that label.

Notable Rhonish reds: **Cowhorn 2010 Syrah 58** (\$45), Rogue Valley, rates 94 points from the respected *Wine Spectator*; stiff ticket but fair value. In the Umpqua, Spangler Vineyards keeps hoarding gold medals for **Spangler 2011 Petite Sirah** (30), huge, dark and juicy. **J. Scott Cellars 2013 Grenache** (\$29) packs black-berryish fruits on an elegant frame. Agate Ridge gets kudos for all their Rhone reds but especially **Agate Ridge 2011 DK Reserve** (\$36), an effective blend of Rhone reds. Bit of a surprise: **Chateau Lorane 2007 Petite Sirah** (\$20) reveals how this variety can age gracefully in the bottle.

Many others — whites and reds — deserve pursuit and purchase. Track 'em down, Tonto. The future is here now. Feel the heat? ■

Lane Peace Center's
8th Annual Peace Symposium Presents

SEEING RED

Indigenous Perspectives on Peace and Justice

Featuring Keynote Presenters

SUZAN HARJO
Poet, Writer, Lecturer, Curator & Advocate
2014 Presidential Medal of Freedom Receiptant

DENNIS MARTINEZ
Founder & Co-Chair, Indigenous Peoples' Restoration Network

Thursday, April 30, 2015

Lane Community College, Main Campus
4000 East 30th Avenue, Eugene

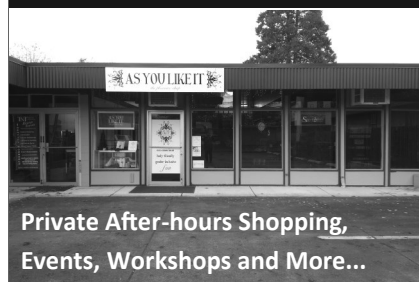
10 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Lane Community College Longhouse, Bldg. #31

7:00-9:30 p.m., Center for Meeting and Learning, Building #19

Live-streamed at: <http://www.lanecc.edu/it/media/live-streaming>

For more information go to: <http://www.lanecc.edu/peacecenter>

A different kind of pleasure shop...



Private After-hours Shopping,
Events, Workshops and More...

In-Store
Special:
Free Lube
with
JimmyJane
Vibes



Wed & Thu 12-7pm
Fri & Sat 12-9pm
Sunday 12-6pm

1655 W. 11th Ave. | (971) 266-8631 | www.facebook.com/AsYouLiketShop

gluten-free options • vegetarian-friendly • no dairy • no msg

TARA RIN
Thai Cuisine

thank you for voting us eugene's
BEST THAI
in eugene weekly's best of eugene
for six years in a row
2008-2014

serving you in two locations

eugene	springfield
1200 oak street	1410 mohawk blvd.
541.343.1230	541.505.8987

open seven days a week

mon-fri: lunch 11am to 3pm
dinner 4:30pm to 9pm springfield / 10pm eugene

sat-sun: 12 noon to 9pm springfield / 10pm eugene

www.tararinthai.com

VLT
86th SEASON!

The Very Little Theatre
presents in STAGE LEFT:

Sight Unseen

A Smart & Sad Comedy
by Tracy Letts

Directed by Darlene Rhoden

**April 24-26,
April 30, May 1-3**

7:30 pm curtain; 2 pm Sundays

Tix: \$10 General Admission

Box office open 2:00-5:00

Wed.-Sat., 2350 Hilyard St.

Tix on-line at www.TheVLT.com

541-344-7751