

## Barry Bonds, Bud-Lite, Mondovino and Me

Spring is my favorite time of year. Baseball returns and we release my favorite wines: 2004 Grenache, 2004 Sangiovese, 2003 Syrah Benchland Reserve and our 2005 Rose. This spring, however, has me thinking of home runs, performance enhancing drugs and 90+ point wines.

Unless you've been living under a rock (sometimes I wonder if that wouldn't be best), you are painfully aware of Barry Bonds' plight to become baseball's all-time home run king. Bonds is a walking bundle of conflict, both personally (just read any of his quotes) and symbolically. Since the late 1990's we have seen Barry go from a relatively slim and fit all-around player (good hitter, base stealer and defender) to a hulking barrel-chested one-dimensional home run machine. He has become larger than the game itself.

Bonds, and countless other body building baseball stars, such as Mark McGuire, Sammy Sosa and Rafael Palmiero, enjoyed fame, fortune and inflated statistics by hitting home runs in the late stages of their respective careers. Unfortunately, they were most likely using steroids and other performance enhancing drugs. Baseball fans, who typically are as obsessed with stats, don't know how to interpret these guys or their seemingly illegitimate numbers. It's enough to make your neck swell. How could this happen?

### IS THERE A COMMISSIONER IN THE HOUSE?

Well, you could blame the owners, or the players and their union for compromising our beloved sport and its holy statistical records by *not* instituting and endorsing an effective drug testing program until this year. They all decided to ignore steroid use and its threat to both the players and the game in favor of, you guessed it: big bucks. Home runs have a much greater appeal to the casual fan than good pitching, solid defense and fundamentally sound baseball. Even the purists who endorse the latter style of baseball have to stop and watch Barry swing for the fences. They can't help themselves.

It is certainly not the first, nor will it be the last time a sport was compromised for money. Just look at all of the advertising displayed in every ball park. But someone should have drawn the line at steroid use, and that someone is Commissioner Bud Selig, or, as Bill King used call him 'Bud Lite'. The commissioner is supposed to be the guardian of the game from ideas that cheapen it, no matter how financially lucrative the idea is. It's what separates Major League Baseball from the WWF (World Wrestling Federation) or Roller Derby. Bud Lite has opted to address this whole mess by audaciously pleading ignorance while we are left to decide whether Barry Bonds and Mark McGuire are Hall of Famers or future stars of Saturday Night Thunder.

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### WINES THAT GO YARD

The fine wine industry is having its own "steroids era" controversy. If you subscribe to Stephen Tanzer's International Wine Cellar or have seen Jonathan Noisseter's 2005 film, *Mondovino*, you are aware of the fine wine industry's most vigorous debates: international style wines (performance enhanced?) versus terroir driven wines. The former wine style is gaining fame and fortune at the expense of the latter, which appeal to the wine purest or traditionalist.

I read Tanzer because he reviews my kind of wines from around the world: French, German and Italian. He is often critical of those wineries producing wines in an overly international style. You know the type: wines that have ripe fruit, soft tannins, high alcohol, lots of new oak. The movie *Mondovino* shows how globalization is taking place in the fine wine world. It features super-consultant Michel Rolland, and wine critic Robert Parker, two men who have had a profound influence on wineries who produce international style wines. As we see in the film, wineries from Bordeaux, California and even South America pay Rolland much *cāsh* to help them make wines that will garner a high score from Parker, which will in turn sell faster at higher prices to consumers. So, what's wrong with that?

Well, both Tanzer, Noisseter and many wine purists are against proliferation of international style wines. Like home runs in baseball, such wines can be exciting and flashy but they might be lacking finer points; such as complex aromatics, good acid balance, and flavors reflective of the growing region. They fear that the wine world will be a duller place if winemakers

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# UNTI

VINEYARDS

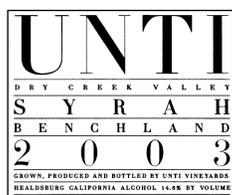
Cont. from pg. 1

simply follow the 90 point or “home run” formula of making wine because there is a tremendous financial incentive to do so. Armageddon!

Like Barry Bonds, Michel Rolland gives us plenty of material to substantiate his role as “the villain.” We see him as a pompous, chain-smoking consultant, who screams at his clients over his cell phone, while his chauffeur drives him (don’t I wish) to each chateau. He repeatedly encourages wineries to “micro-oxygenate” (introduce tiny amounts of oxygen into the wine to soften tannins), which is more or less a technique used for those who didn’t pick their grapes at optimum ripeness. He also calls the people from France’s Languedoc region “country bumpkins and hicks” for not welcoming Robert Mondavi to the area. Sebastien really appreciates that one.

But blaming Rolland or Robert Parker for fine wine homogeneity is like blaming Bonds for the “Steroids Era.” It’s up to winery owners to produce wines that measure up to their own standards. Contrary to Major League Baseball, there are plenty of opportunities to make and/or purchase high quality wines that are reflective of their growing conditions. Despite consolidation of wineries, wine publications or retail outlets—the wine business seems to have an uncanny way of attracting iconoclastic rogues (perhaps yours truly?), who are not willing to follow a formula even if that formula could lead to greater financial reward or fame. Obviously, we can only do this because we have customers who appreciate our style. So while it would be nice to have our wines praised by the wine press, we are confident there are enough of you out there who give us a 90 point score on your own scale. Bless your hearts. As Sly Stone once said, “I want to thank you for letting me be myself again.”

Mick



## 2003 SYRAH BENCHLAND RESERVE

Most of you first visited us because of our Syrah. Okay, some of you

stopped by because you weren’t sure where you were going, but let’s keep that on the down low. We made our first Reserve Syrah in 2002. If you have had that burly wine lately, it is really starting to show why we feel this section of vines within our 6-acre block is so special.

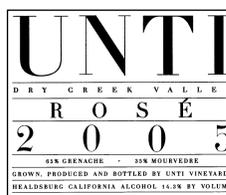
The 2003, which basically comes from the same section, is every bit as big as the ‘02, but with more complexity and better acid balance. If the 2002 Benchland is Jerry Jeff Walker, then this ‘03 is Bob Wills. (You can just imagine the two of them drinking this big boy in Fort Worth while chewing on BBQ brisket.) Every once in a while we have a batch of wine that is outstanding wire to wire, from crush to bottle. This 2003 Benchland is surely a charter member of that club. It is the single best batch of Syrah we have ever seen here.

Contrary to 2004, we had some moderate weather during the ‘03 growing season. This gave aromatics, deep color and structure and ideal acid balance—all reminiscent of our favorite Northern Rhones. The wine is concentrated enough to handle 40% new and 40% one year-old barrels.

The high amount of new oak means this wine is undoubtedly built to last, and, as such, we have bottled 50 cases of 1.5 liters.

### 2003 SYRAH BENCHLAND RESERVE

Harvested: 9/21-24/03	Blend: 100% Syrah
Total Acidity: 0.57g/100ml	Aging: 14 mos.French Oak, 40% new
pH: 3.90	Bottled: 12/6/04
Alcohol: 14.6%	Cases Produced: 410 (plus 50-1.5L)



## 2005 ROSÉ

*We are turning Provençal,  
We are turning Provençal,  
We really think so...*

The 2005 vintage gave us awesome Grenache and Mourvedre red wine. It also gave us 3 tons of newly grafted Mourvedre which was not ideal for red, but made lovely Rosé. It is a bit richer and more full bodied than it’s predecessors. Bandol freaks know that a Rosé without Mourvedre is like a Provençal day without sunshine. And a Rosé with twice as much Mourvedre is worth two in the bush.

Not to throw another log on the axiom fire but, since this is our best dry Rosé to date, it will sell out by August. In other words, you snooze, well... you get the idea. Only 425 cases produced.

### 2005 ROSÉ

Harvested: 10/20-11/1/05	Blend: 65% Grenache, 35% Mourvedre
Total Acidity: 0.65g/100ml	Aging: Stainless steel tank
pH: 3.50	Bottled: 3/24/06
Alcohol: 14.3%	Cases Produced: 425

We are attempting to update our mail list and would like to hear from you regarding:

- 1) Any changes in your mailing address
- 2) If you would like to be removed from our mailing list

Please call us at 707-433-5590, or send an email to [diane@untivineyards.com](mailto:diane@untivineyards.com).

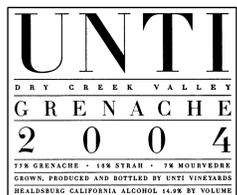
## 2004 GRENACHE 2004 SANGIOVESE

*Hurry up and wait or Cruel to be Kind*

Last newsletter, I pointed out our challenge with the 2004 vintage. A hot and sunny August and September had most vintners racing to harvest grapes before they all dried on the vine. For most growers, harvest took place three to four weeks earlier than normal. Heck, most of the Zinfandel vineyards here in Dry Creek were picked clean by the first week of September!

Amid frenetic conditions of grapes drying and neighbors' tractors rolling, we decided to trust our collective gut (not a nice visual) and wait for flavor and phenolic (tannins) ripeness. Both Grenache and Sangiovese can become too vegetal and astringent when you make your move too soon. We ended up picking our Grenache and Sangiovese on normal harvest dates, which in 2004, resulted in having to sort through some dried bunches.

This resulted in lush, ripe flavorful wines that have plush tannins and slightly lower than normal acids. As George Zimmer would say, "You're gonna like the way they look." You might think that these wines are quite Mondovino-like. No way Rosé! They each have a unique personality that is distinct to their respective varietal grapes grown in our vineyard sites.

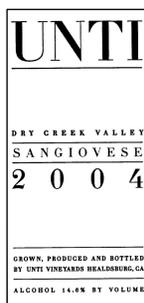


I am very proud of our **2004 Grenache** because it really represents our commitment to making Southern Rhone-style reds, regardless of the vintage. To achieve maximum flavor ripeness we had to harvest the same vines two or three times. One pass was to select only the dried bunches hoping to minimize having these grapes in the main lot. We ended up with almost 2 tons of this stuff, which we have kept separate to make a Banyuls-style dessert wine that might see the light of day in a year or two.

Fortunately, the result of our hard work is 2004 Grenache that is in the style of our previous vintages. A few shriveled grapes made it past the sorting table and they really add classic Southern Rhone-like aromas of raspberry liqueur and dried herbs. As in our three previous vintages, we blended Syrah and Mourvedre for color, structure and complexity.

2004 GRENACHE	
Harvested: 10/13-16/04	Blend: 77% Grenache, 16% Syrah, 7% Mourvedre
Total Acidity: 0.60g/100ml	Aging: 13 mos. in neutral French Oak
pH: 3.82	Bottled: 12/5/05
Alcohol: 14.9%	Cases Produced: 660

Our Syrah in 2004 was quite ripe making it ideal for this Southern Rhone blend. It is a wine that will really sing over the next year or three.



The **2004 Sangiovese** is everything we have come to expect from this hillside section. It is dark and full of cherry, chocolate and earthy flavors. As with most of the current Brunello di Montalcino stars, we have aged this wine in 30% new French oak for added structure and complexity. The ripeness of the vintage means this lush wine is already showing quite well. Drinking this wine makes me think of sitting with my sweetheart, Jean Fruth, in Montalcino's Enoteca Osticcio, where we are happily losing another afternoon enjoying some of the world's finest wines. It all works for me.

As well as the '04 Sangiovese is drinking now, it should improve over the next two years. Because we only select grapes from our hillside section, case production is limited to 500 cases... and that means we won't have it for much longer than 3 months.

2004 SANGIOVESE	
Harvested: 9/10-13/04	Blend: 100% Sangiovese
Total Acidity: 0.57g/100ml	Aging: 11 mos. French Oak, 35% new
pH: 3.68	Bottled: 8/31/05
Alcohol: 14.6%	Cases Produced: 549

### SANGIOVESE SIDE BAR

Last summer Jean and I had the good fortune of visiting Valdicava, one of Montalcino's most successful wineries. Vincenze Abruzzo, Valdicava's charming owner, was so nice with his time that we left him a bottle of 2003 Sangiovese. Six months later I saw Vincenze at a 2001 Brunello di Montalcino tasting in San Francisco where he promptly said "your Sangiovese is the best I've ever tasted from outside Tuscany." Uh, thank you, I think? I didn't have the guts to ask him how many non-Tuscan Sangioveses he's tried. I'm guessing it hasn't been very many. Later, when having a conversation with my dad (in Italian that is) Vincenze gave us a more sincere compliment. Apparently upon tasting the Unti Sangio with his wife she said "If this wine had Montalcino on the label, you would think it is good."

Obviously, Vincenze has good taste in women, too.

# UNTI

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PRESORTED  
FIRST CLASS  
US POSTAGE  
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SANTA ROSA,  
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Featuring-  
**2004 Grenache**  
**2004 Sangiovese**  
**2003 Syrah Benchland Reserve**  
**2005 Rosé**

►► **REMINDER: May through October can be HOT, we recommend that you place your order now and hold off shipment until cooler weather (October), or, pay extra for 2-Day or 3-Day shipping.**

**Ordering Information:** Mail this form to **Unti Vineyards, PO Box 1899, Healdsburg, CA 95448;** or, fax it to **(707) 433-5591;** or, email us from the Store page at [www.untivineyards.com](http://www.untivineyards.com); or, call us at **(707) 433-5590.** Use the same methods to contact us for scheduling appointments for tasting and purchasing on-site.

**Shipping Information:** Residence(+\$4)  or Business

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

c/o Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_ \*\* Zipcode: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone#: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Email (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*DOB (req'd for HI & WI) \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Payment Information:**

Charge to Credit Card below  or Check enclosed

Visa/MC # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date (MM/YY): \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name / Billing address for Cr. Card if different from shipping information.

*Purchasers must be 21 or older.  
An adult signature will be required at delivery.  
Shipping only to states where permitted by law.*

New Releases:	# Bottles		
2004 Sangiovese	<input type="text"/>	@ \$30 =	<input type="text"/>
2004 Grenache	<input type="text"/>	@ \$26 =	<input type="text"/>
2003 Syrah Reserve	<input type="text"/>	@ \$35 =	<input type="text"/>
2005 Rosé	<input type="text"/>	@ \$16 =	<input type="text"/>
<b>Current Releases:</b>			
2003 Zinfandel	<input type="text"/>	@ \$22 =	<input type="text"/>
2003 Syrah	<input type="text"/>	@ \$24 =	<input type="text"/>

Subtotal =	<input type="text"/>
Discounts: 6-11 bottles = 5%, 12-35 = 10%, 36+ = 15% =	( <input type="text"/> )
New Subtotal =	<input type="text"/>
Taxes: CA=7.75%, FL=\$7/cs, GA=\$6/cs, LA=4%, NH=8%, NC=\$2/cs, NV=\$3/cs =	<input type="text"/>
Shipping from chart (add \$4 for residential address) =	<input type="text"/>
<b>TOTAL =</b>	<input type="text"/>

SHIPPING TO A BUSINESS RATES (subject to change)		
State*	6 Pk Box (4-6 btls)	12 Pk Box (7-12 btls)
Northern CA	\$14 – Ground	\$19 – Ground
So. CA, CO, ID, NM, NV, OR, WA, WY	\$17 – Ground \$25 – 3Day \$28 – 2Day	\$25 – Ground \$42 – 3Day \$49 – 2Day
FL, GA, LA, TX	\$42 – 2Day	\$73 – 2Day
IA, MO, NE, ND, MN	\$21 – Ground \$34 – 3Day \$43 – 2Day	\$33 – Ground \$58 – 3Day \$71 – 2Day
CT, DC, IL, NC, OH, VA, WI	\$23 – Ground \$38 – 3Day \$43 – 2Day	\$38 – Ground \$64 – 3Day \$74 – 2Day
AK, HI (via 2-Day)	\$47	\$79
<p>► Add \$4 if shipping to a Residential address. *If your state is not listed, call for options.</p>		