

THE ADORATION OF NATURE: PICNICKING AS ARTFORM

A FEW THOUSAND years ago part of the mountain that is the Stags' Leap Palisades fell down and lay itself out like a skirt, a lap, holding rocky soil. Craggy boulders dimple the grass on a rise overlooking the vineyards below. This knoll is the setting for Block 23, a Cabernet and Syrah based vineyard 2 years away from its first harvest.

Block 23 is the ideal setting for the oldest species of picnic which developed spontaneously on this estate in the late 1890s: the Crowd Scene (Stagsleapus crowdensus). This has been an estate owned by a succession of large and diverse families, the two most prominent being the founding Chase family, who picnicked from 1888 clear up to 1909, and the Grange family, who further developed the artform of dining al fresco from 1913 until 1956.

Over the years, there has been considerable mutation, with many local variants of the outdoor feast. A Grazing Picnic can be accommodated by the sensory garden, or the Winemaker's Apothecary Garden as it is called. Arugula, tender spinach, raspberries, and cherry tomatoes fall sweet, peppery, or sharp across the tongue, oracles of good health and good fortune.

Around the manor house are some choice spots for a Quickie, where one can step down to the Power Spot, a bench curled around a venerable oak overlooking the estate vineyards, sharing some munchables and a glass of wine without tremendous effort. Then there's the

Bocce court for fans and gamesters of the bowling persuasion.

If the hunt for the perfect spot has been successful, the sky itself becomes a picnic blanket inverted. Each picnicker goes home and dreams of the delicate shades of lichen which covered the rocks on the sloping meadows up the hill. After such an interlude, we are rejuvenated. Nature reminds us of her essential mystery as she calls us to her various laps and glades, and we honor her in return by further developing this delicious artform.



MINNIE MIZNER & HORACE CHASE, 1888
COURTESY OF THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

Picnickers share a metabolism of rebellion, the joy of being liberated from the work-a-day world.



ELLA WATSON MIZNER, MINNIE'S MOTHER,
COURTESY OF THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

NOTE: edited excerpt; read the complete version of newsletter articles at stagsleap.com/art/literature.html

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SPRING / SUMMER 2003



COURTESY OF THE OAKLAND MUSEUM OF CALIFORNIA

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STAGS' LEAP WINERY



IF PROUST CAME WALKING: A COLLECTION OF RHÔNES FOR A MAN OF PARTS

THE HISTORIC WINERY AND ORIGINAL 1893 CAVE
PHOTO BY OLAF BECKMANN



“...more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us...”

—FROM MARCEL PROUST'S
MADELEINE REVERIE, REMEMBRANCE
OF THINGS PAST: SWANN'S WAY

The glass he slides across to his guest is the estate blend made from a field mix of the old block Petite Syrah: Ne Cede Malis. Proust bows his head. His foot pumps up and down a bit because he is irrepressible, and because the wine is at once tender and resounding within him. He nods. Ne Cede Malis, Latin for “never give in to misfortune.” Nay KAY Day Mah Lees...

Repeating this prayer, our gentleman tips his hat and departs, stepping into the deepening blue of the evening sky in imitation of a Magritte painting, making signs to the birds as he goes, patting his breast pocket wherein lies the bill of lading with his wine purchase carefully recorded.

PROUST EPITOMIZED THE personality of the flâneur, by definition, a dreamy connoisseur of all things pertaining to culture and gracious daily living. Here we see him as he enters the estate of Stags' Leap on a quest, strolling up the avenue lined with walnut trees looking dapper in his tailored walking suit and his bowler hat. He is keenly interested in the venerable Petite Syrah vines growing beside the drive. Over 70 years these vines have exerted themselves here.

He is gratified and he is thirsty as he makes his way to the manor house porch, and as a guest of the winemaker, samples the wines. He confesses to be looking for something almost grail-like in nature: a wine to accompany his famous madeleine, the cookie which launched his career.

He has the great good fortune to be sitting across from the man responsible for the contemporary replanting of the estate vineyards. Tripped by his instincts into allowing the old block of Petite Syrah to be center stage, winemaker Robert Brittan fell in love with the Rhône varietals which sparkle around him on the table, from the melon spiciness of the Viognier and the fresh Amparo Rosé, to the deep bellied Syrah, a haven for all the gestures that could arise from notes and repercussions of black cherries and flinty anvils of drinkable stone.

The glass he slides across to his guest is the estate blend made from a field mix of the old block Petite Syrah: Ne



THE NEWLY COMPLETED WINE CAVE 2003
PHOTO BY OLAF BECKMANN

THE MONKEY IN HIS BOUDOIR

THE MONKEY LIVED for a number of years inside and outside like a cat. He wasn't housetrained but that's the way it was in the world of Fred Grange as a child growing up in the manor house at Stags' Leap.

One of the imp's favorite places was the kitchen because of the long pull chains which served to open and close vents in the ceiling. A half a dozen such chains proved irresistible

for swinging, which is of course what the monkey loved to do. One day a chain broke and he fell, butt down, into a frying pan on the stove. Fred's grandmother had to chase the mortified animal about the house until she could coax him into her lap and apply butter to the offended parts.

During his daily rounds of the living quarters, the monkey would often sit outside the upstairs window in a tree that used to be there, fascinated by the activities of the people inside.

Her name was Emabel Kaine, as best Fred can remember, and she was a family friend who was staying the night. She was at the dressing table when the monkey

must have caught site of her from his perch outside the opened window.

When she left to go down to dinner, the monkey entered the room and seated himself at the mirror and proceeded to apply to his handsome face the powder, lipstick, and rouge. Upon her return, she was greeted in her own bedroom by a being with an amateur paint job, a clumsy clown or a mocking devil at first glance. We need look no further for the original inspiration in a tradition of elaborate Mardi Gras and Halloween festivities which are hosted in the manor house to this day.



ORANGE ERA, 1913-1956
PHOTO BY OLAF BECKMANN



OLAF BECKMANN



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SPRING/SUMMER 2003 RELEASES FROM STAGS' LEAP WINERY

VINTAGE	VARIETAL	RELEASE DATE	PRICE/BTL.
1999	Estate Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve	May 2003	\$ 65.
1999	Ne Cede Malis	May 2003	\$ 50.
2000	Estate Merlot Reserve	May 2003	\$ 50.
2000	Napa Valley Petite Syrah	June 2003	\$ 31.
2000	Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	July 2003	\$ 40.
2002	Napa Valley Chardonnay	August 2003	\$ 22.

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