

# DECOR & STYLE

APRIL 2005

\$3.75

M A G A Z I N E



LUXURIOUS  
BATHS



N

by Steven Mayer

NOT SO MANY YEARS AGO WHEN PEOPLE INQUIRED about his age, Austin Hope would try to change the subject. And if that failed, he wasn't above tacking on a few extra years for good measure.

"People would say, 'So you're how old?' And it was never a positive thing," he recalls.

It's not surprising that wine lovers were curious about this boy-wonder of wine who received hands-on training at a number of wineries in California, most notably Caymus Vineyards in Napa Valley where he was mentored by legendary winemaker Chuck Wagner.

But Hope's immersion into the magic of wine began much earlier. He was only eight when he began working in his family's vineyards in Paso Robles. Now just 31, he's the viticulturist and winemaker for three different labels: the classy Treana, the solid-value Liberty School and, most recently, the self-titled Austin Hope Winery.

"Probably the biggest thing I got from Chuck Wagner was his encouragement to try things," Hope remembers. "Other winemakers might say, 'This is how you do it.' But with him, there wasn't just one answer."

Hope says he's a farmer first. Without high-quality fruit, the best winemaker in the world will fall flat, he says. But Hope says once the grapes are picked, the primary job of the winemaker is to guide the winemaking process rather than force it.

"A good winemaker is really a steward of the grapes," he says. The Hope family planted vineyards in west Paso Robles in 1978, just 20 miles from the Pacific Ocean in the winegrowing region known as the Templeton Gap. As a result, Austin's growth has paralleled the development of the Paso Robles wine region.

"We're on the brink of stardom for sure," he says of the appellation. And he may be right. The Central Coast is embracing Syrah and other Rhone varieties in a big way and is meeting with dramatic success. The wines made by Austin Hope are no exception.



# Cheers to Hope

## AUSTIN HOPE SYRAH 2002

My favorite of his current-release wines is the 2002 Austin Hope Syrah grown in the Hope Family Vineyard. This well-balanced red is rich and satisfying without being over-the-top in style. It favors elegance and restraint over unbridled ripeness or exotic fruitiness, traits found in many Syrahs from the Central Coast. It's a fine line to walk, between ripeness and elegance, but Hope does it well with this vintage.

"That wine holds a lot back," he says of the Syrah. "We've spent 10 years working on the Austin Hope project. Now we're seeing the fruits of our labor."

With only 250 cases made, don't expect the Syrah to be available forever.

## WESTSIDE RED 2002

This Rhone-style blend made by the Hope winery is a good-value wine with wider availability and lots of bang for the buck. Made with Syrah, Grenache and Mourvedre, the Westside Red is easy to drink and, at between \$14 and \$18, easy to afford.

"People want to try the new blends of Rhone varieties, but many are expensive and hard to find," Hope says. "It's made in a Chateauf-neuf-du-Pape style, ripe, lush and not too tannic." And with 5,000 cases made, it should be around for a while.

## TREANA RED AND WHITE

Only two wines are made under the Treana label. The red—the label's flagship—is a non-traditional blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah. This super-premium wine leans toward a big, rich aroma and an ultra-smooth, crowd-pleasing mouth feel. I didn't enjoy the 2001 as much as I have some previous vintages, but that should be kept in context. This is still a classy, delicious wine—lush, oak-scented and yummy.

The Treana White is a blend crafted from Marsanne and Viognier grapes grown in the cooler climate of Monterey County's Mer Soleil Vineyard. Of the three labels, this was my favorite white. The richer, deeper Marsanne marries beautifully with the simpler, more floral Viognier to create a white wine with enough acid to cut through rich foods, yet inviting enough to drink on its own. This wine's a winner.

For information about ordering wine, call Austin Hope Winery at (805) 227-2004 or Treana at (805) 238-6979. □