

# Report from the Okanagan

by Lori-Anne Charlton



NARAMATA BENCH  
CHARDONNAY 2004



NARAMATA BENCH  
MERITAGE 2003



NARAMATA BENCH  
PINOT BLANC 2004



NARAMATA BENCH  
PINOT GRIS 2004

We put the Therapy labels association to the test here at CityFood and polled the following results. What this says about the state of our psyche may not be pretty.  
CHARDONNAY: a) female genitalia ; b) two women in kimonos bowing // MERITAGE: a) girl with pigtails; b) two seals in love // PINOT BLANC: a) Dungeness crab; b) Darth Vader // PINOT GRIS: a) two pigeons on a bird bath; b) demented smiley face.

Other photos from top right: Winemaker Roger Wong at Tantalus Vineyards; The proposed new label for Dirty Laundry Vineyard; display of fresh baked bread at the Okanagan Grocery in Kelowna.

An around-the-world wine tasting tour brought two Canadian celebrities to the Okanagan this month, to shoot scenes for a new international TV series.

Jason Priestley and Terry David Mulligan host *Hollywood and Vines*, a *Sideways*-style exploration of wine culture that mixes entertainment with enlightenment.

Shooting started in the Okanagan, with visits to **Mission Hill** and **Quails' Gate Estate Wineries** on the Westside, **Poplar Grove** in Penticton, **La Frenz** and **Joie Farm Cooking School** in Naramata, and **Burrowing Owl Winery** in Oliver. Season One has been scheduled with 13 episodes. Other locations to be featured include Washington State, the Napa and Sonoma Valleys in California, and wine growing regions in France, Italy and Chile.

The little town of Naramata just started its first farmer's market, and it's already said to rival that of Penticton's. The **Naramata Farmer's Market** operates on Wednesdays from 4-7 p.m.

The international **Slow Food** movement added an Okanagan convivium to its global roster this spring, when 20 amateur and professional foodies joined forces to celebrate the gastronomic treasures the Valley has to offer.

Joie Farm Cooking School in Naramata hosted the inaugural meeting, with fresh food and beverage samples from area producers. Joie's **Heidi Noble** says that with so much raw product at the disposal of chefs, winemakers and gastronomes, the area is "ripe" for Slow Food. All that's missing is the culture that accompanies it.

That could change soon, she predicts, as well-travelled, young talent move to the area, and bringing their innovative food ideas with them.

Known for its strip malls, chain grocers and fast-food restaurants as much as for its natural bounty, a uniting of those that prize Slow Food could help sway the balance.

The plan is for organized workshops, tours, tastings and dinners for members to follow.

Former Mission Hill winery chef **Geoff Couper** has restyled himself as the **CorkedCooked**, operating out of **Cedar Creek Estate Winery** in Kelowna this summer.

In keeping with the Slow Food theme, the plan is to get ingredients from local producers, touch them as little as possible and put them on the plate in order to showcase the product, not the chef.

"We just do too much to food sometimes," says Couper. "This is a chance to scale back. It's good food, lightly handled."

On the menu: preserved vegetables with charcuterie, marinated seafood and local cheese; Westcoast mussels steamed with Pinot Blanc, miso-lemon broth, garlic and fresh herbs; roasted butternut squash ravioli; charred beef flank steak on spicy greens with salsa verde and a sausage plate with, wait for it, a duo of lamb and rosemary/venison and wild boar with dried sour cherries, served with a classic white bean salad. Dessert features vanilla-yogurt panna cotta, a wine country lemon tart and a "Best of BC" cheese cart.

Couper will also contribute light lunches (quiches and sandwiches) to sister winery **Greata Ranch**, across the lake.

**Waterfront Wines Urban Eats and Drinks**, which opened in Kelowna last November, doubled their capacity in May when they opened a licensed patio out front.

Enclosed by an ornamental black railing and decorative hanging baskets, the new patio comfortably seats 30. Chairs are long in the seat and slightly laid back to encourage conversation over a good nosh with a glass of something complimentary.

The weather was less than cooperative this spring, putting a damper on the demand for outdoors seating, although the place was teeming inside and out before the Sarah McLachlan concert in June.

Busy sommelier/chef **Mark Filatow** just has to take his customer's word that it's an enjoyable spot. "One day, I'll actually get to sit out there," he hopes.

Expect to see a lot more sidewalk cafes on Kelowna's streets. City councillors recently decided that permit holders can continue outside operations indefinitely, as long as their permit is in good standing and their patio in good repair.

In 2002, seasonal outdoor cafes permits temporarily became full-year while the city assessed the impact on such things as traffic safety, winter road maintenance and parking.

Currently, seven cafes have built outdoor patio areas. The city would like to see them maintain their character as additions and enhancements to the streetscape.

**Nk'mip Winery** in Osoyoos is getting a new neighbour. The **Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort and Spa** started construction last December, and the first few Villa buildings are expected to be ready for occupation soon. The plan is for 94 residential units, lodge space, restaurant, spa and gift shop. The development is a two-minute walk from the First Nations-owned winery, with rooms that overlook the vineyard.

And speaking of development, there was a rash of renovations to wineries around the Okanagan this past spring.

**Little Straw Vineyards** (formerly **Slamka Cellars**) in Westbank has torn down the "little shed" that once housed the winery, and a larger cement structure is now in the works. Winery assistant **Susan Ursuliak** said the plan is for the tasting room and wine shop to be ready by fall, with a mezzanine /winery lounge ready for light lunches by spring 2006.

The estimated cost will probably weigh in around \$400,000 for more than 4,000 square feet of space in two storeys. Ursuliak estimates the winery will have about four times as much space – some of which digs into the Mount Boucherie hillside.

**Quails' Gate Estate Winery**, just down the road and around the corner from Little Straw, is in the middle of a \$4.5 million expansion that includes a new wine shop, kitchen upgrades, an indoor eating area and a new, 10,000 square foot storage and bottling building.

The added space will help accommodate special wine and educational services, seminars, private group tours and lessons, as



well as wine pairing and cooking classes.

Work is expected to be completed by next spring.

Just before Vancouver stockbroker **Eric Savics** hosted a weekend long party in late June on the site of his recently acquired **Pinot Reach Cellars**, the name sign for Pinot Reach Cellars came down and that of the winery's new name, **Tantalus Vineyards**, went up. But the changes at the winery will be much more than cosmetic.

A state of the art winery facility is expected to be built over the next five years. In the meantime, most of the old Pinot Reach vineyards are being torn out and replanted with vine cuttings of Riesling from Germany and Pinot Noir from France. Much of the new winemaking equipment has already started to arrive. **Roger Wong** remains as winemaker.

And finally, the controversial statue, "**Frank the Baggage Handler**", which once stood in the centre of Penticton's only roundabout (before a key portion of his anatomy was chopped), will be housed at **Red Rooster Winery** in Naramata starting June 25. **Prudence Mahrer**, who owns the winery with her husband, **Beat**, expects the new addition to get good reviews from their wine tourists – especially after a couple glasses of their All Canadian gold medal winning Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc or Bantam wines.

**Bernie Hadley-Beauregard**, the marketing man behind the label launch of **Blasted Church** is back from New Zealand where he was developing the brand for a major new winery. Now he's turned his attention to the home crop of wineries who are also anxious to jump on the goofy name bandwagon. In fact, in the Okanagan alone, he's got three new clients.

First up is **Dirty Laundry Vineyard** (the former **Scherzinger Vineyard**) which takes its branding inspiration from an old Chinese laundry that moonlighted as a bordello in Summerland's gold mining days. The labels have been designed to give the impression of cleanliness and purity. At first sight, that is. It takes a bit of time to discover the steamy-ness behind the scenes. Look at the steam rising from the small red icon of the iron and

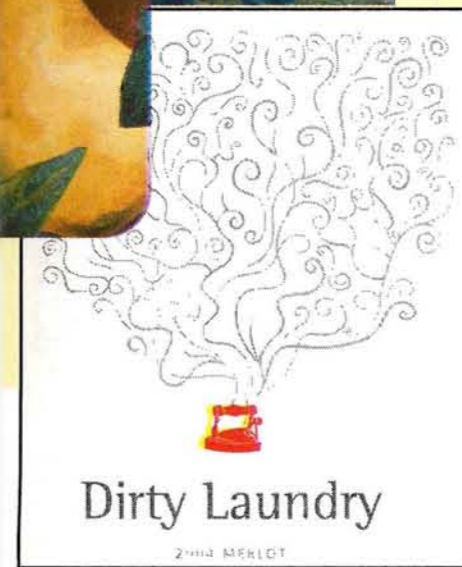
you start to see naked torsos in the vapours. Sort of a "Where's Waldo?" effect. Or is it Wilma?

Next in the portfolio is **Therapy Vineyards**, a new winery on a piece of Naramata property that used to be the old **Red Rooster** site before the Rooster relocated closer to **Hillside Vineyards** and sold the property to **Naramata Development Corp.**, a consortium from Calgary.

Therapy Vineyards labels are based on **Rorschach** inkblots. The copy on the back label asks the consumer what they see in the wine (rather than the usual text which tells them what they should be tasting). It's

an interesting experiment and one that is bound to provoke some peppery dinner conversation. No doubt it will just be too much temptation to call the guest-house located on the vineyard property, "Inn Therapy".

**Hester Creek** is also looking for an image facelift. And apparently there is another bit of history attached to the name which is also worth utilizing for its local flavour factor. According to Hadley Beauregard, Hester



Creek's namesake was the daughter of a magistrate who was known by the community as "The Hanging Judge".

"Can you imagine," says Bernie, "what that poor girl had to get around in order to get a date? Oy!"

As such, he is working on a theme of escapism and adventure.