



... WHEN THE CONVERSATION IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE WINE

FALL 2013

Spotlight On...

IDYLLWILD DEER SIGHTINGS



Shanna Robb, the project's volunteer chairwoman

Hear ye, hear ye! You'll soon be spotting deer all over Idyllwild!

What's so exciting about that, you ask? It would be news if we didn't already have deer in our mountain community, right? Ah, but this is a very special herd of deer. Commissioned by the nonprofit Art Alliance of Idyllwild,

this herd will be Idyllwild's first public art exhibit – a display that's designed to enchant locals and tourists alike.

The 22 deer, each one painted by a different artist, will be anchored in twelve locations throughout the town. "We picked locations that are visually appealing and good memory makers – places perfect for taking pictures," said Shanna Robb, the project's volunteer chairwoman. The Art Alliance also wanted to entice people to explore Idyllwild. "The deer will be placed in the Four Corners area of Fern Valley, down North Circle, throughout the shopping district of the village and all the way out to Pine Cove Market," Shanna confirmed. "We want to help as many people as possible discover Idyllwild. Some folks only shop in the middle of town and might not explore further up towards the Four Corners. Other people don't know we have a nature center, and the deer exhibit might lure them over there."

Anyone interested in checking out all the deer can pick up a map at the Idyllwild Area Historical Society. The map also describes the deer's

artistic themes. As Shanna explained, "Each deer reflects a piece of the town's history or a significant feature of the area." The themes will be revealed when the deer debut at the Art Alliance's Annual Art Walk & Wine Tasting on October 12th.

Local sponsors picked up the tab for the deer – and all 22 sponsors call Idyllwild home. "We had no trouble finding sponsors. In fact, twelve approached us before anything was publicized," said Shanna. And all of them share the Art Alliance's vision of Idyllwild as not just an art town, but a *public* art town. "The deer sightings project is a grassroots effort. Chris and Melody Johnston are sponsors not because they are owners of Middle Ridge Winery, but because they are very involved in the community. The same is true of their friends Dr. Kenneth Browning and his wife Sandy, owners of Fern Creek Medical Center, who are co-sponsoring a doe and fawn with the Johnston's. These four friends were excited to do something together to help others come to know more about the town they love."

Melody Johnston concurred. "We couldn't think of a better way to honor the history and culture of Idyllwild, as well as the artists who are such an important part of our community."

All Art Alliance artists in good standing were invited to participate. The imaginative stylings of two local artists, Kathy Harmon-Luber and Marilyn D.F. Boire, grace the doe and fawn sponsored by Middle Ridge Winery and Fern Creek Medical Center.

"My doe... evokes an aura of peace and tranquility, and the essential life-giving water to our high mountain community, its flora and fauna," said Kathy Harmon-Luber. "Through my deer sculpture, you'll be taken on a journey of local nature, peace and discovery."



The fawn's theme goes hand-in-hand (or should we say hoof-to-hoof?) with the doe. "The theme of my fawn is 'Earth to Heavens' in Idyllwild," said Marilyn Boire. "The painting incorporates the strawberries growing from the earth and progresses to the mountains and the heavens. I christened my fawn 'Petito'. He's brightly colored and adorable."

Middle Ridge's colorful doe and fawn definitely won't be difficult to find. They'll be located right in the heart of town in front of BBVA Compass Bank.

"This project is about celebrating the history of Idyllwild," Melody said, "It's also about making history. The Art Alliance has taken a bold step in initiating public art exhibits in Idyllwild. We can't wait to see they have in store for us next!"



Above: *Petito*, painted by Marilyn D.F. Boire.
Below: *Dottie*, painted by Kathy Harmon-Luber.

The Mad Scientist

...ON MALBEC & PETIT VERDOT

GETTING TO KNOW MALBEC

One historical reference to the name Malbec says it came from the surname of a Hungarian peasant who first spread the grape throughout France. It became a very popular grape, but Malbec's sensitivities to ailments made it difficult for growers in the Bordeaux region. When a huge frost wiped out most of the Malbec vines in 1956, many of those growers chose to replant with Cabernet and Merlot. It would be just a "minor" grape today if not for the fact that, in 1868, it was introduced to Argentina by a French agriculture engineer. Today, Malbec is the most widely planted red grape varietal in Argentina and has made its way to other countries including, of course, the U.S.

Chris on Malbec

"The Argentinian Malbecs are becoming very popular, but I think people will appreciate that my Malbec is a little different. Argentinian winemakers typically mix in an over-ripe batch of fruit with their 'regular' grapes in order to produce a heavier wine. But I don't like that thick, jammy taste. My style is a lighter Bordeaux-type wine with no residual sugar."



Wine club members and friends received a sneak peek tasting of Middle Ridge's delicious 2010 Malbec and 2010 Petit Verdot at last November's barrel tasting event. And now you can, too! We caught up with Winemaker Chris as he was bottling these rather unknown varietals.

Q: *You've used Malbec and Petit Verdot for your Meritage blends, but this is the first time you've bottled them as stand-alone varietals. What's different this time?*

Chris: The wines were so well received at the barrel tasting that folks started asking me when they'd be available for sale. At that point, the wines had been sitting in oak for 25 months. The tannins were already very smooth, and the aromas were beautiful. They were just really delicious wines. On top of that, this is the first year that I have enough of the wines for blending into the Meritage and to bottle some as stand-alone varietals.

Q: *Why do you think the Malbec and Petit Verdot were so good this year?*

Chris: I always start with really good fruit. These particular grapes came from the Paso Robles area. Next is the cooperage — the barrels I used. I'm very picky about barrels. I use only French oak and specify the forest from which it comes along with the thickness of the staves, the toast level on the inside of the barrel, and whether or not the heads of the barrels are toasted. Also, these wines have now been in barrel for 33 months, and they've aged really nicely.

Q: *What do Malbec and Petit Verdot add to your Meritage?*

Chris: Most red Meritage is made from Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc. Some winemakers, such as myself, also add in Malbec and/or Petit Verdot. Petit Verdot adds structure to the wine by putting in some tannins and aromas. Malbec offers different aromas such as cherries and plum, and it also helps create a good acid structure. I sometimes think of Petit Verdot and Malbec as the "forgotten blend-

ers" because many winemakers stick to the basics and don't use them. But my Meritage wouldn't be my Meritage without them.

Q: *Can you describe their taste and aromas for those who couldn't make it to the barrel tasting?*

Chris: Sure. In fact, let's open up a couple bottles right now. [Chris pops open a bottle and pours a glass.] The Malbec has lots of cherry aromas and beautiful floral notes. I taste black berries, plums and cherries, and there's a nice raspberry finish. It's a really great medium-bodied wine with good acid and tannin structure.

Now the Petit Verdot . . . there's a lavender aroma along with bright cherries and some vanilla. On the palate, I get cherries, raspberries and pomegranate. It has nice bright acids, smooth tannins, and a hint of vanilla on the finish.

Q: *Sounds delicious!*

Chris: Too bad I can't send you some over the phone.





W I N E A W A R D S



GETTING TO KNOW PETIT VERDOT

The name Petit Verdot means “small green” and is actually the reason this grape is difficult to grow in its home region of Bordeaux. Unless weather conditions are perfect during flowering, the berries won’t develop, and they remain small. It also tends to ripen later than other Bordeaux varietals, which means that in some years the entire crop is lost. As a result, many French growers uprooted their Petit Verdot plants in the 1960’s in favor of the easier-to-grow Cabernet and Merlot. However, the 1980’s saw a resurgence of Petit Verdot when viticulturists in the U.S., Australia and Argentina discovered that the grape grows really well in the right climate.

Chris on Petit Verdot

“It seems very few people have had the good fortune of tasting and appreciating a Petit Verdot. That’s because few winemakers attempt making it – the grapes produce a wine that is typically coarse, tannic and hard to drink. However, mine has nice bright acids, smooth tannins and is really delicious. I can’t wait for folks to try it. It just may become one of their favorites!”



2009 MERITAGE SOLD OUT!

Bordeaux Blend * California * 56% Paso Robles, 44% Temecula Valley
Double Gold – San Francisco International Wine Competition

We were excited to receive this prestigious award for our Merlot-based 2009 Meritage. It is definitely a fine wine – full-bodied and rich in both aromas and flavors. We are sad to announce that is all gone, but we hope to please our fans – and the judges – with our 2010 Meritage which is scheduled to be released in early 2014.

2010 OLD VINE ZINFANDEL

Cory Ranch, Lodi

Gold – Zin Challenge

Silver – Riverside International Wine Competition

Surprise! This Zin is made bordelaise style, which means it has a little more acid and tannin structure and was aged in French instead of American oak (traditionally used for Zins). The result is a thick, rich mouth feel and aromas that reach out and grab you. \$28

2009 RESERVE CABERNET SAUVIGNON

Paso Robles

Silver – Long Beach Grand Cru International Wine Competition

This Cab is thick and rich with aromas of deep black fruits like currants, blackberries, black plums and black cherries. Add a hint of licorice, and you’re in heaven. Aged for 29 months in French oak. \$42

2012 PINOT GRIGIO

Blue’s Creek Vineyard, Temecula Valley

Silver – Critics Challenge

This is the fifth harvest from Blue’s Creek Vineyard and, as the vines have matured, the grapes have developed apple aromas in addition to the fresh pears of prior years. The nice acid structure of this wine makes it a perfect pairing with cream-based sauces and softer cheeses. \$21

COCKTAILS SUR LIE - THE MULE

Sparkling Cocktail

Silver – San Francisco International Wine Competition

Silver – Los Angeles International Wine & Spirits Competition

The Mule is the first drink in a new line of sparkling cocktails called Cocktails Sur Lie. Imagine a Moscow Mule gone champagne! It’s made with muscat wine grape juice that’s co-fermented with freshly sliced ginger and hops, and topped with a dose of vodka. It’s a party in a bottle! \$27

Overheard

@MIDDLE RIDGE

Deer Sightings is Idyllwild's first public art exhibit, so it's really making a buzz! Here is what we've overheard about the painted herd while we've been out and about town.

LINKS

-  **Middle Ridge Website**
www.middleridge.com
-  **Facebook:**
www.facebook.com/middleridgewine
www.facebook.com/cocktailssurlie
-  **Twitter:**
twitter.com/middleridgewine
-  **YouTube:**
www.youtube.com/user/MiddleRidgeWinery#p/u



Dr. Kenneth & Sandy Browning
Fern Creek Medical Center

“Deer Sightings is a wonderful art project that will make Idyllwild even more of a destination place than it already is, and we’re so happy to be part of it. When we learned that our dear friends Chris and Melody were also going to be sponsoring a deer, doing a pair together was a natural next step. I go to the bank where our two deer will be placed and seeing them will be a nice reminder of our friendship and our connection to the community.”



Photo by: Frazier Drake

Gary Kuscher

President, Art Alliance of Idyllwild
“Chris and Melody are big supporters of the Art Alliance and have sponsored our annual Art Walk & Wine Tasting for the last several years. That’s why I knew they’d want to be part of Idyllwild’s first public art exhibit. It’s this kind of support that has made Idyllwild a haven for artists and gained it the recognition of being one of the ‘100 Best Small Art Towns in America.’”



Kirsten Ingbretsen

Owner, Acorn Gallery
“Deer Sightings is going to be so wonderful for our town. There will be a deer near the Acorn Gallery, in front of Cafe Aroma, and I’m so excited about it. I’m so happy Middle Ridge is co-sponsoring a deer – the winery is so good for our community, and we love and appreciate them.”

Come taste Middle Ridge wines at Crush & Brew in Old Town Temecula, which serves as our tasting room, and at special events in Idyllwild.



Crush & Brew
28544 Old Town Front Street
Temecula, CA 92590



www.middleridge.com



Idyllwild Deer Sightings is one of many projects and events coordinated by the Art Alliance of Idyllwild. If you appreciate art, enjoy shopping for unique gifts, or love an excuse to get away to the mountains for a day or two, be sure to check out their website or sign up for their newsletter at www.artinidyllwild.org. See you in Idyllwild!