

LANE TANNER

She has been called “Sister Bacchus”, “Soul Mother of the Vine”, or then again just “DIVine.” How did this happen to a girl who set out to spend her life working in a chemistry lab?

One day, while this Lake County native was filling in on the bottling line at her neighborhood winery (Knocti) and running some routine lab work, in walked the winery’s consultant, the legendary Andre Tschelitcheff. Lane Tanner found herself hastily introduced as “the new enologist”. As the Romans said: “nomen est omen” (the name is a sign). Tanner had never heard of an enologist before. But after an after-noon spent impressing Tschelitcheff, she was officially hired by Knocti and began trying to live up to her new name.

With Tschelitcheff’s recommendation, Tanner headed south, working at Firestone, at Zaca Mesa, and then participating in the start-up of the Byron Winery in Santa Maria. A local wine distributor offered to support a “Lane Tanner” venture, on the condition that this name appear on the label. Thus, in 1984, was born Lane Tanner wines.

From the beginning, this self-styled Luddite has dedicated herself to the vinification of single vineyard Pinot Noirs with wine-making techniques utterly free of technological gimmickry. “Nothing satisfies like succeeding with Pinot Noir,” she says. “It is the most responsive, delicate, fickle, fragile grape to work with – and I’m hooked on it.” 100% destemming, low sulfur and frequent punch-downs early in the fermentation (while alcohol levels are low) conduce to zingy freshness and *fruit*. Tanner handles Syrah - added to her line up in 1996 – in the same way.



A large lot of Lane wine is one of three or five hundred cases. Both her small narrowly focussed production and her large expansive personality play roles in securing for her some of the finest fruit in Santa Barbara County. “Julia’s Vineyard,” to take one example, is the property of Barbara Banke, president of Cambria Winery and wife of Jess Jackson, a contract Lane says she landed after “the ultimate female power lunch. . . You know, have lunch, talk some business, and then go shopping for dresses.”

Don’t look for the rampant expansion of Lane Tanner wines. When there is a new release, Lane will write “it’s ready to go to good homes throughout the nation.” But the truth is, Ohio and Kentucky are fortunate to be among the few, select markets with distribution.

Practices like manual punch-down and gravity-fed bottling by the barrel don’t lend themselves to mass application, unless of course you want to manage an army of cellar rats. But Lane insists she absolutely loves the “grunge labor” that goes with her style of winemaking. She is dedicated to making a modest living and making only as much wine as she can lavish with constant affection and sell at reasonable prices to a select group. The group? - those who appreciate and respect the individuality, independence and personal flair that characterize each wine, not to mention Lane Tanner herself!

Varieties: *Pinot Noir, Shiraz*
Acreage: *Contract fruit, see below*
Production: *2,000 cases.*

Note: absolutely nothing substitutes for the wit and whimsy of a Lane Tanner back label, but we have included a few of Lane’s own trenchant descriptions with the list of her offerings below:

Pinot Noir Santa Maria

Those lots from Bien Nacido that don’t make the final cut for the vineyard designate end up here. This is the wine Lane calls “working girl”. There is plenty of complexity and of course vineyard identity, but the wine is simply more serviceable – in its youth, anyway – than its vineyard-designated counterpart.

Pinot Noir S. Maria

“Julia’s Vineyard”

“A.k.a. The Haunting Other Woman. This wine is my top of the line Pinot. It is round, ripe, soft and voluptuous [and] shows the darker, more sexual side of Pinot Noir.”

Pinot Noir S. Maria

“Bien Nacido Vineyard”

From several choice Pinot blocks on this vast vineyard property, Lane’s Bien Nacido is her “personal favorite. This wine achieves the impossible by being both big and light at the same time.”

Syrah San Luis Obispo

“French Camp Vineyard”

This syrah unabashedly “in the style of my Pinot Noirs, but still a little uncivilized”. A.k.a. “Jungle Boy”.
