



February 2010

## Hello Friends of Democracy!

**Democracy – “Best Buy”** – No, we aren’t referring to the recent Supreme Court decision in Citizens United vs. FEC. You are the first to know that Democracy Vineyards’ 2007 “Velvet Revolution” was awarded a Silver medal and a Best Buy designation from the Beverage Tasting Institute in their 2009 World Wine Championships. In their tasting notes, the panel judged this Bordeaux style red blend to be “Exceptional” and highlighted the “Aromas of unfired clay, loganberries incense and pepper spice” on the nose.

Our 2007 “Declaration” white blend also received accolades from across the Beverage Tasting Institute. A recommended selection, the panel enjoyed the wine’s “tart honeyed lime peel notes on the brisk, chalky oyster shell accented finish”.

As always, our goal is to produce high quality Virginia wine that can be appreciated by all but – to receive such high marks for our first wine blends is clearly a delightful surprise beyond our expectations!

### Find award winning Democracy Vineyards wines at Virginia Wine Expo!

*Friday February 26 through Sunday February 28 -- Special Sunday offer for Friends of Virginia Wineries!*

**Get \$10 off each on-line ticket** to the Sunday February 28 Lincoln Walk Around Grand Tasting! To purchase – go to [VirginiaWineExpo.com](http://VirginiaWineExpo.com) by February 20 and use promotional code WINE10 at check out.

Our first festival of the year – *featuring all four of our wines – Velvet Revolution, Declaration and the new ones – Forum [the new red blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Syrah] – and Village View Gold [our slightly sweet apple wine produced with estate grown Ginger Gold apples]* -- will be at the Virginia Wine Expo at the Richmond Convention Center from February 26 through 28. Attendees will find over 350 wines from over 60 Virginia wineries along with opportunities to sample from some of Virginia’s top restaurants and specialty food vendors. The expo kicks off Friday night with the Virginia Governor’s Cup Grand Tasting and continues Saturday night with Sparkling & Sweets, featuring Virginia sparkling and dessert wines along with dozens of desserts from some of the Commonwealth’s best pastry chefs and chocolatiers. Throughout the weekend there will be special seminars on ports and Madeiras, a competition between Virginia and French cabernet francs, wine pairings with Spanish tapas and much much more! The expo opens Friday at 4 p.m. with the seminar on ports and the grand tasting from 6 to 10 p.m. It is open from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

**Upcoming festivals** where you can find Democracy Vineyards Wines! -- The **Waynesboro (Va.) Fly Fishing Festival** on **April 17** and **18**; the **Montpelier Wine Festival** which will be held in Madison, Va. on **May 1** and **2**; the **Front Royal (Va.) Wine Festival** on **May 15**; **Vintage Virginia**

on **June 5 and 6** at Bull Run Park in Centreville, Va.; and the **Nelson/Amherst Wine Festival** on **June 19 and 20** to be held at the old Amherst County stockyards.

Festival volunteers are always welcome and get free wine in exchange for their services! If you can help, shoot us an email at [info@democracyvineyards.com](mailto:info@democracyvineyards.com) with your availability!

**Greenwood Gourmet Grocery** - (540) 456-6431- is the latest addition to our retail outlet line up. Located at 6701 Rockfish Gap Turnpike in Crozet, Virginia [Rt. 250 just a little bit west of Rt. 64 at exit 107]. The store features a full service espresso bar, an array of local artisanal cheeses, cured meats, fish and poultry and garden products as well as freshly cooked foods and sandwiches prepared daily.

**Democracy wines in artsy photos!** Do check out the blog of Anthony Quinn, proprietor of Cleveland Park Wine and Liquor in Washington, DC. Not only does he have some highly complimentary things to say about our new wines Forum and Village View Gold, but he has obviously had a jolly good time photographing them! Work with me, baby!  
<http://chatwine.blogspot.com:80/2010/01/owner-jim-of-democracy-vineyard-in.html> One correction from the blog – Forum is a wine created by Neala Estate Vineyards owner Kim Moreno. Kim brought us a sample of this wine to enjoy after our first weekend of vineyard planting. We liked it so much we decided to put it in our product line!

**Unum label approved** – the feds have approved our label for our white varietal Unum. This is a 2009 lightly oaked viognier which will be bottled in March and available at the beginning of April.

### **People of Democracy – Chris Hill**

A new and periodic feature for our newsletter will profile some of the people who have been integral to the birth and evolution of Democracy Vineyards. This month, we introduce you to Chris Hill, our vineyard consultant.

Chris is a native Virginian, born in Harrisonburg and raised in Courtland, Virginia in Southampton County. He earned a degree in sociology at Duke University then served in the Army from 1971 to 1974. After the Army, he spent a couple of years doing social work with Community Action. The GI Bill gave him the chance to go to Virginia Tech for two more degrees – this time in horticulture. Never too far from his social work roots, however, his Masters degree was in horticultural therapy, similar to art therapy or music therapy. Indeed, to those who view cultivation of the earth and nurturing of growing things as a deeply spiritual or therapeutic exercise, this makes absolute sense!

He and his wife, Kathy, a nurse practitioner with the University of Virginia Medical Center, got married in 1976 and settled in Charlottesville in late winter of 1981. That fall, some friends asked him to help them start a vineyard. Since his job with Virginia extension was ending, this seemed like a good gig. That vineyard became Glendauer, which Chris continues to lease and manage to this day.

Vineyard growing in the early 1980s was, in his words, “brutal – we didn’t have the right equipment. We planted the wrong grapes. We didn’t have good spray programs. This was in the very early days of the vineyard industry in Virginia and there were few guideposts to follow. France and California were no models because Virginia is too wet a climate. We had vigor problems, challenges in getting grapes to ripen. It really helped when we got Tony Wolf [the state viticulturalist at Virginia Tech extension service] and we slowly figured things out.” Today, his work as a vineyard consultant is all about saving his clients from the mistakes he made starting out.

Chris says his “real pleasure” comes in working with new vineyard sites – “taking what I’ve learned and applying those lessons from the ground up.” One of his common complaints about Democracy is that we “don’t have enough stuff” – meaning we’ve been slow to accumulate the requisite equipment and materials necessary for optimal operations. “To get good growth you need weed control, disease control – the right equipment.” Part of this is endemic to trying to start a business from a distance while working at other jobs. We’re making progress but we understand Chris’ impatience. He is quite enthusiastic about the overall situation of Democracy Vineyards calling its site “hot! You’ve got tremendous sun exposure which will ripen the fruit nicely.” The grapes he chose for planting in the vineyard were selected precisely for its location. The lower field requires cold hardy varieties like Viognier and Chambourcin. The latter grape is also fairly easy to grow – something that we pair of beginners were eager to find. Chris also expects the upper field grapes – Petite Manseng, Merlot and Petite Verdot to “produce all kinds of interesting blends.”

The vineyard is still young and Chris doesn’t want to over-crop the vines. But he expects a lot of vigor [growth] because of the soil and climate and predicts that we should get a sufficient production to blend with other grapes for the 2010 vintages.

In keeping with our name, we asked Chris what was the first election in which he voted? “That would’ve been when I was 21 – the 1968 election between Wallace, Nixon and Humphrey.” He speaks with dismay about the “southern strategy” employed in that election and which so divided the nation. If he had a chance to share a glass of wine with any political figure living or dead, Chris says he’s often thought it would be interesting to talk with George Wallace “in his later years -- because I think he did a lot of reflecting after he was shot and I’d like to hear his thoughts about his impact on the ’68 campaign.” Another figure who intrigues Chris is Ben Franklin. “I’d be way too intimidated one on one but maybe in a group it would be fun to have a glass of Madeira with him, be a fly on the wall and listen to his stories about his experiences in England, being this 59 year old guy and BS-ing all these sweet young things.”

**There’s a bear in the woods** – Readers of last month’s newsletter will recall the story of our downed vineyard fence which we thought had happened as a result of the mid-December snowstorm that hit parts of Virginia. According to a neighbor’s eyewitness account, it wasn’t the snow that took out 120 feet of fence. It seems that a black bear – roused from his mid-winter slumber – came bounding over the hillside above our lower field. The fencing was obscured by the accumulated snow and, as a result, the bear didn’t see it when he went flying across the road and smack dab into the fence – snapping the ties and rolling him up into the plastic webbing. He disentangled himself and quickly retreated to the woods from whence he came. Ronald Reagan was right – there IS a bear in the woods [see 1984 campaign commercial].

Happy February! Susan & Jim

[www.democracyvineyards.com](http://www.democracyvineyards.com)