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## A Face For Anderson Valley: Domaine Anderson

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Great wine is something you may incorporate into your life on a daily basis, but how often do you have caviar? I put the two together and found that - in this case - it was the wine that was really special.

A group of Los Angeles food and wine writers recently took a publicist's invitation to attend a wine dinner at Petrossian West Hollywood, an exclusive restaurant featuring caviar and French cuisine. The caviar was great by the way, as were the dishes paired with the wines. But it was the wine which attracted me. The dinner was held to feature the four wines of Domaine Anderson, a new winery in Anderson Valley with some heavyweight parentage.

### The Domaine

Domaine Anderson is the realization of a vision. The Rouzaud family of Louis Roederer, had their eyes on a special parcel of land in Anderson Valley for a number of years. In 2009, the stars aligned for the purchase to be made and vines to be planted. The first vintages of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir came in 2012, and the wines - two each, Chardonnay and Pinot - were released last year.

What captured the fancy of the Rouzaud family was the terroir of this particular 50-acre Anderson Valley plot. The vineyards - and the production - are mostly dedicated to Pinot Noir, but there is some Chardonnay made as well. Where grows Pinot Noir, Chardonnay usually grows, too. It was felt that Anderson Valley lacks a "face," so Domaine Anderson took the name for their label, hoping to provide a better focus on the Mendocino County region.

Domaine Anderson Wine Club Manager Jennie Dallery (below) offered that head winemaker Jerry Murray is "a Pinot Noir fan who came to winemaking, not a winemaker who came to Pinot Noir." He oversees production of two estate wines - Pinot Noir and Chardonnay - as well as a single vineyard bottling of each grape. The estate wines are blends made from several parcels of their estate vineyards.

Here are the wines featured at the dinner, as well as a brief note about the food created in Petrossian's kitchen for pairing purposes.

## The Brut

The evening opened with a sparkling wine, the Roederer Estate Brut NV. It's a toasty and yeasty bubbly, which went wonderfully with the first course of Transmontanus caviar, cold buckwheat noodles, Santa Barbara sea urchin, quail egg, scallion and yuzu.

## The Chardonnay

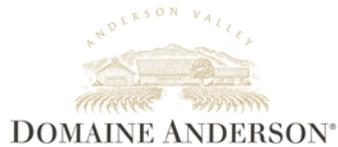
The Domaine Anderson Estate Chardonnay 2012 also hit that dish well, although the attention of the diners was somewhat distracted by the wine's amazing nose, one of the best sniffs of Chardonnay I have ever had. Lemon smoke dominates the aromas, and dazzles the sense. On the palate, Meyer lemon is in the forefront, leading a creamy mouthfeel that still has plenty of acidity. The wine underwent partial malolactic fermentation, so the zing I look for in a white wine is not blunted by the soft mouthfeel.



This was an explosive wine. As elegant as the Walraven Vineyard bottling would prove to be, this one is just as boisterous. Not in that big, flabby buttery way that Chardonnay is expected to behave in Cali, but in a way that is surprising, innovative, fun. If you gave up on Chardonnay years ago, this is one that will bring you back to the fold. It really is the Chardonnay for people who don't think they like Chardonnay.

Next up, the Domaine Anderson Walraven Vineyard Chardonnay 2012, does get full malolactic treatment. The nose is light and ethereal - almost a disappointment after the show put on by the estate Chardonnay. There is a very nice acidity on this one, with barely a hint of oak. The lemon finish is crisp and refreshing. This single-vineyard wine paired nicely with the second course - Kanpachi carpaccio, featuring uni, caviar, lemon, sweet chili avocado mousse and brioche. The wine played the part of support for this tasty and spicy dish.

Walraven Vineyard is on the east side, looking over the valley below from an altitude of 500 feet. The wine spent 11 months in French oak, 25 to 35% of which was new, with gentle stirring of the wine during the aging process. The result is a wine hardly marked by oak at all. The malolactic fermentation makes it more creamy while the oak adds just a bit of weight. The touch is absolutely perfect.



### The Pinot Noir

The Domaine Anderson Estate Pinot Noir 2012 came out just after the raw artichoke salad with Italian black winter truffle, pine nuts, arugula and lemon. This wine hit the truffle right, but the Walraven Chardonnay was better suited to it.

The estate Pinot was dark, meaty and savory on the nose with a great backbone. Dark berries and coffee notes made the palate beg for food, but the dish with which it was paired was a little too spicy for the tannins - lamb merguez potato gnocchi, butternut squash, parmesan, sage, brown butter and red pepper flakes. I'm glad I saved some for dessert.

The other single-vineyard wine came with the fifth course, Aspen Ridge short rib on parsnip mash with pear and horseradish. The Domaine Anderson Dach Vineyard Pinot Noir 2012 provided more fruit than the estate wine, with smoky black raspberry and cherry aromas hit with a spot of black tea. The palate is a little smoother and a little brighter than the estate Pinot, and it fit extremely well with the rib.

### Dessert

Dessert brought a nice surprise - a 1999 Roederer Estate Anderson Valley L'Ermitage. The nose runs quickly from toast to yeast to caramel to apricots. The palate offers great, toasty fruit. The blend of Chardonnay and Pinot Noir is a library wine, available only to wine club members. Four percent of the cuvée experiences oak. It was probably not the best choice to pair with the Valrhona chocolate mousse with caramel pearls and gold leaf, but I did have a sip or two of the Pinots still available, and they were terrific with the high-class Ho-Ho.

The Domaine Anderson wines aren't cheap, but they don't break the bank, either. The Walraven Vineyard Chardonnay 2012 sells for \$55, while the Estate Chardonnay 2012 is \$37.50. Both wines age for 11 months in oak. The Domaine Anderson Dach Vineyard Pinot Noir sells for \$65, while the Estate Pinot gets \$45. Both wines are aged for 16 months.

Thanks go out to Domaine Anderson Wine Club Manager Jennie Dallery, who was present to talk about the valley and the wines, giving her expertise and knowledge to a subject that is obviously close to her heart.