



wine

## Koehler Winery

By Michael Cervin, March 30, 2006

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“I want a 90-point wine,” said Peter Koehler. His namesake winery has been around since 1997 and has produced moderate wines so far. But he recently decided to raise the bar and break into the stratosphere. “I want to be one of the top 20 wineries in the world.” And Koehler is just the man to make that happen.

To start off, he hired 90-point winemaker Chris Stanton. Stanton, soft-spoken and utterly in love with making wine, was the champion of the Mayo Winery in Sonoma, where he created nearly three dozen high-scoring wines. Stanton, born and raised in Napa and Sonoma, has winemaking in his blood. This year marks his 25th harvest, so he knows a thing or two.

Stanton takes a low-key, backseat approach to making influential wines. “I don’t do much,” he explained, shrugging his shoulders, “just bring the fruit in and let it express its varietal character.” When the wines are close to bottling, he stays at the winery and tastes the wines at least twice a day, sometimes more, to find the perfect moment.

Koehler also has the right real estate: the winery sits on “the 5th Avenue of wines,” as Koehler calls Foxen Canyon. The fruit from this particular patch of land seems to defy conventional farming practices.

Koehler’s 2005 Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and Chardonnay will be released by June; the reds, including Cabernet Sauvignon, Sangiovese, Grenache, and Pinot Noir, will be released later this year and into 2007. Even in their adolescence, the deep brooding reds and beautifully balanced whites hint at a future of 90-point scores.

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