



WINE CLUB

HAWK WATCH

NOVEMBER 2019

Alright, that was the strangest, longest, most challenging harvest to date. It was a harvest that will truly "separate the men from the boys", as they say. Not because it was any more physically demanding (although as I get older it feels like it is...), but rather because it lasted so long, and the fruit ripening and maturity was all over the map. Typically, we harvest some of our fruit from our own vineyard starting in early September, and we continue to harvest as various varieties ripen up through mid to late October. This harvest however we didn't harvest ANY of our fruit until October 6th!! We were roughly 4 weeks later than normal which translates into a few added challenges and a couple tough decisions and sleepless nights hoping Mother Nature would cooperate with us long enough to get our grapes fully ripened. As a frame of reference, we've had frost and snow in the month of October in prior years! So, having a harvest that's delayed by a full month is a pretty ugly situation for mountain grape growers. Every morning Lisa and I would watch the weather forecast hoping to see warm weather, especially following a wet winter and heavy rain on Labor Day. The vines had more than enough water to grow and ripen, now all we needed was heat. We were cruising right along until mid-October when the weather cooled off and ripening and sugar accumulation stalled. We were gravely concerned that our sugars would not rise high enough to make the big, full bodied wines we strive to produce. Hawk Watch making a 12% alcohol Syrah?? Sorry, not gonna happen...ever. Fortunately, the weather turned around and we got a full 10 days of warm weather at the end of October and into the first week of November. With some very judicious irrigation practices and additional hedging and leaf picking of the canopy we were able to pull off what we thought was impossible; picking ripe fruit in mid-November! Last picked was 2.5 tons of Tannat on November 10th. That's the latest we've ever harvested. Our patience and willingness to risk crop loss paid off in spades as we not only got all of our fruit ripe, we also increased our vineyard yield by 40% through some tweaking of our farming practices!

So, speaking of our "no wimpy wines" philosophy, this quarter you've got 3 pre-release wines in your shipment: our 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon, 2016 Cabernet Franc, and an interesting blend we call "Exotica" (a 2016 as well). All are really tasting wonderful right now. Of course a little additional bottle age is always nice...if you can wait that long...;) Salut!

Mike & Lisa

Pic of the Quarter!



course sip a little vino on the Guadalupe River. Keep those amazing traveling Hawk Watch bottle photos coming!

With several excellent photos this quarter to choose from, this one in particular caught my eye because it matched so perfectly with our vibe. On a recent trip to Kerrville, Texas member Pat Martin takes a moment to relax, enjoy, unwind and of

Zena & Zoro's Mouser Blog



OK, so the other day we heard our folks saying that we actually have 5 1/2 cats. How can you have half a cat? And isn't 5 cats enough (we have 3 in our house too...)? Oh, maybe they're referring to that stray cat they call "Hula" that they've been feeding OUR food to for the past month!

Wine Club Selections

Mixed Club
(Grandfathered Original Club Members)

2018 Sauvignon Blanc
2016 Cabernet Sauvignon
2016 Cabernet Franc

Reds Club

2016 Cabernet Sauvignon
2016 Cabernet Franc
2016 Exotica

2016 Cabernet Sauvignon

What can I say about Cabernet Sauvignon that hasn't already been said? It's arguably the most recognized and consumed variety of wine on the planet. Everyone that has ever put a wine glass to their lips has at one time or another enjoyed a glass of Cab. Cab is versatile, Cab is easy, it's cool and it's classy. It's interesting how Cab enthusiasts and aficionados are very much like those Pinot Noir cultists that eat, drink and breathe the varietal. Pinot from Oregon is not like Pinot from Northern California, which is not like Pinot from Central California, which is nothing like Pinot from Burgundy. Well, Cab comes in many forms as well. We live in Southern California (which is not considered "Cab country"; just ask someone from Napa...). It's too hot, too dry, the fruit gets too ripe, etc. In my humble opinion, that's called "a challenge". How can we make high caliber Cabernet Sauvignon in a climate that should not be conducive to growing quality Cab fruit? Well, here's where the story gets interesting. At nearly 3,300 feet in elevation we have a very unique mountain microclimate that allows us to grow Cabernet Sauvignon successfully. Being at elevation gives us more direct sun exposure, our humidity is low year-round minimizing mold and mildew pressure, and our diurnal temperatures can swing upwards of 50 degrees in a single day! All these factors contribute to our ability to retain natural acidity in the fruit while developing mature flavors and aromas during the ripening phase. Oh yes, we can grow Cabernet Sauvignon in Southern California. And grow it we do! Enjoy our 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon now or hold for 6-8 years - 94 cases produced

2016 Exotica

In 2008 we labelled one of our new wines "Exotica". The wine was a 100% Merlot fruit bomb with 16% alcohol. It was so unlike any Merlot we had ever encountered that we felt we would be doing the wine a disservice if we were to simply have labelled it "Merlot". The wine was fat, ripe and juicy with a massive palate and a long elegant finish. Well, that was the one and only time we called a wine Exotica... until now. We're resurrecting the Exotica name this time not with a Merlot, but with a wine that is an eclectic assemblage of Syrah, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Petit Verdot and Cabernet Franc. Unlike its predecessor, our 2016 Exotica has layers of fruit and spice interlaced on the palate creating a complex wine that utilizes the best qualities of each of the five grape varieties to create a wine of complexity, richness and opulence. Enjoy now, or hold for 6-8 years. 52 cases produced.

2016 Cabernet Franc

In our nearly 12-year history we've made a few varietal Cabernet Franc wines and although I believe those wines were/are solidly made and holding up very nicely (the 2008 and 2009 are really coming into their own now especially), I have always struggled with this grape. Cabernet Franc can have a tendency toward vegetal aromas and a thin palate. I guess that's why we don't always make a varietal Cab Franc. In my opinion both Cabernet Sauvignon and Cabernet Franc need to ripen completely before being picked. Often the sugar content of the fruit will rise to the point of ripeness, but the aromas, flavors and other elements are not yet fully mature. What that equates to is a tough decision having to be made by the winemaker. Do I pick the fruit because I don't want the alcohol to get too high (the higher the sugar content of the grapes, the more potential alcohol you'll have in the finished wine), or do I let the fruit hang and let the sugar climb beyond the "comfort zone" to try to eliminate some of that veggie element knowing and accepting that my final alcohol will be well into the 14%-15% range and sometimes even higher? Well, as you may have surmised by now, I'm not an "in the box" winemaker. Walking that razor's edge with nearly every wine we make is what makes this job fun and at the same time very challenging. So, I will always opt for higher alcohol in lieu of reduced off aromas or flavors. Our 2016 Cab Franc is one of those wines that required the utmost patience during the summer as we watched the sugars climb higher and higher as we waited for the bell pepper and jalapeno aromas to fully integrate with the other flavor and aroma compounds. The result? Well, you be the judge! Enjoy now or hold for 6-8 years - 48 cases produced



2016 Solo Barrique Grenache

Grenache, Garnacha, Grenache Noir. No matter how you pronounce the name of this workhorse grape, the complex characteristics of the resulting wine, the softness of the tannins and the fruit forward aspect of the palate will rarely disappoint. Grenache is a fun grape to work with and, handled correctly, can lend an added fruit component to wines that lack structure. Adding a small portion of Grenache can really liven up an otherwise one dimensional wine. But it's when Grenache is made into its own full varietal wine that the nuances of flavor and aroma really show themselves. Our 2016 Solo Barrique Grenache (single barrel) shows beautiful hints of rose petals, bright cherry, cinnamon and spice in the nose with a rich palate of juicy red fruit, clove, nutmeg, a hint of cocoa, and what I like to call "Christmas spice". When I enjoy this wine I can't help but think how outstanding it would be when enjoyed with holiday turkey or baked ham. On its own it's a luscious, robust wine that's mouthfilling and memorable. I always vowed I would not make a full varietal Grenache wine, but this little beast changed my mind entirely. Enjoy now or hold for 5-7 years. - Only 22 cases produced (1 barrel)