



WINE CLUB

HAWK WATCH

AUGUST 2020

If you're all like Lisa and I, we've heard more than enough about COVID 19. So, for the remainder of this newsletter you will not hear any more about it except to ask that you patronize the businesses that are complying with mandates and avoid those that aren't. That is the ONLY way we are going to make any real progress in battling this disease. With that said, as I write this the forecast for today calls for a high of 103 and possible thunderstorms this afternoon. Some of you have asked what that does to the vines. Since we're all about education at Hawk Watch here are few things to ponder. First grapevines shut down at around 95 degrees; photosynthesis stops, sugar production stops, and the vine goes into survival mode. Sugar concentration in the grape berries rises due to dehydration. Extended periods of heat can cause grapes to shrivel and eventually raisin. Even if the grapes survive the heat, the skin of the grapes may become sunburned. Not good. Then the thunderstorms come! Of course, there is the ever-present threat of lightning strikes causing wildfires, extreme wind (aka as "Armageddon"!!) causing the grape clusters to snap off and entire rows of grapevines to blow over (this happened last year in our Malbec vineyard). Humidity from rain events can cause powdery mildew to form on leaves and clusters making them unusable for wine production, and water droplets can find their way into grape clusters and cause bunch rot, again making the fruit unusable. So, when we have summer rains all we can do is hold our breath and hope we've done our homework to give us the best chance of weathering the storm. We've sprayed sulfur in the vineyard to stave off mildew, we've leaf picked around grape clusters of varieties that are more susceptible to bunch rot (Tannat, Petite Sirah, Syrah) to allow more drying airflow, and we've left more upper canopy on varieties that need a little more shade to prevent direct sunlight and heat from damaging the fruit. Suffice it to say that a lot of time is spent in the vineyard during the growing season in preparation for what is coming this week. Fingers crossed! Although grape growing and tending to a small vineyard seems like a wonderful way to spend your days, the truth of the matter is that growing grapes is a fulltime job. Whether it's 30 degrees and snowing or a blistering 115 degrees, if the work needs to be done, you do it. If you don't, playing catch up when the weather improves is a recipe for disaster. I will say this however; if you do it right and put in the time and effort necessary to maintain a healthy producing vineyard the rewards are many. Especially when it comes to the end-product, wine. The old adage, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" truly applies.

So, as we run headlong into our annual "Armageddon", we hope you all are having a wonderful summer, and staying safe and healthy! With a little good fortune, and if everyone follows the protocols and mandates, we will work our way out of this pandemic by year end. But then again, we're not going to talk about that.... - Mike & Lisa

Pic of the Quarter!



Reversible handmade masks by Laurie Appleton and hand sanitizer made by Mike! Each only \$5.00 at the winery!

Zena & Zoro's Mouser Blog



Normally we wouldn't have many good things to say about a new cat addition to our family, but this little guy is pretty cool. When mom heard that someone had found a 4-week old kitten living in their car engine and were trying to find someone to adopt him, well you know how the story ends... Welcome to our family "Leo"!

By now you likely are aware of the fact that we are huge supporters of animal shelters and rescues, particularly Living Free Animal Sanctuary in Idyllwild. And, when one of our wine club members adopts a pet from Living Free we get very excited. So when heard heard that wine club members Ron and Carlos adopted "Mason" last month we were elated! Another animal rescue! Welcome to the Hawk Watch family Mason, and congratulations guys!

Wine Club Selections

Mixed Club
(Grandfathered Original Club Members)

2018 Sequoia
2017 Cabernet Sauvignon
2016 Petit Verdot

Reds Club

2016 Mongrel
2017 Cabernet Sauvignon
2016 Petit Verdot

2017 Cabernet Sauvignon

Each year the one grape variety that seems to vary most is Cabernet Sauvignon. Hot, dry summers yield big, rich, spicy Cab fruit with firm tannins, structure, and complexity. Other times, growing conditions may be cooler than expected during ripening and the resulting fruit is softer and more elegant on the palate, offering the winemaker an opportunity to make a more fruit-forward version of Cabernet Sauvignon. These fruit-driven Cab's require a more delicate touch in the cellar in marrying the fruit with oak. Too often this style of Cab is over oaked, woody and out of balance. Winemakers can not take the "one size fits all approach" with fruit like this. To highlight the fruit element of our 2017 Cabernet Sauvignon we used a little more medium toasted American oak (which provides a vanilla character), and a higher percentage of neutral barrels (barrels that are at least 4 years old that no longer offer any oak "flavor"). This combination reduces the possibility of the wine being over-oaked and results in a wonderfully elegant, versatile, food friendly wine. Enjoy now or hold for 5-7 years. 100 cases produced.

2016 Petit Verdot

There are very few wine regions where winemakers are wading into dangerous waters by taking varieties that are typically used as blending fruit and making varietal wines with them. But how boring life would be if all we made were the same cookie cutter wines every year, right? Recently there has been a growing interest in varietal Petit Verdot wines. Typically, and historically used as a blending grape to provide firm tannins, deep color and earthiness to Bordeaux blends, Petit Verdot has recently enjoyed a resurgence in popularity as its own varietal wine. I wouldn't say that every year is a good year for Petit Verdot, but the warm, dry southern California summers do provide the right conditions for Petit Verdot to thrive and produce some incredible smoky, earthy, spicy fruit. The resulting wines, like our 2016 are rich, ripe and chewy with grippy tannins and incredible complexity. Enjoy now or hold for 7-8 years. 90 cases produced.

2017 Solo Barrique Tannat

The long wait is finally over!! Since the day we picked our first Tannat fruit in early November 2017 people have been asking when the wine will be ready. On the rare occasion, I would thief a sample from our lone barrel (we only harvested enough fruit for a single barrel) and share it with anyone who happened to be in our tasting room at the time. The anticipation continued to grow. Having never worked with Tannat, the only frame of reference I had was the similar grapes Petite Sirah and Petit Verdot. "Similar" in terms of the robust nature of both, their intense color, firm tannins and density. Aside from those aspects, Tannat is a different animal altogether. Hailing from the Northern Rhone of France and adopted by Uruguay as their national grape, Tannat is a beast. BUT, it is difficult to grow and manage, which we found out the hard way. In our climate Tannat is a heavy fruit producer. To maintain quality often 1/3 - 1/2 of the fruit needs to be dropped to allow the remaining clusters to ripen evenly and completely. In 2017 we dropped more than half the fruit. Tannat also ripens very late. In fact, when most wineries are long finished with harvest, equipment is cleaned, new wines are in barrel, and they're preparing for the holidays Tannat is still hanging on the vine; ripening very, very slowly. So, patience in not only a virtue, but mandatory. Tannat doesn't show its true colors (pun intended...) until it is completely ripe. That often means harvesting in mid-November. Tannat also responds to oak differently than most other varieties. We age most of our wines in French oak with a sprinkling of American as needed for the desired aroma and flavor components we're seeking. Tannat on the other hand is different. The fruit is so massive, we gravitate more toward American Oak, specifically "heavy toast" American oak. When American oak is fired at such high temperatures it offers up coconut and vanilla characteristics that we thought would pair nicely with the rich, spice driven aspect the Tannat fruit. Personally, I think we nailed it... Enjoy now or hold for 10+ years. Only 22 cases produced.

2016 Mongrel

Mongrel... What a perfect name. Especially for a wine that's well, a bit grumpy. I always refer to Mourvedre as the "angry" grape because it's got an earthy, grunginess that can't be disguised. It's a huge producer and will quickly put out massive quantities of fruit if not farmed and managed properly. There's nothing "fruity" about Mourvedre. Quite the contrary in fact. Mourvedre is a spice bomb that makes a wonderful backbone from which to build a wine that's better than the sum of its parts. Adding 25% of both Syrah and Petit Verdot help pull fruit out of the Mourvedre while respecting and maintaining the wonderful spice component. Adding these two grapes to the mix also provides a firm tannin structure and some very interesting flavor components. 50% Mourvedre, 25% Syrah, 25% Petit Verdot. Enjoy now or hold for 5-6 years. 32 cases produced.