



WINE CLUB

HAWK WATCH

MAY 2021

Last quarter I started this section of our newsletter with the word “Covid”. This quarter I’ll vow not to use this word in our newsletter since for the past 14 months that’s the only topic that’s being discussed on a regular basis, and quite frankly we’re all getting pretty tired of the same old discussion. So no more talk about “that word”. Instead let’s talk about grapes, wine, great weather, and the approaching harvest. Four of my favorite topics! If global warming is responsible for the fantastic spring weather we’ve experienced over the past few vintages, then I say bring on global warming! I’m joking of course, but since 2019 we’ve had excellent Spring weather that has allowed the vines to ease out of dormancy with little or no frost or wind damage. This has in turn allow us to grow excellent quality fruit and (with a little help from mother nature), make some pretty good wines. The danger zone for growing grapes is always the spring, especially in the mountains. During winter the vines are completely dormant and aren’t nearly as susceptible to damage from inclement weather. During the summer and fall we have the ability to counter what mother nature throws at us with the arsenal of tools, processes and products we have at our disposal: Too hot or too windy, water a little more; to cool or rainy, water a little less; weeds in the vineyard, mow or till them in; mildew danger, spray sulfur. The list goes on. In the spring though, we are at the mercy of Momma Nature and sometimes she has a very poor sense timing! With that said, 2021 is shaping up to be another epic vintage. Our vines are loaded up with baby clusters to such an extent that we’re already cluster and shoot thinning to try to keep the vines “in balance”. Culling fruit increases fruit quality, typically. Think of it this way; a grapevine has a root system that is just so big. It can only suck up so much water and nutrients given its size. Now, the vine can either share that water and those nutrients with 20 clusters of grapes, or 50. This is over-simplifying the concept but you get the picture. For most vines we want to keep our cluster load to about 25-30 clusters per vine (depending on the grape variety and cluster size/weight - Yes, we actually count and weigh individual clusters to forecast our crop load!). Tannat is our biggest over-cropper each season, setting upwards of 70 clusters on some vines! We shoot thin (meaning taking out shoots in the canopy that have no fruit on them or that are simply growing erratically) to increase sun exposure and air-circulation. Increasing air circulation keeps mildew and other moisture-driven nasties like fungus and mold in control. Our vineyard is typically capable of producing roughly 13 tons of grapes. We reduce that number to about 10-12 tons by cluster thinning, and typically that’s the sweet spot for this vineyard. So, if you see us out in the vineyard this time of year shoot/cluster thinning this is likely what we’re doing. That, or dealing with gophers.... or squirrels... or coyotes...or....

Now that we’ve had our vineyard lesson for the day, let’s turn to the wine. It is rare that in a single quarter we release 3 new wines at once, and even more rare that we release all of them at the same time! This is one of those rare occasions! The new wines are all 2017 vintage wines; Petite Sirah, Mongrel and Exotica. Our newest Petite Sirah is a far cry from the 2016 version. Not as brightly fruit driven, but instead meaty and dense with loads of earthiness, bbq, teriyaki and tanned leather. One of the best estate Petite’s we’ve made for sure. Next up, Mongrel; fruit forward and rich, our 2017 is packed with juicy ripe fruit with a highly structured and complex palate and a lingering smokiness on the finish. Finally our 2017 Exotica. This vintage definitely earns its name with an extraordinarily floral nose with a solid rich palate of dark fruit, cedar and spice. Well, there you have it! A terrific spring, lots of fruit on the vines, and three new reds on our menu. It doesn’t get much better than that! Salud!

Mike & Lisa

Wine club members Glen and Marguerite Coddington of Beaumont take a much earned break from their busy work schedules to enjoy a charcuterie plate and a bottle of our 2011 Signature Reserve Syrah. Just goes to show you that you don’t have to travel far from home to take a great Pic of the Quarter!

Pic of the Quarter!



Zena & Zoro’s Mouser Blog



Last month our folks replaced the bottom seal on the toll up door so mice couldn’t get in. One occasionally still gets in, so we play with it until it stops moving, and then leave it for them since they apparently still haven’t learned how to catch their own food. They must not be very bright, but we keep trying...

Wine Club Selections

Mixed Club (Grandfathered Original Club Members)

2017 Exotica
2017 Mongrel
2020 Viognier

Reds Club

2017 Exotica
2017 Mongrel
2017 Petite Sirah

2017 Exotica

Our 4th release in the Exotica series is just that, exotic. A blend of Syrah, Merlot and Malbec our latest edition opens with rich, aromatic layers of rose petals, lavender and cedar. The palate follows with dark, juicy black fruit framed by firm, grippy tannins. A hint of white pepper and sage are evident on the long elegant finish. I love making this wine each year because it begs to be different than all our other wines. Thinking outside the box is the name of the game here, with a “sky is the limit” approach being mandatory! Syrah with Merlot? Syrah with Malbec? Pretty unusual.... But in the game of wine blending all rules and conventional wisdom go out the window. I look at blending like you would look at a leaking dam. You keep plugging holes until the dam no longer leaks. Translated to wine blending this approach works perfectly. The blend needs a little more fruit? Try a touch of Merlot. Need a little more structure, try some Malbec. Only after all the “holes” are filled do you arrive at your final blend and hopefully something truly exotic! Enjoy now or lay down for 5-7 years - 98 cases produced

2017 Solo Barrique Syrah



Please see attached card describing our 2017 Solo Barrique Syrah and the vineyard from which it was produced

2020 Viognier

A good friend and colleague of ours Nick Palumbo grows some of the best Viognier fruit in the Temecula Valley. So when we source grapes for our Viognier, we always look to Nick first. Nick and I differ in the style of Viognier wines that we each prefer, but the quality of the fruit is always the backbone of what makes both styles work. Several years ago, when Leon Santoro was the winemaker for Orfila Winery he would blend up this phenomenal Rhone white blend he called “Lotus”. I was typically a blend of Viognier, Roussanne and Marsanne with Viognier leading the charge. Lisa and I absolutely fell in love with this wine as it was big, rich, juicy and ripe with loads of peach, honeysuckle and tropical fruit. We often think of white wines as lighter in style than their bold, red cousins, but this white wine was massive. Letting the fruit hang on the vine a bit longer than is traditional allows the sugars to rise allowing for a higher alcohol content in the finished wine, and as such more richness and volume in the palate. I prefer to leave the acid a little lower than is normal for white wine which also contributes to the creamy mouthfeel. Although our version of “Lotus” is 100% Viognier, I think Leon would be pleased. - 89 cases produced. Enjoy now.

2017 Petite Sirah

We absolutely LOVE Petite Sirah. From its dark, black fruit to its stiff tannins and inky dark color, Petite Sirah has been one of our favorite varietal wines for decades. We always seek it out on tasting menus and in restaurants and we are rarely disappointed. This is the first Petite Sirah from our estate vineyard that truly pushes all my buttons. It’s big, it’s robust, it’s beefy, earthy, smokey, leathery and tannic. Again letting the fruit hang a little longer than is normal allows the grape to take on some of these characteristics while retaining its dark fruit notes. Enjoy now or lay down for 6-8 years. - 97 cases produced

2017 Mongrel

As the name suggests, Mongrel is an eclectic breed. Not adhering to any standard and much like Exotica, Mongrel takes the best of what each varietal has to offer and “fills in the holes” to produce a wine that is greater than the sum of its parts. A blend of Syrah, Grenache and Petit Verdot (yes, PV in a Rhone blend! Who knew?!) Mongrel is soft and silky and packs a real fruit punch from the blend of Syrah and Grenache. Petit Verdot is added in a small amount to add structure and complexity. Enjoy now or hold for 5-7 years. - 87 cases produced