



“...but these go to Eleven.”

Although Nigel Tufnel was speaking of his amplifier settings to an interviewer in the satire ‘This is Spinal Tap’, he was unclear about what the number on the dial really meant. It seems that is the case for many of us these days when it comes to what the alcohol level on a wine label really means. I am asked about this more often by visitors lately and feel it is worth addressing here. Alcohol levels have long been used as a basis for taxation – the higher the alcohol, the higher the tax rate. The historical means of measuring alcohol were not very precise and so labeling requirements for alcohol levels had a fairly liberal leeway built in. I have also found that using the traditional ebulliometer seems to correlate alcohol levels better with my own sensory evaluation than compared with more modern methods.

With the tendency of ‘bigger and riper’ wines since the mid-1990’s, that leeway on the label has seemed to give permission to some folks to take excessive liberties with what they report – even across the sacred border of 14% where the excise tax rate steps up. This confuses the issue when trying to calibrate taste with what is listed on the bottle. It’s also important to remember that any sense of ‘heat’ in the wine is also affected by how much other ‘stuff’ is in the wine to balance it. The alcohol number alone tells us little about the acidity and sense of freshness in wine. Just as Nigel’s gum chewing rhythm says little about the tempo of the song he is playing [how can he *do* that?] or the connection between the title of one of his songs and its style [why would he do *that*?].

As form should follow function in architecture, I think winemaking choices should follow material. Alcohol levels will follow flavor and structure choices. Because I value structure, which tends to decrease with increasing ripeness, the alcohol levels usually remain in check without specific consideration when I’m deciding when to harvest. I suppose one could resort to high tech methods to reduce the alcohol level in a super-overripe wine to whatever number you like, but that would not address the lack of structure (low acidity and over-ripe tannins) or tone down the sweetness and viscosity that other fermentation products like glycerol have brought. I find it simply easier and preferable to eat grapes, harvest them when they will make the kind of wine I want to make and then put it into a particular mixture of new and old barrels that it will like until it is ready to bottle. Maybe mix the parts together once during that time... Forget about defining and debating what is ‘natural winemaking.’ This is just ‘simple winemaking.’

What about simple winemaking in a complex vintage? The vast majority of the 2011 harvest was 'normal' for us and we harvested as usual when the grapes tasted right. However, there were a few times later in the season when we knew that leaving the grapes on the vines thru another rain storm would not give us better wine, so we harvested earlier than we would have otherwise chosen to. As winemaking follows material, we found different paths for these grapes than we normally would have. There were a number of times that we broke our own in-house records for low alcohol levels. A few Syrah lots did not even go to eleven! This is perfect for a part of our rosé! Other times we found that while different than usual, pleasant red wines can come from somewhat unpleasant conditions. Even after 30-plus vintages, I continue to be amazed by what one can do with grapes outside of the 'usual' parameters and am reminded once again that winemaking is a lifelong learning opportunity.

Open House

We will have a diverse set of new releases to show at the upcoming open house that go from '08 to '11. The dates are: **April 13, 14 and 15, and April 20, 21 and 23** from 10 am to 5 pm each day. Everything listed below will be open for tasting, whether already sold out or not. You may pick up any wines ordered now. If you ordered from last August's 2010 Zinfandel futures offering, we'll be sending you a restatement of your order soon. Please review if your futures are scheduled for pick-up at the Open House or shipping. Just drop us a line if there are any changes.

New Releases

2010 Scherrer Vineyard 'Old & Mature Vines' Zinfandel

The 2010 harvest had two notable sudden heat spells that marked the personality and quantity of the vintage according to the variety and location in Sonoma County. It was the stems of the Zinfandel that were most affected by the first spell and our family's vineyard was not spared this tragedy. The second heat spell, right at ripeness, brought the work pace to a fevered pitch and many unusually long days strung together. We lost the majority of the crop and had to go to heroic measures with painfully selective harvesting at the vineyard and cluster-by-cluster sorting & surgery to make sure only the soundest fruit made it into the fermenter. The extra care was totally worth it. This vintage is a little more dark-fruited than usual - more like the 2000 vintage which is still developing nicely - but has a good bit of structure and welcome savory nuance to keep it well-short of jammy. From a numbers standpoint, the low pH, structure and density bode well for our typical long, slow development in bottle. I'm really looking forward to watching this one over the years. Only 260 cases produced. There is a limited availability as most sold out on futures. *\$32 per bottle, \$18 per half bottle, \$68 per magnum*

2010 Scherrer Vineyard 'Shale Terrace' Zinfandel

These vines were less affected/alterd by the heat given the larger leaf canopy in this block to protect the fruit from the sun. It is much more like past vintages and one of my favorite Shales ever. There is that

nice stone fruit thread that precedes and follows the red fruit center, and juicy mouth-watering acidity. 97 cases produced. *Sold out on futures (it figures).*

2011 Dry Rosé

This has been an evolution for us beginning in 1997. Like the Zinfandoodle, we gave it a slightly different twist on our normal label design, giving an additional designation of ‘explorations.’ Over time, I’ve realized this was somewhat conflicting for me because I am quite serious about the rosé. So while the wines may continue to evolve as they should, it’s no longer a naked exploration (we have a map now) and so we decided it was time to put the Rosé into the regular label design.

During the past three vintages we have incorporated whole-cluster pressed Syrah into our program with excellent outcome. As I also began to study Grenache this past year, I have found that it is a perfect counterpoint to the Syrah [yes, I’m a slow learner]– so much so that I did not see a need to rob some of our Zinfandel or Pinot Noir juice for this blend as before. We stand at about 70% Syrah and 30% Grenache with this vintage. It seems to be nearly a carbon copy of last year’s rosé with maybe a little lighter touch on the typewriter keys – it has a little more pronounced sense of minerality and is slightly more floral rather than fruity aromas. I actually prefer it by a slight margin to the 2010, which I wondered if we could top. Our recent experimentation with screw caps has sent me to bottle the entire commercial vintage of 750’s with the closure because this wine tastes better during its normal lifetime under that closure. [I am cautiously exploring how other wines respond to this closure over their expected lifetimes as well.] There should be enough of this wine to last thru the open houses and into part of the summer, at least. 460 cases produced. *\$18 per bottle, \$38 per magnums*

2008 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

The 2008 season was notable for spring frosts in low areas and later with a few smoke-affected areas due to the fires that summer. The Cabernet at my family’s vineyard was fortunately spared any of this excitement. I think 2008 is one of the more interesting vintages for this site because it has both the up-front fruit that makes nearer-term enjoyment possible and great substance for long-term aging. It reminds me very much of the 2005 with a touch of the forward plumpness of the 2004. Not quite as red-fruited as the Alexander Valley bottling also harvested from this vineyard, it has a classic cassis/violet/fresh-loam aroma that brings a smile to many a face. With good structural tannin that is enveloped by appropriate viscosity it is delightful right now with food. I prefer opening a bottle a day or two before drinking it now, though. A week would not be a problem. On the heels of such a well-touted vintage as 2007, these are the wines that really turn heads down the road because they are often simply overlooked or upstaged. Showing a vertical from 2001 thru 2008 for a wine journalist recently, I was pleased to see how this wine stood up to its more developed and evolved and older siblings. This past year, we have broken the unspoken recent trend of having only one vintage of Cabernet Sauvignon at a time in wholesale distribution. I felt that a wine that has a happy spot of about 10 years or more should be in no rush to be sold out so soon after bottling nor should it *have to* be gone within 12 months of

initial release. There is no reason to treat this stuff like a chocolate milkshake¹. Many of you have understood this for some time. I finally discovered that a vertical tasting flight is all that was needed to make my point. Of course, the price will have to increase for the cellared wines a nominal amount each year reflecting our effort required to achieve this. The reward is that restaurants will be able to offer something in a more traditional, food-friendly style that has the benefit of time to complete some of its evolution without having to invest in their own aging program, or they could go younger if that is what suits them best. And we can all come back to the well too - for a while, at least. As usual, we pulled an allocation of even older vintages out of library last November and have practically nothing left by the beginning of March. I can take a hint...eventually. Only 125 cases produced. *\$48 per bottle, \$26 per half bottle, \$100 per magnum*

2008 Calypso Vineyard, Green Valley Syrah

Otis Holt had been growing Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon for years until the winery he had been selling to decided to stop making Bordeaux varietal wines. We were introduced, and I saw the fine homemade wines Otis had made for himself over the years. But I was not looking to expand this type of wine beyond my family's vineyard. Ultimately, I asked Otis to convert most of the vines over to Syrah as I thought it would be a great match for the site. He did his homework and selected many clones beyond my suggestions. This fine, tiny vineyard is growing in about as cool a place as I would put the variety, which is where I think the finest versions are found. It will sometimes have a hard time yielding great red wine in cold, wetter vintages such as 2011, just as in many places in the Old World have had to contend with. But that's where our rosé saves the day. Depending on what Nature gives us, we can have something special and pleasurable every year.

The 2007 Sasha bottling was mostly from Calypso, but there was more than the 5% allowable from another vineyard preventing us from designating the vineyard on the label. While there will be a 'Sasha' bottling released this summer, we have kept a small amount separate as a vineyard designate that illustrates why I am so excited about this site. This wine has the pretty floral thing and blue fruits on the mouth like the 2007 Sasha. It also has layers of darker, earthy tones and some black pepper kind of like the 2008 Timbervine Syrah released last October, just in a more mouthwatering package. I think it will be several years before it is really at its prime, but as with our Cabernet Sauvignons, it benefits from a day or two of opened bottle experience. 116 cases produced. *\$32 per bottle.*

¹ 'Chocolate Milkshake wine' n. Red wine harvested at extremely high ripeness level so as to have very little structure or acidity and won't improve with time in bottle. Like the kind made from frozen dairy products, it's yummy until it melts. Left in the closet or cellar, it goes sour.

2009 Russian River Pinot Noir

There has been plenty of hype about this vintage for Pinot Noir, so there is little need to add to that. Over the years we have been able to establish some wonderful long-term relationships with vineyard sites that are complimentary rather than antagonistic in a blend. Add to that a growing season like 2008 with fewer issues to overcome...what's not to like? It is a little richer, denser and darker in color than the 2008 vintage. Floral, red, black and blue fruits all take their turn and change places with the toasty, earth/loam and lightly herbal notes like a slowly changing kaleidoscope crossed with a 1960's overhead projector liquid light show with colored mineral oil and alcohol. It is not quite as intensely concentrated as the 2007 on entry at least, but the flavors swell, reveal their secrets and linger on the lips for what seem like an eternity [this is starting to sound too much like a formula romance novel]. I think it will take a couple of years longer to hit its stride than the previous two vintages, so I would plan to cellar this and consider working on any 2005-2008's during the next 4-5 years before getting seriously into this vintage. The reward will be substantial, I think – kind of like with the 2004 Fort Ross High Slopes Pinot Noir (our last vintage). It is not *that* dense, but the upside to patience on wines like these is significant. 570 cases produced. *\$42 per bottle, \$22.50 per half bottle, \$86 per magnum.*

Recent Releases & Opportunities

For great drinking from thru the next 5 years, I'd suggest looking at the 2007 Sonoma County Pinot Noir listed on the order form. The 2008 OMV Zinfandel is getting ready to begin its run with restaurants as it begins to enter its 'zone'. The 2009 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay is showing fantastic at this early stage and will be gone by the end of April. 2007 'Sasha' Syrah is currently open for business as well. The 2004 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is showing very well right now. Those looking for something with more current reserve and promise for the future might look to the 2005.

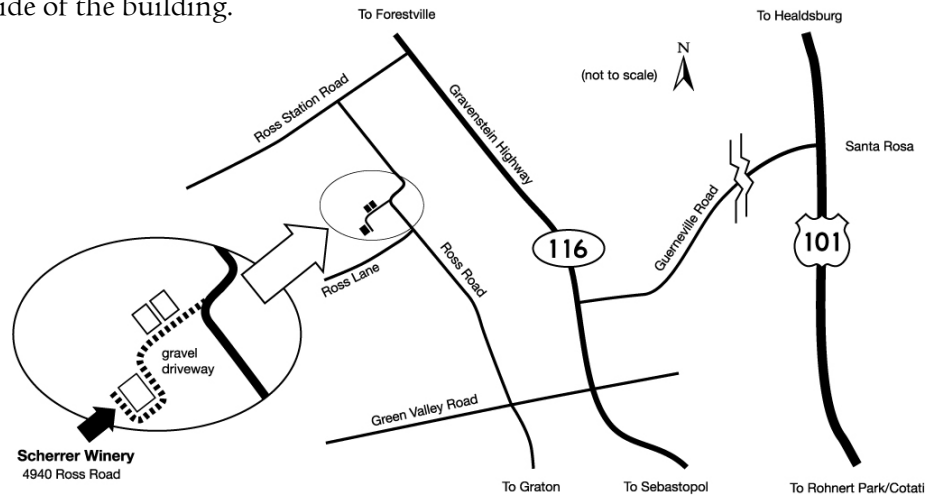
We offer wines on this mailer well ahead of 'general' release to the trade, so that you may have an opportunity to come 'back to the well' so to speak, if/when you find yourself falling in love with something as it begins to hit its stride. Be sure and ask if you're looking for something specific that we don't have listed, there isn't room for everything! We try to delay general release enough so that restaurants, in particular, can offer our structured, food friendly wines that are truly drinking well without the burden of holding them themselves. Realizing how much this has been appreciated, we will try to continue this as much as possible going forward as market circumstances continue to turn around.

As always, thank you for your support. It is what allows me to do this, supports our family and the growers we work with.



Directions

Below is a map of the area local to the winery. The winery address is **4940 Ross Road, Sebastopol**. If you get lost, the telephone number at the building itself is 707-824-1933. Please drive slowly down the driveway. The entrance and gravel parking is on the west side, so don't hesitate to drive clockwise around to the other side of the building.



Shipping Information

We will be happy to ship your order to any of the following states when weather is wine friendly.

An adult Signature is required upon delivery.

	<u>Case</u> 12 x 750's 6 x mags	<u>Case Plus</u> 12 to 15 x 750's	<u>Half Case</u> 6 x 750's 12 x Half Bottles 3 x mags
GSO Delivery to CA residents (recommended), NV and AZ (if you visited within the last 12 months)	\$16/box	\$20/box	\$12/box
UPS to CA residents	\$24/box	\$24/box	\$16/box
UPS to CO, ID, OR, NM, NV or WA	\$32/box	\$32/box	\$24/box
UPS to AL, DC, IA, IL, IN, GA, KS, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NC, ND, NE, NH, NY, TN, TX, OH, VA, WI, WV* or WY (*license pending)	\$42/box	\$42/box	\$26/box
FedEx 2-day to above states plus: FL or HI	\$80/box	\$95/box	\$48/box
Overnight to any above state plus: delivery to address with liquor license (any state). HI or Alaska higher	\$90/box	\$100/box	\$64/box

MAILING

SHIPPING

Name	Name	
Street	Company Name	Residential <input type="checkbox"/>
City, State, Zip Code	Street	
Daytime Phone	City, State, Zip Code	
e-mail:	Delivery Phone	
Changes? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Shipping Notes	

New Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2010 Old & Mature Vines Zinfandel	\$32 / bottle, <i>limited</i>		
	\$18 / half bottle		
	\$68 / magnum		
2011 Dry Rosé	\$18 / bottle		
	\$38 / magnum		
2008 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	\$48 / bottle		
	\$26 / half bottle		
	\$100 / magnum		
2008 Calypso Vineyard Syrah	\$32 / bottle		
2009 Russian River Pinot Noir	\$42 / bottle		
	\$22.50 / half bottle		
	\$86 / magnum		

Some Current Wines	Price	Quantity	Amount
2007 Sonoma County Pinot Noir	\$35 / bottle		
2008 'Old & Mature Vines' Zinfandel	\$32 / bottle		
2009 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay	\$40 / bottle		
2007 'Sasha' Russian River Syrah	\$30 / bottle		
2004 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	\$55 / bottle		
2005 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	\$50 / bottle		
	Subtotal		
Discount on wine for total orders of 12 or more bottles		-10%	
	Subtotal		
Sales Tax: CA 8% Out of state: FL, GA, IL, IN, KS, LA, MD, ME, MI, NH, NM, NY, OH, SC, TN, TX, VA, WI, WV			%

Choose: Pick up at Open House or Shipping method and cost:

Total

Payment: Visa / MasterCard American Express Check

Card #	Expires:	Security Code Visa/MC: 3 on back Am Ex: 4 on front
I confirm I am at least 21 years of age.		Date of Birth:
Signature:		Date: