

‘How Dry I am...’

While the old Zinfandel vineyard survived that dark period of our country’s history between 1920 and 1933 called Prohibition, I began to wonder if those same old vines would be singing that song popular during their teenage years, albeit for a different reason. As the first half of winter slunk along with scant rainfall, it appeared that we had suddenly been transported to a foreign place. My sister, Louise sent me a picture of the old Zinfandel vineyard after pruning with the caption ‘this is what farming in the desert must be like.’ There was no cover crop where typically the grass would be lush..... Only bare earth and gnarled vines set below a pure blue sky. Fortunately, the storm door opened up at last and it looks as though we will receive enough water to ensure the old, unirrigated vines will have enough moisture to make it through another season.

I remember the 1976 and 1977 ‘drought’ seasons about as well as a teenager could. The crops were naturally small and everything ripened early and rapidly. I’ll never forget the intensity of flavor in the Zinfandel grapes, though. If this is what we look forward to in 2014, I say ‘bring it on.’

There is a difference today in the majority of the vines existing in Sonoma County, though. In the last couple of decades, most vineyard plantings depend heavily on drip irrigation and utilize shallower-rooted, less vigorous rootstocks that may not deal well with an entirely dry root zone. Thoughtful use of the drip irrigation could mitigate low natural rainfall. However, there is talk of severely limiting water available to farmers. Wells along the Russian River plain (and even beyond) compete for underground flows that feed municipal water systems downstream. While it would not affect any vineyards I work with, it will be very interesting to see how it plays out this year from many perspectives.

Open House

We will have a diverse set of new releases to show at the April open house. The dates are: **April 4-6, and April 11-13 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 or from last August’s 2012 Zinfandel futures offering at this event or we will schedule them for shipment.

New Releases

2012 Scherrer Vineyard ‘Old & Mature Vines’ Zinfandel

Over the past couple of decades, I have been ‘monitoring’ the development of our Old and Mature Vine Zinfandel. What I see again and again is that the slightly leaner, ‘skinnier’ vintages are usually the ones that go best with food and go on to age and develop most gracefully: 1992, 1994, 2001, 2005 are all good

examples of this. I just shared a bottle of the 1991 (our first vintage) with a colleague. Its freshness blew *his* mind and made *me* smile. Experiences like this have been guiding me to lean *a tiny bit more* on the earlier side of my preferred ‘harvest window.’ [My dad has been lobbying for this all along, by the way]. What I am seeing from this modest restraint is nice freshness of fruit flavors (more of the red raspberry and cherry notes) without too much syrupy, jammy character that could overshadow the fruit nuances. We want to showcase a nice balance of the varietal elements that are special to Zinfandel. Sometimes, the acidity/tannin angular side of the wine appears prominent when the wines are only a few months old. But things come into focus with time, especially during the last half of barrel aging. Those of you who come to the barrel tastings each year have seen this for yourselves.

I’m still only talking about an ever so slight shift based on retrospection. The wines are still in the mid-14% alcohol range, which is where our Zinfandels seem to want to exist. There is red, black, and blue fruit, fresh loam, nuances of roasted grains, mouth-watering acidity and good flavor persistence. 2012 is a really nice vintage and in reasonably good supply – for now. 890 cases produced. *\$36 per bottle, \$20 per half bottle, \$75 per magnum*

2012 Scherrer Vineyard ‘Shale Terrace’ Zinfandel

At the open house last August, this was a little more ‘showy’ than the OMV out of barrel. Tasting this just before bottling confirms the extroverted personality of the shale this year. But you can’t always judge the race by how the horse acts on the way to the gate. It will be fun to watch this horse race between the two Zins as they round the second turn at futures pickup time. While it still has its typical stone fruit facet, a Pinot Noir-like texture and mineral side, it is showing a high degree of black fruit as well. As of bottling day, this is probably my favorite vintage from this block. 180 cases produced. *\$36 per bottle, limit 3, very, very limited supply.*

2011 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay

Lately, the Chardonnays have been cleaned out for a month or two between releases [the Chardonnay shelves are looking pretty ‘dry’]. I don’t know if it has more to do with the positive press the Chardonnays have received recently or the increasing satisfaction of those who have been drinking them. The two vineyard-specific bottlings, Helfer and Scherrer, are like two variations of a breed of dog: one coated and the other smooth coated. [No, they don’t smell like dogs.] The Scherrer presents itself a little leaner and more penetrating, while the Helfer is more layered and textural.

While the 2011 vintage presented challenges very late in the season, both Chardonnay vineyards were harvested well before any thought of rain surfaced. It captures a really nice, cool growing season which shows most in the crisp acidic backbone that carries the wine’s pear, citrus zest notes with great continuity. There is nice texture and some roasted grain nuance that support the fruit not unlike how a pie crust supports the filling. I really love where it is right now, even at this very early stage with only one year in bottle. 163 cases produced. *\$36 per bottle, \$20 per half bottle, and \$75 per magnum.*

2013 Dry Rosé

During a decade and a half of making dry rosé I have really gotten obsessed with bringing this to another level. The marriage of Grenache with Syrah is a traditional thing in southern France and I’m finding that it also translates very well to this part of the ‘new world.’ The 2013 found its perfect combination of 30% Grenache and 70% Syrah, practically identical to the 2011 vintage’s sweet spot.

Bone-dry and structured in a way to allow it to float effortlessly over bitter, salty, fatty foods with equal facility, this is my desert-island wine. It has some gentle, floral aromas, maraschino cherry, a hint of boxwood/passionfruit on the nose. It enters the mouth with a slight firmness from its refreshing acidity that wakes up the palate. Those of you who have experienced this know. Those who have not, should try just one bottle. In 2013, I was able to make more of this exactly the way I want so it is OK to treat yourself without feeling like you robbed someone else. 630 cases produced. *\$22 per bottle.*

2010 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

One of the great things about being in Sonoma County is the diversity of climate and soil within short distances. It allows me to work with very diverse varieties – an opportunity not available in most winegrowing regions of the world. It is natural for people to think of a winery specializing on one or two things, because that is what grows best in their area. I am lucky to have more options.

Typical to our Cabernet Sauvignons, this opens with cassis and fresh loam, some black fruit. The flavors follow the aromas (without the sweetness of the pies) and with this vintage there is a fairly broad texture and flashiness that hangs off its amply-structured frame. Just-appropriate acidity brings the wine to a nice, juicy mouth-watering finish with great persistence. Our Cabernet Sauvignons are beginning to receive more widespread attention, not because they are the flashiest, or the biggest, or from the fanciest zip-code – but because they are classically-styled for balance, food-friendliness and ageworthiness. It takes years to establish this because you can't fake aging. The site is also a little earlier-ripening than many famous Cabernet vineyards, so in 'tougher-to-ripen' vintages, we end up with great material. This is my long-term project and I'm very pleased to see the results as they unfold. 165 cases produced. *\$52 per bottle, \$28 per half bottle, \$110 per magnum.*

2010 King Vineyard Pinot Noir, Russian River Valley

Most of our Pinot Noirs are grown on Goldridge soils in the Green Valley and on the Sonoma Coast. This vineyard is a bit more to the East of the Laguna de Santa Rosa on a higher-clay and silt soil named Huichica. It is slower to warm up in the spring (which is good because being on the valley floor it is naturally more prone to spring frost) and is consequently harvested during the late part of the fall. Twelve years ago, I made a 'Laguna' bottling from similar soils, which was very popular. This is similar in expression to the Laguna bottling with its darker fruits and more substantial weight on the mouth. It's kind of like a Russian River Valley counterpart to the Sonoma Coast 'Big Brother' bottling we do. More of a masculine Pinot Noir, this is more of a lamb and mushroom wine than a salmon wine. 98 cases produced. *\$44 per bottle.*

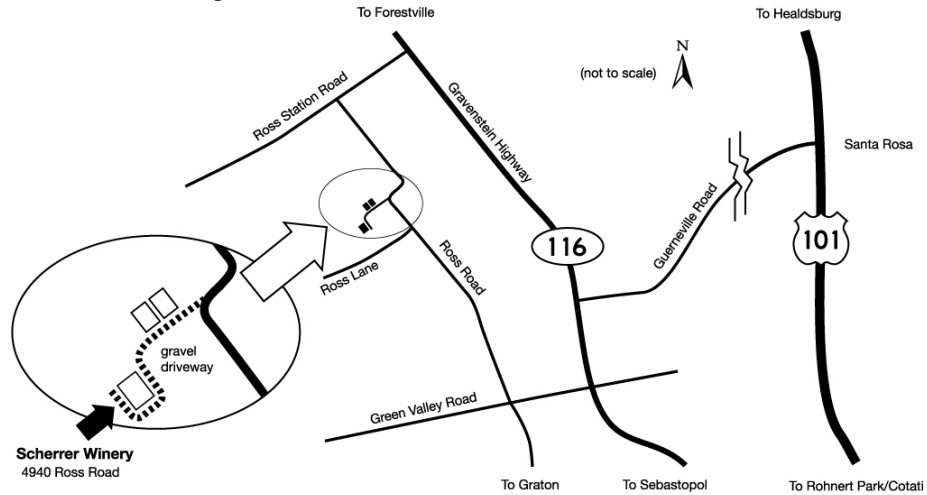
Recent Releases & Opportunities

This past few months the 2009 Russian River Valley (\$44) and the 2009 Sonoma County (\$35) Pinot Noirs have really opened up nicely. The 2008 Calypso Syrah (\$32) is also beginning to come into its own. My go-to vintages of Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon continue to be 2003 (\$65) and 2006 (\$52). While I hope to keep the older Cabernets available each year as library wines, their general supply is starting to 'dry up'. With so many new releases this spring, we only have a bit of room left on the order form. We've left a few spots open for you to add in any of these other recent wines if you missed them the first time or if your own supply has dried up.

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.

	Case 12 x 750's 6 x mags	Case Plus 13 to 15 x 750's	Half Case 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)	\$20/box	\$24/box	\$14/box
UPS to CA residents	\$28/box	\$28/box	\$18/box
UPS to CO, ID, OR, NM, NV or WA	\$36/box	\$36/box	\$22/box
UPS to AL, DC, IA, IL, IN, GA, KS, LA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, MT, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NY, TN, TX, OH, VA, WI or WY	\$46/box	\$46/box	\$28/box
FedEx 2-day to above states plus: FL, HI	\$94/box	\$102/box	\$50/box
Overnight to any above state. Delivery to any state address with liquor license. HI or Alaska higher	\$118/box	\$124/box	\$68/box