

Where ‘Substance meets Delicacy’

I look at wine balance in a general way, as having an equal presence of ‘angles vs. rounds.’ Structure from tannins and acids [angles] lessen as the fruit ripens and the counter-balancing glycerol [round] is produced [in lock-step with alcohol/initial sugar level] which ameliorates and balances these two opposing forces creating a ‘sweet spot’. In other words ‘unripe grapes start out super angular and become way too round when they become over ripe.’ Each grape variety has its own ‘sweet spot’ due to its natural ‘angular load’ of acid or tannin-based. For example, Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon are vastly different varieties, each with a different ‘sweet spot’ of intrinsic balance evident by their different uses at our tables. The wines produced by each of them cannot be judged by the others’ composition. Their destinies and their ideal conditions are different and that is exactly what is exciting about the diversity of wine. Sadly, of late the popular trend seems to focus on something easy to measure like alcohol, applying it to all varieties and regions. Context is important for everything: substance and delicacy are not mutually exclusive in a binary sense. They have their own roles in ‘the achievement of balance.’

So let’s look at this concept from the perspective of recent weather. Having consecutive low rainfall years, I see the great value my father has always placed on having deeply rooted plants: they can moderate their vigor according to the ‘bank account’ of soil moisture available to them achieving a balance between resources and productivity. He grew up without irrigation as an easy option for the family’s perennial crops. It was clear that a good fit with the environment was necessary to success and feeding the family every day. Little water meant a high value was placed on efficient rootstocks for ones’ trees and vines. That, combined with planting in well-drained soil that is able to retain enough available water from natural rainfall, meant you could support and ripen a moderate crop without significant irrigation. Our current industry technology has allowed us to push the limits of the site’s potential beyond nature’s design.

Last year, I said ‘bring it on’ regarding the potential quality from a drier than typical vintage. From our own personal perspective, we are quite happy with the results. But I have also been pretty picky about the sites and people I will work with, so in the end, it all works out. Together, we try to make wines that are appropriate for the variety and that are appropriate to the place they come from. Some varieties, like Grenache, celebrate substance while often embracing delicacy, while others like Pinot Noir, celebrate delicacy, while often embracing substance.

Open House

We will have this large and diverse set of new releases to show at the April open house. The dates are: **April 10-12, and April 17-19** 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 2013 Zinfandel futures offering at this event or we will schedule them for shipment.

New Releases

2013 Scherrer Vineyard 'Old & Mature Vines' Zinfandel

This has been a relatively generous vintage from the beginning of its life in barrel. While it is unmistakably in our rather elegant [delicate] style, it has always had this intensity of fruit that makes one want to drink it in its primary stages. What I like about this kind of vintage is that you can enjoy it fairly early on, as well as later, where its balance between substance and delicacy will support a long life.

I think of this as a multi-berry tart. Blackberry, raspberry and cherry notes play tag with the toasty/spicy/loamy counterpoint at this stage. Those of you who came to the August barrel tasting of this when offered on futures know what I'm talking about, others like this as well: 'Tasted from barrel, the 2013 Zinfandel Old & Mature Vines Scherrer Vineyard is shaping up to be a jewel of a wine. Layers of dark blue and black fruit, smoke, tobacco, incense and licorice flesh out as the 2013 shows off its exuberance and power. Hints of lavender, cocoa and leather add the final notes of complexity. Today, the 2013 is super-expressive. (92-94 Points) Antonio Galloni [February 2015]

2013 was also a somewhat more generous vintage quantity-wise so fortunately it is possible to have enough bottles to enjoy at all stages of development without compromise. Folks who have been doing the futures program with us attest to the value of having enough of a wine to develop a relationship over time. 1200 cases produced. *\$36 per bottle. Half bottles (\$20) and Magnums (\$75) also available.*

2013 Scherrer Vineyard 'Shale Terrace' Zinfandel

There was great excitement at last August's barrel tasting over this wine. It showed great depth, structure, concentration and a bit more darker fruit than is typical of this small site. There is still the echo of stone fruit, more minerally and stony texturality that this site expresses rather than the more silky, slippery texture that the OMV achieves when mature. It is a truly unique pocket right adjacent to areas that each have their own particular expression of Zinfandel. I think the 2013 vintage's signature for Zinfandel at the family vineyard is just that: impressive substance relative to the normal site expression while still maintaining the underlying delicacy of the house style: a synthesis of land, weather and human attitude. 210 cases produced. *Sold out on futures (it figures).*

2012 Grenache, Sonoma County

A few years ago over a bottle of Grenache my dad and I agreed that this grape should do well at the Scherrer Vineyard. Dad said it used to be grown more extensively in the area, but it was not as highly valued as other grape varieties or crops so it (unfortunately) fell out of favor. While I have been collecting and drinking southern Rhone wines for decades (where this variety plays a large role), I had not seriously considered working with the grape before then. There are several acres at the family vineyard that have been fallow a long time and perhaps it is time to change that. So, it became time for me to learn something by working with the variety so we could make some more informed decisions when it came to planting time. My sister, Louise who has been farming alongside my dad for quite some time, likes this wine very much and supports the idea, adding her own efforts in research. It's nice to have everyone lending their minds to a new endeavor. It will make the result more timeless and lasting.

Enter Dick Keenan's Kick Ranch in eastern Sonoma County in 2011. The late fall rain that year didn't make it the ideal vintage to work with a new [to me] variety growing on the cool side of its zone. But I found that even under difficult conditions, it is a very worthy variety in Sonoma County. While I

did not bottle a varietal Grenache from that first vintage, I learned a great deal about its personality including its affinity to co-fermenting and blending with small amounts of other varieties such as Syrah and Zinfandel. The 2012, our first bottling offered here, bears the fruit of this experience. There is a small amount of Syrah co-fermented with one of the Grenache lots and blended together for optimal harmony. That bit of Syrah makes it well balanced in all its aspects of angles, rounds, substance and delicacy.

Our 2012 Grenache has a nice mix of floral, red-fruit, white pepper, earthy/meaty aromas that give way to an appropriately generous, textural mouthfeel that is supported by substantial tannin in the way that a large tent is held up by the interior framework. The sides can billow in the breeze, ruffling and changing shape, but the core structure is sufficiently solid to maintain shape and function. Again, there is *delicacy within substance* here. We have done extensive research at the dinner table pairing this wine with many different foods from tomato-based sauces and pasta, simple grilled pork, to braised beef and antelope and find that it is extremely versatile. It also handles a diverse set of food spices and sings with rosemary in particular [no great surprise there].

“Excitement” and “anticipation” pretty much sum up the reactions of those who have previewed this wine from barrel or bottle. Josh Reynolds tasted the young wine last May and remarked “Elegant and lively on the palate, with energetic raspberry and wild strawberry flavors complicated by peppery spices. Finishes with bright, focused red fruit flavors and very fine tannins; there’s a pinot-like elegance to this Grenache that makes it approachable now”. The two questions most commonly asked by the early audience were ‘when will this be released?’ and ‘will I be able to get some?’ The answers are: “now” and “yes”. 215 cases produced. *\$35 per bottle*.

2014 Dry Rosé

Our rosés since 2011 also reflect the exploration of Grenache’s contribution to the pink side of things. The Syrah and Grenache find a balance of angles/rounds (acidity/body) without significant skin/seed intrusion into the angular side of the equation. In 2014 the Syrah is slightly dominant by percentage but not by expression. The Syrah base enjoys the laser-beam focus and special perfume that the Grenache brings. Compared to the red Grenache wine also offered, it’s like dance partners that switched leads and flow into another successful dance. As last year, this is bone-dry and structured in a way to allow it to float effortlessly over bitter, salty, fatty foods with equal facility; this is still my stranded-on-a-desert-island wine. It has some gentle, floral aromas, guava, dead-ripe warm strawberry and it rolls thru the palate like an adult-styled lemon [or guava] drop without the sugar or additives. It makes the next bite of food as fresh as the first one. ONLY HALF AS MUCH AS LAST YEAR 360 cases produced. *\$22 per bottle*.

2011 Platt Vineyard Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast

This wine is very much like what we expected to have ripeness-wise when the vineyard was first developed nearly 15 years ago: 13.3% alc. There’s an iron/blood thing that speaks of the nearby sea and sense of salinity. It does not appear super-rich at first glance, but has a surprising depth of flavor that comes in subtle, non-linear approach (substance within delicacy). Josh Reynolds wrote “Juicy and nicely delineated on the palate, showing very good depth and gentle sweetness to its mineral-laced red fruit flavors. The refreshingly bitter finish clings with vibrancy and spicy persistence.” (May 2014) I do think it is more approachable earlier than the previous vintages of this bottling that, while frustratingly latent, one is rewarded with patient aging as any who have tasted the 2008 which is beginning to happen now. Those looking for cold-climate Pinot Noir examples can see the edge this is poised upon. 115 cases produced. *\$55 per bottle, \$120 per magnum*.

2011 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon

I have thoroughly enjoyed working with this variety and exploring its signature at my family's vineyard since the 1997 vintage. I began working with this variety elsewhere since 1979 and am impressed with its sturdiness on the vine as well as in the bottle. It is one of those varieties that tolerates some rain and probably embraces it to a great degree. Some of my favorite long term vintages have seen a bit of rain just before harvest as opposed to the vintages where hot, desiccating conditions can push harvesting decisions ahead of actual flavor development. Scherrer Vineyard is not a cold, high altitude mountain site so it performs well in colder vintages when rains come early because the grapes are already ripe. Why? It is a bench just off the valley floor where the springtime frosts are less an issue and the grapes tend to ripen a little earlier – but not too early. Talk about a sweet spot! The great-grandparents were no dummies.

This wine has the typical 'cassis thing', some nice fresh palate cleansing qualities, some good weight and persistence without being dominating or cloying. I see a 'deciduous and fir forest underbrush after the first rains' along with a black fruit/sage interplay that makes for interesting and pleasant table-side company. Antonio Galloni summed it up in February that "the 2011 is quite pretty. Plum, pomegranate, mocha, spice, savory herbs and ferrous notes are laced together in a super-attractive fabric. The 2011 has put on considerable weight since last year [in barrel], but it remains a quintessentially mid-weight Scherrer Cabernet." Sounds about right, including his understanding that our wines have a rather unique trajectory in the cellar because we don't follow the usual 'recipe.' 165 cases produced. *\$52 per bottle, \$28 per half bottle, \$110 per magnum.*

Recent Releases

These past few months the 2010 Russian River Valley (\$46) and King Family Vineyard (\$44) Pinots as well as the Helfer 2011 Chardonnay (\$48) have been very popular. They are hitting on all cylinders at the early stage of their races...which should be long ones, by the way. The last few cases of 2013 Dry Rosé and Rosé of Syrah are also doing exactly what we have envisioned. It's a shame pink wines have a reputation for not lasting a year. Some need a year. In light of the smaller amount of 2014 Dry Rosé, it might make a great comparison to open each vintage together to see what a year can do. 2009 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$55) is still rather young and primary, but entirely satisfying at this time.

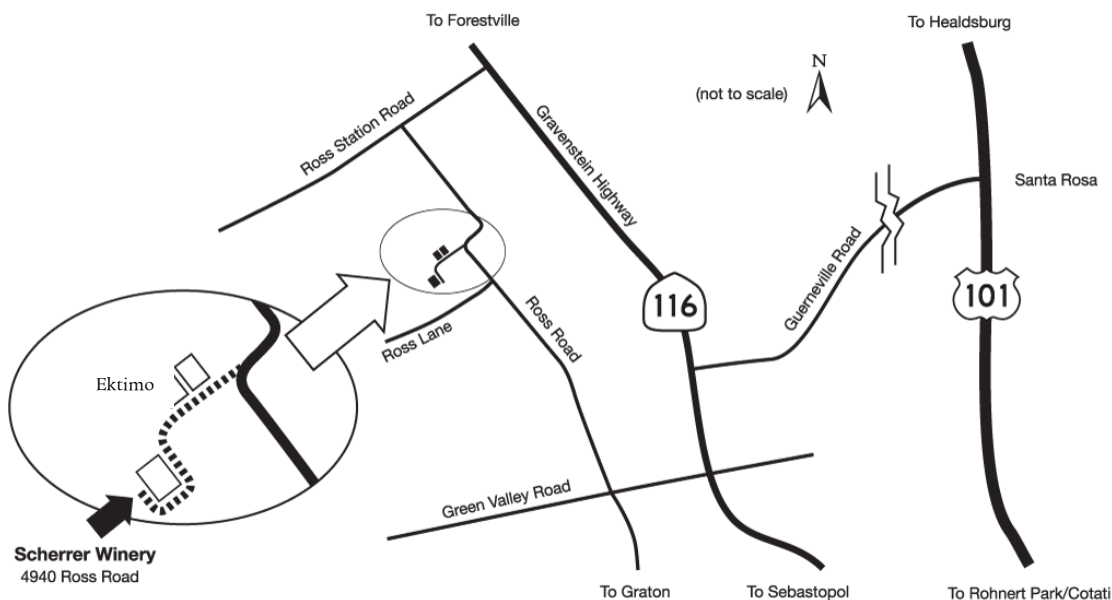
The 2012 Old & Mature Vine Zin is settling in and showing its stuff. Jancis Robinson recently had some at Zuni Café in San Francisco and made it her Wine of the Week describing it as "no disappointment and showed just how fine a wine this grape variety can be when the vines are old and there is a sensitive hand on the winemaking tiller... [it] was subtle, bone dry, lip-smacking and communicative with a strong dried-red-cherry flavour and carries its 14.5% alcohol effortlessly." Substance and delicacy finding their balance.

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. Children may be playing nearby. 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.	Case: 12 x 750 mL 24 x 375 mL 6 x 1.5 L	Per bottle (750 mL equivalent)
<u>Pick up</u> is available during Winery Open House events or by appointment	NC	
<u>Golden State Overnight</u> (recommended) to CA, NV and AZ	\$21/box	\$1.75
<u>Ground</u> to CA, AZ	\$30/box	\$2.5
<u>Ground</u> to CO, ID, OR, MT, NM, NV or WA	\$36/box	\$3
<u>Ground</u> to AL, DC, FL, IA, IL, IN, GA, KS, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NC, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, SC, TN, TX, VA, WI or WY	\$48/box	\$4
<u>FedEx 2-day</u> to above states plus: HI, AK	\$96/box	\$8
<u>Overnight</u> to any above state. Delivery to any address with liquor license.	\$144/box	\$12