



...but Mom always liked you best...

As pointed out by that old Smothers Brothers gag, there is a long lasting consequence to the idea of a parent showing preference for one of their children over another. Winemakers seem to be put in a similar situation when it comes to different vintages, bottlings or even varietals on a regular basis. Fortunately, wines don't have feelings so winemakers can actually admit to favorites, for whatever reason. The usual question: 'Which is your favorite?' And the answer is usually the same, 'it depends.' 'What are we eating with it?' 'What is my mood?' 'What is the weather like?' 'Who am I sharing this with?' Just as I love each of my two children for who they are as individuals, the same applies to a degree for each of my wines. There is normally no one 'favorite' because they are all unique and special. The challenge of parenting and winemaking is to guide and help each of your children and wines to let their best qualities shine as brightly as possible. Then it is time to stand back and appreciate the results.

The three vintages 2012-2014 offer a strong string of wines in all the areas of Sonoma County across a diverse range of varieties. It is arguable which site performed best in which vintage, but they are all really close when one stands back and takes a good long look. With few exceptions, it is hard to play favorites among these individual wines. While I try not to do that, I have to be honest that the 2014 Old and Mature Vines Zinfandel offered on futures here is shaping up to become darned special. It is also in relatively short supply. I don't think the graceful 2012 OMV or the generous 2013 will hold that against us at vertical tasting reunions.

Focusing on the bottled wines in this offer, I'm impressed overall with the 2012 Pinot Noir vintage here in Sonoma County, especially nearly a year after they were bottled when they really begin to show their true nature and lasting strength. Across the board, they boast a really strong backbone of structure that supports good intensity of fruit. These wines should hold together beautifully for a very long time. Regarding Zinfandel, 2012 and 2013 also had different strengths that complement each other well. Our Zinfandoodle v.2.3 illustrates that symbiosis perfectly. By contrast, our Chardonnays from the same two vintages (2012 and 2013) are much more alike than they are dissimilar. Looking back at 2011, in the past I have gone on at length about the amazing quality of the pre-rain wines (Pinot Noir in particular). The 2011 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir offered in the spring and the 2011 Big Brother in this offering are perfect examples of that. Easy choices there!

Open House

On **July 31, August 1 and 2 from 10 AM to 5 PM** we are pleased to have our summer open house with barreled Zinfandel available for tasting and futures purchase, as well as some new offerings. The winery address is 4940 Ross Road, Sebastopol, 95472. If you get lost, the direct number is 707-824-1933.

Zinfandel Futures

2014 Scherrer Vineyard 'Old & Mature Vines' Zinfandel Futures

When we get a couple of dry seasons back to back, very mature vines with deep root systems are capable of fully exploiting the soil profile and can make AMAZING wines. This vintage has great intensity of just appropriately ripe fruit and even more concentration of material than usual. It should age tremendously and should have a very, very long 'happy spot.' As I'm a long-term development kind of guy, I'll be going deep on this in my personal cellar. Trying not to pick favorites, but just sayin'...

There is a really nice, pomegranate/red cherry note on entry which seamlessly transitions toward bramble fruits, both red and black. It has a refreshing, lively acidity and appropriate tannin to hold up the structural side of things. Fresh loamy notes balance the fruity elements just enough. In short, this wine is right in the pocket. Production is less than the last couple of years, about only 550 cases will be produced. *Estimated release price: \$38 per bottle. Futures price: \$280 per case.*

2014 Scherrer Vineyard 'Shale Terrace' Zinfandel Futures

Low clay content, very deep and well-drained soil, this tiny parcel supports a larger, deeper root system that receives its water, oxygen and nutrients differently than the rest of the Scherrer Vineyard. This wine has a refreshing nectarine-like aroma, some cool mintiness and fresh loam that support those aromas thru the mouth. There is a nice minerally mouthfeel that is not unlike red Burgundy (a strange thing to say about a California Zinfandel). This is especially noticeable when there is more of a beet-root thing rather than black-fruit thing on the mouth. The 2014 season seems to have given this site the stony/earthy traits in common with the 2005 and 2008 Shale Terrace Zinfandels. By contrast, the past few vintages have been more black-fruited and sexy in their youth. It is like the drought conditions are accentuating the unique site character.

There is a slightly smaller amount of this than in 2013. If you think you are interested, be sure and place your order well before the open house. If you've not ordered any Shale before and would like to, be sure and submit your "Wish List" order, we take them in the order received after the "First Crack" has passed for those that have purchased in the past. About 170 cases will be produced. *Estimated release price: \$38 per bottle. Futures price: \$280 per case*

Summer Releases

2013 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay

I can't decide which vintage I prefer for this wine: 2012 or 2013. As mentioned earlier, they appear to be much like carbon copies [who remembers those?]. There's a nice balance of perky citrus notes and apples, complicated toasty, nutty notes and a long, graceful mouth-watering finish. If pushed to differentiate, I would have to say this site presents itself with a tiny bit more of a minerally side and a slightly less 'fruity' note than 2012. People are often very surprised to find that this is not a coastal or Russian River Valley vineyard because of its bright acidity. After nearly 20 years of working with this site, I just simply find it typical of this fortunate location. 225 cases produced. *\$38 per bottle*

2012 Sonoma County Pinot Noir

This is our first 2012 Pinot Noir release from what is becoming a (rightly so) highly regarded vintage. It has great intensity and everything is in the right proportions. While this bottling is normally not what I consider to be a wine destined for really long term cellaring, this vintage is probably a rare exception. It has some of the beautiful perfumes of the 2011, the verve of the 2008 and some of the concentration of the 2010.

It is focused around bright red fruits, fresh loam, rose petals, and snappy acidity leading to a mouth-watering, long finish. This is a wine that absolutely over-delivers on the expectations due to the label being 'merely' Sonoma County (which I find to be an unfortunate expectation for such a great, complex region). Don't be fooled by our understatement on the label. Coming from prime real estate in the heart of Russian River Valley this is a real over-achiever. It is a wine that should be put into blind tastings with 'fancier' wines to keep things honest. 700 cases produced *\$36 per bottle*.

2011 Big Brother Pinot Noir

Harvested at full, appropriate ripeness a few days before the early October rains, this is another Pinot Noir (like our Russian River Valley Pinot Noir) that defies the reputation of 2011 being a 'difficult' vintage because it was 'in the barn' before things got tough. In fact, it benefitted from a long cool growing season and was harvested at exactly the level of ripeness we desire. Primarily from the far Northern Sonoma Coast which is a tad warmer than the Southern Sonoma Coast, it exhibits a somewhat broad presentation, along with signature savory notes, some red and blackish fruit. It is fairly rich (consistent with its name) with a very long finish yet is tempered by its great verve, energy and acidity which is the hallmark of the cool growing season of 2011. Think of a 'big brother' who works out regularly and eats right. The dancer Gene Kelly immediately comes to mind here. However, the grapes were not actually allowed to be 'Singin' in the Rain.' 140 cases produced. *\$55 per bottle, \$28 per half bottle, \$120 per magnum*

Zinfandoodle v.2.3

Most of you know this is a synthesis of our 'Old and Mature Vines' fermentation lots that were not fully needed to perfectly complete that blend in a given vintage. Waaaaaay too good to 'bulk out', over a decade ago I started saving and combining these supposed 'leftovers' and combining them in alternating years. It allows me the flexibility to optimize each Old & Mature vintage. In 2012 we found an excess of structured components while in 2013 we found an excess of generous ones. You get the picture. It's pretty darned awesome to be able to do take the best of both rather than to choose between them.

It has picked up momentum over time and sells out faster with each new release. Not surprising, as it is really nice, food-friendly Zinfandel at a friendly price. Rather than 'jammy' and 'stewed fruit' characteristics often seen in CA Zinfandel these days, this has red and black fruits, perfumes, fresh loam aromas that suggest something from Italy rather than California. This has a surprising tendency to create a salivary/mouth-watering response which is essential to complement food. At this early stage of life in bottle, being open for a day this shows a lot of rain-on-stones aroma, graphite/pencil and settles into a really pretty, plummy mouth-watering stance. 780 cases produced. *\$20 per bottle*

Reflections on Recent Wines

The 2008 Platt vineyard Pinot Noir (\$75) is continuing to impress visitors at the winery. I like to serve it blind and ask for guesses on the vintage. There is a tiny bit of 2014 Dry Rosé (\$22) available. If it sells out before, don't despair, there will be a 2014 Rosé of Syrah bottled and available this fall. The 2010 Sonoma County Pinot Noir (\$36) has settled into its 'happy spot' and should be gone pretty soon. The 2011 Russian River Valley Pinot (all pre-rain fruit, \$46) has just about eclipsed the 2010 bottling at this point, as expected. Its perfumes and verve intermix with enough generosity and dark cherry nuances to make this recognizable as Russian River fruit which is quite compelling. While the 2010 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon (\$52) is quite impressive and has sufficient stuffing to satisfy lovers of the current 'in vogue' style, the sleeker 2009 vintage (\$55) is capturing my attention right now (there he goes picking favorites again). Our highly versatile 2012 Sonoma County Grenache (\$35) has been stealing hearts since spring and is proving to be an extremely versatile wine with food.

Again, thanks for your continued support. It allows us the creative freedom to do what we love. I am unable to fully communicate this in such a small space.



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. While it's tempting to zip along now that our neighbors have paved it, children may be playing nearby and there are a couple of blind corners around buildings. The entrance and our gravel parking area are on the west side, so don't hesitate to drive clockwise around to the other side of the building.

