

## Another one just like the other one...

For years I've wished for another chance to re-do the 1991 vintage. It was our first vintage under our own label, highlighting Zinfandel from the family vineyard. I was working at Dehlinger Winery at the time, where we worked with earlier and later varieties in the relatively cooler part of Russian River Valley. Being just 30 years old and having only 15 vintages as a home winemaker and 12 years as a cellar worker at commercial wineries [I'm still clearly a cellar worker at 62] under my belt of which 8 vintages were post UCD graduation, I was not very experienced with the different ways to approach a vintage outside of 'numbers' (but I was learning). ['Numbers' are the juice analysis like sugar Brix levels, pH, total acidity, etc.] What I had begun to realize was the disconnect between those values and what else lurks inside the skins and seeds of the grapes that make red wine red. Following up after the vintage, one could see the disconnect if one remembered what the fruit and vines were like at the time. The early part of 2023 became as close to that re-do of 1991 that I have wished for. The Brix was lagging all other measures/assessments of ripeness that folks have recently become accustomed to, plus weather was mild and cool, allowing the vines to make changes slowly.

Again, to make the 1991 connection, we harvested Zinfandel late in September at modest brix levels both years. After years of being pushed on picking by warm temperatures at harvest more often than not, this year, I was delighted that Brix was lagging all other signs of ripeness. We harvested when things tasted right, despite what 'the numbers' said. A slight departure in the vintages, in 2023 there was a somewhat warm spell in the middle of harvest that brought Brix back into sync with everything else folks were used to, so those picking by the numbers should still be pretty happy, as long as they did not wait too long.

As far as lifelong learning goes, looking at some of the wines that we have coming out now, 2020 was a year of learning for winemakers that were open to learning and thinking critically about how to approach the vintage, hopefully with some experience to back it up [I wonder how experience comes if one does not try something different...]. Unfortunately, it was not a universal learning experience for all, as many vocal 'colleagues' opted out of it, in my opinion, due to fear of failure at certain unaffected sites. I'm cool with opting out on one's own. I'm not cool when those that opted out are also maligning the efforts of those of us who persevered because we were more bold or experienced or just lucky, saying we have 'lower standards.' [Judi deleted the next part on what I thought about that by the way] The proof is in the bottle and time will be the judge of this if anyone cares any more. Besides a couple of lovely 2020 Zinfandels and Chardonnays in recent releases, I've got a couple of really compelling 2020 Pinot Noirs in this offering that are proof of that pudding. Come taste for yourself or order the new Releases sampler if you're not able to come to the Open House so it comes to you.

## Open House

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Please plan on joining us **November 17, 18 and 19 from 10-5**. The winery is located at 4940 Ross Rd. Sebastopol CA. [\*This map\*](#) will help, we're not well marked or easy to find.

**Pick up** is always an option, we just need to schedule for a day that we're here. Just call (707) 823-8980 or [email](#) and we'll figure it out.

## Library Releases

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In the 30+ years making my own wines, to be able to *show* how well our wines age means more to me than you can imagine. It's not just that they hang onto their fruit with time, but they actually *gain* many layers on top of that. There aren't many wineries willing to commit and invest into holding back wines for years to slowly bring them back to offer them for sale. But we are putting our money where our mouth is. Be on the lookout for the library releases which will go live on our website on **Saturday November 11 at 9 am Pacific**. You'll receive an e-mail that morning as a reminder. Despite the small amount of space devoted to it here, it is a significant focus of ours.

## Futures

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### 2022 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Futures

Another drought-ish vintage with low crop level, this occupies a similar spot on the spectrum as the 2021 vintage. Maybe not quite as firmly structured at the same stage as 2021, but the concentration of fruit is remarkable for a wine that is not heavily-laden or ponderous. Just like our Zinfandels, all this fruit was harvested before the epic heat spell that followed Labor Day weekend that year. Therefore, it possesses all the best typical qualities of this area and bottling.

Red and black cherry aromas are surrounded by nuances of fresh loam and Christmas spices. It sits evenly across the palate while just-right acidity makes it all seem very juicy and exciting. Sipping it with food just makes me want to come back and have a second sip by itself because it's not only a food wine, but it's just plain delicious as you'll see at the open house. I really need to give this a sexier name that does justice to its importance in our scheme of things.

Futures \$414 per case (full cases only, \$34.50/bottle). Estimated release price \$56. Offer available until December 31, 2023 or until the futures allocation sells out. Futures Release date November 2024, general retail release date November 2025. About 300 cases to be produced

### 2021 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Futures Release Notes

Extending the time in barrel on lees before bottling, just as with the 2020 vintage, I have just recently bottled this wine after 25 months in barrel at the end of October. I have learned that longer time in barrel is better, especially with such a structured young wine. So, I delayed the bottling which makes sense for the wine, despite doubling my workload this late during the harvest season. While I'm not the only person doing every single bit of the work (there are many strong hands in play for the major activities), I just happened to be the person making sure it all happens and the one attending to the many abstruse details nobody really talks

about when winemaking is discussed. These details can cause one to work insane hours and to sleep at the facility when driving home would get too much in the way of some much-needed sleep.

2021, another drought vintage, this is quite ample and generous. It is tempting to call it 'big brother' quite honestly. While I adore both the elegant and the robust sides of the vintage spectrum we can have (provided things are in balance) this is a stunning crowd pleaser that should seduce those who find Pinot Noir 'watery or wimpy.'

I ponder delaying the release of these futures offerings in successive years in order to give a little more breathing room for us to get everything done. But seeing how the longer time in barrel benefits the wines, I am seduced by the possibilities. Released now to futures customers only, Retail release to follow November 2024.

## New Releases

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### **New Release Sampler Pack**

In our continued effort to bring the Open House tasting to you, we are offering a Sampler pack of one bottle of each of the following five New Release wines plus a bottle of last year's release of 2021 dry Rosé of Syrah at 15% discount and free ground shipping. This offer is not on our regular public website. It is accessed only through [the link here](#) or the links provided on the email newsletter. You can also send in the attached order form or send us an email or give a call. It is possible to purchase multiple samplers, by the way as many have. *6 bottles, Special offer \$309 \$263*

### **2021 Dry Rosé of Syrah**

We don't always make a varietal Syrah Rosé. Only in the vintages where I have more of this component needed for the blended one, am I able to select out the barrels that will reach perfect balance with another 5 months in barrel on lees. The extra time fills out the 'rounds' to match the 'angles' this variety possesses as a Rosé. This talk of 'extra time in barrel through the summer' is not something you hear from most Rosé producers! While folks think Rosé wine is only 'good' for a few months after bottling and for summer consumption only, our style (and the 100% Syrah Rosé, especially) has legs and a very different trajectory.

Tasted now in November 2023, this shows a nice, focused Santa Rosa plum and Royal Ann cherry character. Bone-dry and perfectly balanced for holiday fare, we felt we have enough of this to offer again this year to illustrate what 'real' Rosé can do. Antonio Galloni reviewed this wine recently in June 2023: "The 2021 Dry rose of Syrah is a fine choice for readers looking for a Rose with enough texture and complexity to drink well at the dinner table. Creamy and expressive, with lovely red berry, floral and earthy character, the 2021 is an absolute delight. 90 points." Originally released Nov 2022, 93 cases produced *\$24 per bottle*.

### **2021 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay**

Our style of Chardonnay is probably best described as middle of the spectrum with surprises. It is barrel fermented in a mixture of old and new French oak using our own indigenous microflora. It is aged on lees in barrel for an extraordinarily long time and bottled without fining or filtration. The extended time on yeast lees (23 months) gives remarkable texture and fullness (surprise #1) which are balanced by the salivary-inducing acidity (surprise #2) necessary for that upward trajectory on the finish.

The 2021 vintage from this site possesses all the best qualities of the area: Richness paired with balancing acidity, great fruit (pear/apple with a hint of star fruit), and a nice non-fruit petrichor note. Compared to recent vintages, it's a bit richer than the racy 2020, more fruit-driven than the 2019, more similar to 2018 and 2016 (and especially the 2009). This should 'ring the bell' for Chardonnay lovers. Just 68 cases produced \$54 per bottle

### **2020 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**

Without any fires in the area, I think 2020 would have been considered one of the best vintages of the decade. The wines picked before the fires started in late August 2020 in our area are stunningly brilliant. Nobody can second guess those wines as they were in the barn before any possible harm could come. There were plenty of sites not affected despite being on the vine after the fires started because the reactive smoke was either too high or heading in the opposite direction from where the site was. Duh! There were yet other places we work with that were challenged and the growers and I agreed to leave on the vine as the exposure appeared to be significant. I used common sense as much as possible along with recalling my experience with a site that was heavily affected by smoke in 2008 that turned out to be very attractive with a rather different approach (2008 Black Lightnin'). We have had people ask for a repeat for many years since. And, no, this is not a repeat of that wine, thank you very much. This wine is so typical of the area in most vintages.

Ginger, red beets, red and black cherry, tarragon, and a touch of damp loam on the nose. Juicy roasted beets and cherry pie on the mouth. Very nice continuity, focus and length with a quite mouth-watering finish. I've endeavored to maintain clarity and focus of this wine during blending trials and have learned a lot in the process. 215 cases produced \$52 per bottle, \$30 per half bottle, \$108 per magnum

### **2020 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir**

For the past decade I have made some wines for a friend's label, Winners Circle, both from their own estate vineyard as well as sharing some sites I already work with. For me it was an opportunity to be lured out of my own usual, habitual aesthetic and look at things differently. For several years, their Sonoma Coast bottling was a blend of parts from High Slopes and Platt sites that I have become well acquainted with. I had to face the fact that arguably the appropriate blend was right up there with the separate expressions as far as balance and completeness... so for me it was 'mission accomplished. Another kind of good.' It's like the difference between a stunning solo performance vs. a duet or trio. With wine, the solos seem to get all the accolades. But faced with beautiful harmonies and counterpoints, who can argue which is more pleasurable? Winners Circle later decided to focus on their Estate site entirely, leaving the regional blend in the rear-view mirror. But the learning happened, and I continued this study for my own advancement of craft.

Again, in 2020, the blend of Platt and High Slopes were so compelling this vintage that I could not deny their union. It would be much easier to just grind through the usual items, resting on past laurels and marketing channels. But this year, the blend was undeniable, and why make things easy anyway?

I know I've hammered this message heavily, however, anyone who says all 2020 Sonoma wines are smoke-tainted (or will have it surface someday-maybe in 1000 years) needs to taste this wine or maybe enter an MMA ring with me for 30 minutes (it will not take long) to get straightened out on this subject. Again, we have multiple examples of success with this vintage as do a number of colleagues with the right situation.

There's a good mixture of plummy notes, hibiscus, black mission fig fresh off the tree, are echoed in the mouth. Some tart, juicy rhubarb notes interjected in the center make this quite satisfying. The finish is pretty rich and long with an upward trajectory, which is typical of our style. 196 cases produced *\$56 per bottle*.

### **2019 'High Slopes' Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**

This is from a site at the furthest southern edge of the Russian River Valley AVA where the coastal influence is strongest. It causes a challenge to the vines in the Spring while they are trying to bloom due to cold temperatures that inhibit full pollination giving smaller berries and very low yields. This foggy, wind-swept location is on the leeward side of the hillside so it is protected just enough to actually succeed ripening on a reliable basis. Due to the small berry size, the concentration of the red wine is significant in most vintages. This vintage presents more of a coastal vibe with bright acidity and crisp edges rather than relying upon sheer concentration of skin material.

There's also a saline undercurrent that runs through this wine from start to finish, again more of it's nearby coastal location, even though it is in the edge of the Russian River Valley AVA. Hibiscus and blood orange aromas take the lead. Some cranberry and spicy nuances like allspice make one salivate with anticipation of the lively verve this wine has. Bing cherry emerges after the bottle is open for a day. While appearing a bit more svelte and wiry than usual, it is built for the long-haul (in my opinion, although Mr. Galloni thinks more of a near-term proposition. I just recall the 1999 Little Sister Russian River Pinot Noir vs. the 1999 Big Brother aging curves and see a similar life to this expression). I feel this should be laid down a couple of years before really getting into them in a serious way. 63 cases produced *\$75 per bottle*.

### **2019 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon**

All of our Cabernet Sauvignons originate from the family vineyard. However, the soils and rootstocks vary so it is not surprising to end up with a couple different expressions of the grape in the area. We bottle part with only the 'Alexander Valley' designation and the rest with the Vineyard designation.

Bottled just days before harvest began this year after nearly 4 years in barrel, it promises a very long life as the classic versions of this variety should deliver. As I mentioned for the release of the 2018 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, my winemaking for this bottling has evolved from a slightly traditional gestalt to more of a Burgundian approach of no racking at all until bottling after nearly double the typical time in barrel. It suits the fruit well and I think the wines are better for it as we don't squander the material's long term oxygen appetite by handling in the open air. The result with this 2019 wine is truly remarkable. It is a very special vintage for this variety in the area (as 2023 appears to be). The approach has layered textures and nuances that at this early stage of the wine's life and I am immensely impressed with the promise this has in addition to how compelling it is so soon after bottling. Sometimes, you can have it both ways.

Cassis, slight vanilla, classic old-school Cabernet character on the nose. Structure and body are in balance. Having worked at a winery for several years right out of college where Andre Tchelistcheff consulted in the 1980's, I think this is the type of Cab that would have made his eyes sparkle. [he also had a disdain for Zinfandel, for which I forgive him. As much as he loved Pinot Noir, I think he would have appreciated our style of Zin very much].

Two days after opening the bottle, it shows epic integration and seamlessness. While really plush and complex, it has a juicy, perfect level of acidity and enough red fruit pop on the finish like a well-placed crescendo in a musical composition. It has the stuffing to age a very long time. 540 cases produced \$48 per bottle

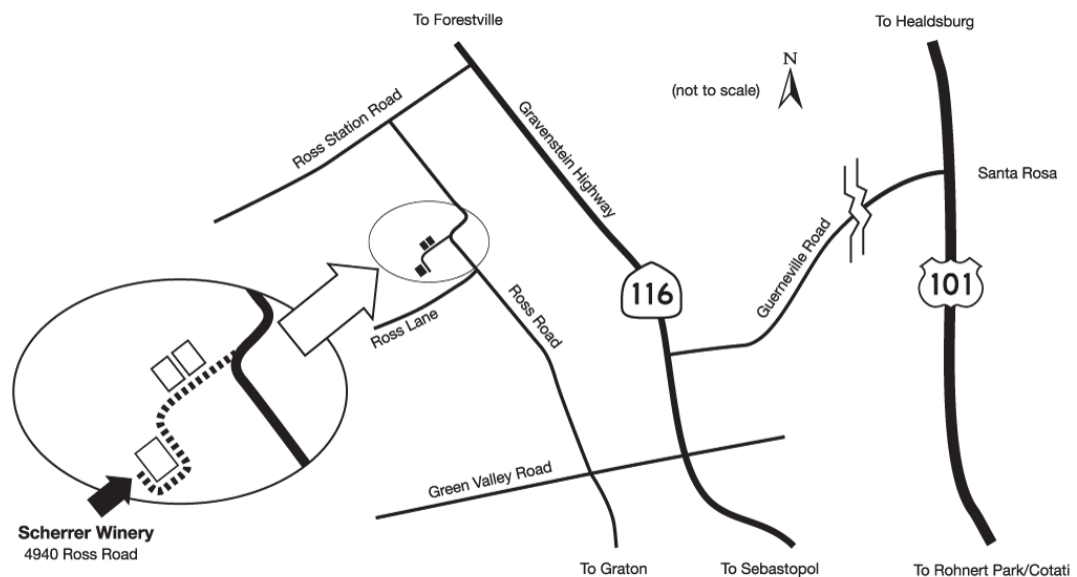
## Very Recent Releases

The 2016 Calypso Syrah (\$50) is showing so well right now it would be a shame to ignore it. We have a bit of the 2019 Shale Terrace Zin (\$42) and is showing nicely at this point (we don't sell all of the Shale on futures as we did in the past). The 2018 Pinots are also strutting their stuff: Gunsalus (\$48), Platt (\$78), Hallberg (\$78), and Russian River (\$52). Of course most of you are probably waiting for the Library release!

Again, thanks for your continued support. Your support also allows us the creative freedom to do what we love and to support old and create potential new family legacies. As always, I am unable to fully communicate this in such a small space, but still try anyway.

## 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 is 707-824-1933. Please drive slowly down the driveway. The entrance and our gravel parking area are on the west side, so please drive clockwise around to the other side of the building.



**WARNING: Drinking distilled spirits, beer, coolers, wine and other alcoholic beverages may increase cancer risk, and, during pregnancy, can cause birth defects. For more information go to [www.P65Warnings.ca.gov/alcohol](http://www.P65Warnings.ca.gov/alcohol).**

## Shipping Information

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We will be happy to ship your order to any of the following states when weather is wine friendly. We prefer FedEx for Ground, though UPS is available by request.	Case: 12 x 750 mL 24 x 375 mL 6 x 1.5 L
<b>Pick up</b> is available at the Winery during events or by appointment.	NC
<b>GLS Ground Delivery</b> (recommended) to CA	\$27/box
<b>GLS 2-Day</b> to AZ, ID, NV, OR, WA and parts of NM	\$33/box
<b>Ground</b> to CA, NM, NV or OR	\$40/box
<b>Ground</b> to AZ, CO, ID, MT, WA or WY	\$51/box
<b>Ground</b> to AL, DC, FL, GA, IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, ME, MI, MN, MO, NC, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, VT or WI	\$63/box
<b>FedEx 2-day Air</b> to above states plus: HI higher	\$1173.50/box
<b>FedEx Overnight</b> to any above state. HI higher	\$240/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
I am over 21. Date of Birth:	Shipping Notes

Futures Wine - Released November 2024	Price (cases only)	Quantity	Amount
2022 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$414 / case		
Futures Subtotal			
Sales Tax: Pick up 8.5%			
Shipping: AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, NC, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, VT, WA, WI, WY		%	
Choose: <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up at Winery <input type="checkbox"/> Shipping method and cost:			
<u>Deadline</u> : December 31, 2023		<b>Futures Total</b>	

New Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2021 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay	\$54 / bottle		
2020 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$52 / bottle		
	\$30 / half bottle		
	\$108 / magnum		
2019 'High Slopes' Pinot Noir	\$75 / bottle		
2020 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir	\$56 / bottle		
2019 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	\$48 / bottle		
New Release Sampler (one each above plus Rose' of Syrah, 15% discount)	\$263/ 6 bottle pack		

Past Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2021 Dry Rosé of Syrah	\$24 / bottle		
Scherrer Coutale Sommelier Corkscrew	\$25 each		
Subtotal			
Discount on wine for total of 12 or more bottles (sampler & futures builds toward the discount but are not further discounted)		-10%	
Subtotal			
Sales Tax: Pick up 8.5%			
Shipping: AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, ME, MI, NC, NH, NJ, NM, NV, NY, OH, OK, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, VT, WA, WI, WY		%	
Choose <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up at Winery <input type="checkbox"/> Shipping method and cost:			

**Total**Payment:  Visa / MasterCard  American Express  Check

Card #	Expires:	Security Code
Signature:	Date:	