

## Ebb and flow (and a Nepenthe reprisal)

We have ‘enjoyed’ another reasonably moisture-laden rainy season this year (though in our area it was more spread out over the season in contrast to all the flooding in Southern California). This moisture is good for the health of perennial plants, including grapevines. When rainfall is spread out, more of it has a chance to soak into the soil as opposed to simply running off toward the ocean making headlines along the way. With the forecast of La Nina conditions developing over the Pacific Ocean over the next part of the year, we are being told to expect lower than normal rainfall in the near future. Either way, I’m going to continue relishing the more generous rainfall years and tolerating the less generous ones, dealing with the ebb and flow of moisture as it comes. From a historical perspective, until super dry seasons begin stringing together for more than 2 years in a row, it is nothing different than what our area has seen for at least 170 years.

As you’ve heard me mention before, California historically receives its seasonal rainfall with very wide swings between drought and deluge. In July 2021 I posted [this link](#) for Santa Rosa rainfall for each month beginning in 1902 to 2020. Additionally, [here](#) is an excerpt of the years between 1853 and 1886 at a site in Santa Rosa and then Petaluma (which tends to be a little drier than Santa Rosa). The point I found most interesting is that the year-to-year variability is normal for sites in this area, a pattern that goes back a long time.

For example, when I take the most recent periods of annual rainfall (July 1-June 30) the 20 year period ending in 2019 averaged 30.5” while on the other end of the data set, the 20 years ending in 1922 averaged 28.5”. It strikes me that the average is remarkably similar to each other and right in the zone for this entire data period of 1902 - 2019 (30”), despite the huge differences between individual years throughout the data set. Even the most recent 10-year average ending in 2019 (29.5”) is right in line with the historical averages. Looking at this large data set from 1902-2019, please note how variable each month’s totals are between seasons. Again, my point is that for grapevines (and other crops i.e. growing grass for livestock) I think the way we receive the rainfall can be more significant to the character and size of the crop than the simple total. Years with smaller totals arriving in evenly spaced intervals can be as effective at recharging the soil (or even more so) than high rainfall totals where it arrives with infrequent deluges - especially if they are very early in the rainfall season. So in the right soils, the vines on ‘old-style’ rootstocks that explore the soil deeply can pretty much get what they need during what we call a ‘drought’. Having a front-loaded or back-loaded rainy season can determine if the soils are at field capacity or saturated at the beginning of the season which will have an impact on the amount of growth and have an effect on the personality of the vintage.

Just as there is an ebb and flow to rainfall and weather patterns, there appears to be a parallel in supply chain dynamics and wholesale wine market patterns. A tidal lagoon can sometimes

be disrupted by some large object falling into the system and creating a significant splash. The recent pandemic was an example of this. Sometimes reverberations fade quickly after the initial waves have passed along the shoreline and parts of the shallow bottom. The initial disruption of the pandemic with the kinking of the supply chain has mostly worked its way through our societal laguna. Unfortunately, another reverberation has settled into a difficult situation for small producers like us without a national sales force. Initially during the shutdown when take-out was the only option, restaurant buyers/Sommeliers were no longer needed so they were among the first to be let go. When re-opening began, struggling restaurants often tasked the general manager with wine purchasing decisions on top of so many other duties. Some restaurants that initially reopened ordered our wines immediately as demand was there and the older list was still saved on the computer. However, over time the already over-worked, beleaguered GM's found it easier to let the more dominant distributors write and populate their wine lists (for free). Naturally, those distributors would promote the brands who have a national sales force with a culture of badgering the distributor to 'make target numbers.' I can relate countless stories from restaurant (and even small store) buyers saying the distributor is always out of stock on our wine, but the distributor just happens to have something else to sell on hand...which means they are moving other brands to 'make numbers' while leaving our wine in 'the book' (and out of stock). This isn't the case in all markets, but the impact is real enough across the country. We are not alone in seeing this.

**What this means to you and us is that we once again find ourselves with wines aged to a perfect spot in their trajectory without its usual home.** In the Spring of 2020 we did a 'Nepenthe' offering of such wines left behind from the suddenly closed channels and instead offered them directly to folks at home at amazing pricing to help ease the pain of being effectively 'locked down.' We understand how grateful people were for this and we share in that gratitude for being able to have that direct connection. This keeps us able to continue doing what we do and supporting our family and vineyard partners in growing and making the kind of food-friendly and age-worthy wines we have been refining for decades. So, now in 2024 we are again faced with a similar situation that is a reverberation of this difficult ebb in the flow of things. We have selected a Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Rhône blend that have found themselves without their usual restaurant destinations and are offering them at Nepenthe pricing of 40% off retail through May 31.

Just don't forget about the new releases, they are really exciting.

## Open House – One weekend only.

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Reverberations aside, we are happy to be able to host our annual Spring Open House. We will be open only one long weekend, **April 19 - 21 from 10 - 5 each day.** As in the fall, we will have food plates and seating available outside, this should allow for less congestion inside where the wines will be poured. This has seemed to be a positive change from the old days of crowding into smaller spaces for a lot of reasons.

If you're unable to make that weekend, we have pickup by appointment, just call or drop an email and we'll find a time that works. I am at the family vineyard a lot, but Judi is often able

to be there to meet you at the winery. Coordinating is important. 707-823-8980  
[info@scherrerwinery.com](mailto:info@scherrerwinery.com)

## New Releases

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### **2023 Dry Rosé, Sonoma County**

This is a very important wine to me personally as several family members and I drink a glass of it as much or more than anything else I make (I'm not yet required to log this data at this point). Depending upon the characteristics of the components (and vintage twist), the basic proportion of this is usually around half Grenache, with the other half made up of Zinfandel and Syrah. In 2023 the optimal proportion was about 53% Grenache, 34% Syrah and 13% Zinfandel. Each variety is harvested and vinified separately. Just before bottling, they are blended in 'the right' proportions. And, my how they harmonize in 2023! For the first time in over a decade with this type of blend, we had an excess of Grenache beyond the optimal proportion and have withheld several barrels to bottle separately which is a very exciting wine in its own right. Usually, it is an excess of Syrah, if anything. But not this year. Every year has its own slant.

Tart red cherry is the theme here. There's a trace of strawberry, hibiscus and some red plum nuances as well, but cherry is unquestionably the main theme. Components for this were harvested independently, and I am thrilled at how lively and pretty this wine is. It's the second vintage for two of its components and my what a vintage it was! No stress, all success. 250 cases produced. *\$26 per bottle.*

### **2021 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay, Alexander Valley**

Lemon-lime, petrichor, dried-apple and a hint of dried apricot on the nose. Nice, thick entry with substantial texture far beyond its barely 14% alcohol level. There's surprising acidity right from the start which carries through in a straight-line keeping things refreshing and lively. There's a nice, umami-savory/brioche note that seeps in gradually as the acidity slowly recedes, kind of like how a camera changes focal planes from foreground to background. Day 2 on an open bottle shows a little more of the brioche notes and maybe a hint of barrel nuance on its very long finish.

Overall, this is quite dynamic and complex which has a lot to do with its extended time in barrel on yeast lees for 24 months. It's as though no new barrels are needed to support the non-fruit side of things (however there's still some new oak in there). 135 cases produced. *\$44 per bottle, limited half bottles \$23.*

### **2020 Sonoma County Pinot Noir**

As our 'entry level' Pinot Noir, this always hits well above its price point in every aspect. It allows me to cast as wide a geographical net within Sonoma County to assemble a dynamite Pinot Noir. It's seriously structured, has great complexity and ages well. While I could label this as Russian River Valley, I don't because there's another bottling that always has *that* signature big-time (called the Russian River Valley bottling, of course). However, this vintage actually shows a bit of Russian River Valley signature of dark cherry cola, plus a bit of peony and even a spicy musky hint as well. On the mouth, there is hibiscus added, good core tannin

structure and just enough acidity to make it juicy and uplifting while showing good continuity of flavor and a long finish.

Day 2, the aromatics are a bit less effusive. However, the mouth becomes a powerhouse explosion of red fruits, darker fruits with an earthy counterpoint and all-important juicy acidity. Again, it has weight and seriousness beyond most Single Vineyard bottlings I see out there lately. Put this in a blind tasting of 2018-2021 fancy Pinot Noirs and tell me what you think. 208 cases produced *\$42 per bottle*.

### **2022 Scherrer Vineyard 'Old & Mature Vines' Zinfandel, Alexander Valley**

I usually prefer the later vintages because they usually have more moderate temperatures during the final stages of ripening and harvest. However sometimes, the earlier ones can be beneficial to miss a heat spell as well. In 2022, our Zinfandel (and nearly all the Pinot Noir) was just arriving at the 'sweet spot' before Labor Day. So, we harvested ahead of the forecasted heat wave, preferring not to subject the grapes to the dehydration challenges due to their vascular connections naturally breaking down at that stage as they are unable to rehydrate the berries as fast as 'the tide flows out' of them. What we did not know was how extreme and long that heat wave would end up being until it was already upon us. Fortunately, as a result of getting our grapes in before the heat, our wines have their typical nerve and verve.

This brings up the interesting subject of 'optimal harvest window.'. Regarding harvest timing, under most harvest weather conditions, there is usually a window of several days (not just several hours) where one will get about the *same kind* of wine style. Over the past 15 or so years I have been leaning in on the early side of that window a bit more and more. Sometimes, on harvest day, I recall wondering if I hadn't gone just a bit too early while destemming the fruit. However, as fermentation and extraction proceeded, revealing more of the true character of the grapes, I would grow more comfortable with my choice of harvest date. Then as the wines settled into barrel during their first year, I would find myself quite satisfied that the harvest date was just about right. Then after bottling, as they grew into their first 5-15 years after the vintage, I would continue to grow even more certain it was the correct decision. So, this is not something that has come as an epiphany. It's about experiencing the entire ebb and flow of the plant and wine system over many vintages.

With fresh grapes, the difficult part in deciding to pick is to find the point where structure and generosity (angles and rounds) are in balance. Since you cannot ferment and extract the compounds of a sample rapidly enough to make a choice based on the result, one has to taste/chew (gently) the freshly harvested grape sample to get a sense of the balance and *imagine* how it will play out as these things combine during aging. There are some clues: Looking at the way the vines present themselves as the season progresses is a large database of observation to assess the state of the plant and the likely composition that the wine will have in the end. There's a parallel balance between fruit and non-fruit facets and ripeness choice that I can and do go on for hours about (maybe at another time). Too far in either direction gives a less interesting result, in my opinion.

For this wine, there is a bit of blueberry, red raspberry, freshly picked wild blackberry are accompanied by some acoustic guitar notes (see Shale Terrace description below) of rosewood and graphite on the nose. The mouth is inviting, both fruity (with red fruits initially and

plenty of darker fruit notes showing up in the middle palate) then leaning a bit savory with a juicy, salivating finish. It is set up in the style of the past decades of our OMV Zinfandels. I am delighted at how this wine continues the stylistic trajectory we have been on. 580 cases produced. *\$44 per bottle, \$24 per half bottle and \$90 per magnum.*

### **2022 Scherrer Vineyard ‘Shale Terrace’ Zinfandel, Alexander Valley**

As I’ve said many times, this is the Zin that identifies as Pinot Noir. It is a singular expression of this variety that I have not seen in a bottle anywhere else. Pretty red fruits and a signature nectarine perfume greet the nose. There’s a slight strawberry-rhubarb thing as well and a graphite-like petrichor note that reminds me of using a pencil to shave off bits of graphite into the grooves of the ‘nut’ when replacing Martin D-28 guitar strings to help lubricate their movement for fine tuning each string. So, there’s a trace of cedar from the pencil, rosewood from the guitar body and Spruce from the top. By day 4 on an open sample bottle a note of sage arises. On the mouth, it shows a good cut of acidity like one would use rhubarb in a fruit dish to balance the sugary, fruity ‘rounds’ from the other components. While not a heavy-weight, there is appropriate persistence similar to the perfect house guest who stays just long enough to leave a fine impression and great memories that elicit many future visits. 145 cases produced. *\$44 per bottle.*

### **2019 Huntsman Red**

2011 was our first vintage of this Rhône-inspired blend. It has been a creatively rewarding exploration of the long-established synergy between Grenache and Syrah. This 2019 Vintage was aged 4 years in mostly larger format barrel (1 ½ to 2x the normal size) and as (almost) always, no new oak was used. I tried some once and felt it was not bringing anything more than it took away, so there was no point in spending the money on new barrels.

As usual, satisfying earth and darker tones from the Syrah are balanced by the lift and lightness, higher perfumes brought to the table by Grenache. I co-ferment most of this and they harmonize quite well this way. All winemaking choices such as time on skins, degree of pressing follow what the combination needs, so it’s not surprising how harmonious the co-ferments show. Since I have some separate parcels of each variety on hand, I have the option of nudging the blend if and when needed similar to putting the rose blend together.

Aromas of brand-new leather roasted red beets, a trace of sandalwood, and what my dear old friend Don Bliss used to call ‘mother earth’ referring to fine Barolo. The mouth carries a lot of savory notes with that ‘mother earth’ thing with a finish that does not appear to end. It sits comfortably in the middle of the mouth like a large house cat on one’s lap on a cold night. The wine doesn’t really purr. But you might. 102 cases produced. *\$44 per bottle*

### **2019 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon, Alexander Valley**

I love to open bottles from this vineyard at 10-20 years of age. They appear immortal, which is an asset of ‘classically-styled’ Cabernet Sauvignon from our area. By contrast, what I call the ‘chocolate milkshake’ style that is showy/yummy when freshly made but doesn’t even make it past a decade without decay and decline. To some folks, those wines are simply delicious and consume them very young. Fair enough. But to me this is frankly a wasted opportunity to have a ‘great’ wine. One may as well drink a very delicious young Dolcetto without a potentially \$200 price tag.

Here, there's red fruit, cassis, menthol, pipe tobacco (my dad used to smoke a pipe many years ago-the unburned tobacco smelled great) and fresh plum on the nose. On the mouth, brightly lit red fruit is balanced by shadowy umami-laden notes of grilled portobello mushroom, with a fruity reprise of hibiscus, notes similar to those in the 2020 Pinot Noir as well [Pinot descriptors in a Cab?]. Holding up the non-fruit side of the equation again, freshly tilled loam finds its way into the retro nasal aromas at the end. Having a Cabernet Sauvignon wine with some red fruits and just enough acidity to give a mouth-watering finish is uncommon today and rather exciting.

Day 2 after opening there is a more cohesive aromatic character, kind of like how a lasagna becomes more integrated upon a second heating. It's the same story on in the mouth. There's also an overall menthol nuance that emerges as a tiny back note. While meant to age a long time, this can certainly be enjoyed younger. If you want a preview of what's to come, open bottle and nurse it over a few days. 140 cases produced. *\$72 per bottle, \$38 per half bottle, \$146 per magnum.*

### **New Release Sampler Pack**

In our continued effort to bring the open house tasting to you, one bottle of each of the above New Release wines (except for Shale Terrace Zinfandel, which is too limited to offer this way) 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 an email or give a call. 6 bottles, Special offer ~~\$272~~ \$231

\*Free shipping on sampler packs only. Ground shipping will be weather dependent; if needed, we'll plan on storing the wine for you and ship in the fall when temperatures are wine friendly. If you'd like your wine sooner, we will offer a discount for 2-day air on this as well.

## Nepenthe III

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We have selected a Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and Rhône blend that have found themselves without their usual restaurant destinations and are offering them at Nepenthe pricing of 40% off retail through May 31.

### **2015 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir**

This is one of my favorite vintages of this bottling ever. When pulling a bottle to take home for a nice meal or to share with friends, this has been my go-to. At nearly a decade after the vintage it has truly hit its stride and in perfect shape for the style. It is a tragedy that this does not see the light of day on restaurant wine lists all over the place due to the changes in distribution. It has the potential to open peoples' minds about how RRV Pinot Noir can be a serious wine capable of development and improvement for decades rather than mere months. It is stunning and something that will make pretty much anyone smile as soon as they bring the glass to their nose. There may be a frown when the bottle is gone, though. Definitely something to take a stand on as we were quite bullish on the demand when we made this so there's plenty to go around. I would not be surprised to see people re-visit the well multiple times similar to the original Nepenthe offering of the 2013 vintage. ~~Regular \$52~~ Nepenthe price \$31

**2017 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay**

Another fine food group is held down by this style of Chardonnay. It is a profound expression of a tiny site situated in a fantastic neighborhood for this variety. I'll never understand why this bottling did not become intensely sought after. For two years it was rated higher than all the fancier top name labels in a publicly shared blind tasting in NYC amongst long-term wine professionals. Both times it was considered 'a fluke.' You can read the results of the second tasting [here](#). I should call this the 'Rodney Dangerfield effect.' We will start with the lovely and complex 2017 vintage and if needed, will move to the 2018. ~~Regular \$52~~ Nepenthe price \$31

**2016 Huntsman Red**

Exploration of Grenache and Syrah together found us adding another Grenache site for 2016 between Windsor and Healdsburg, slightly warmer than the Kick Ranch which I consider on the edge of regularly having sufficient heat to ripen the variety. Kick was usually the last fruit we took in. Good generosity and suave texture were conferred by the inclusion of this site. It is pretty compelling and very useful with a wide range of cuisine. There's still a rooting of Syrah from Calypso and Lolita vineyards in the cooler parts of the county in this vintage. I love the confluence of these different parcels because it is possible to bring just the right components to the table in various bottlings given the nature of the vintage. It bridges the gap between a rich Pinot Noir and a domestic Rhône type blend. ~~Regular \$42~~ Nepenthe price \$25

## Recent Releases

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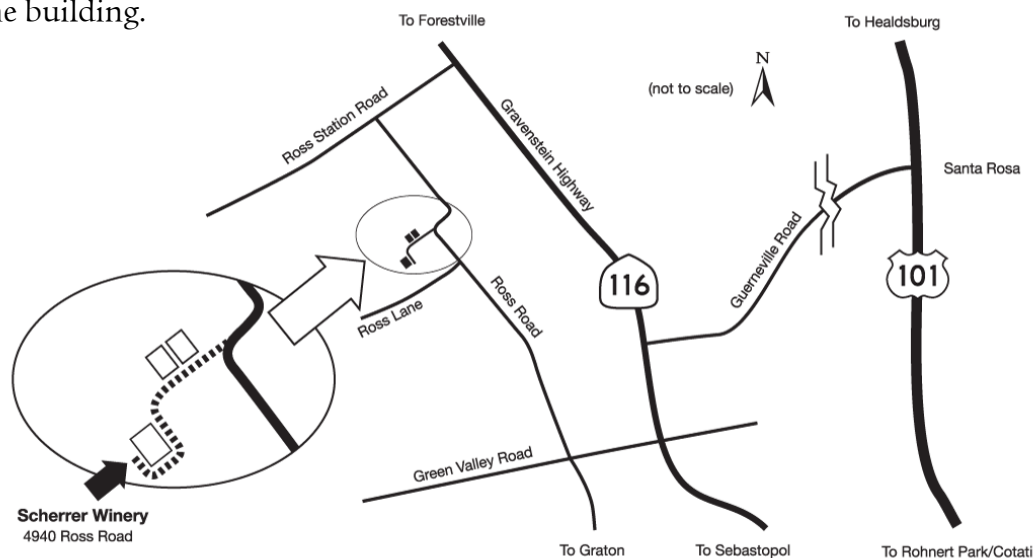
If anyone wants to see how our style of rose develops, we still have a little of the 2022 vintage which is at peak drinking point and would make a nice comparison with the very recently bottled 2023. I'd drink the 2022 (and 2021, if you have any) this spring and early part of the summer while allowing the 2023 to settle into itself after its recent bottling. The 2018 Old & Mature Vines Zinfandel is at a very happy point in its development as well.

I certainly appreciate your continued support as we navigate these turbulent times.



## 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 707-823-8980. 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.



**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

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 AZ, CA, NM, NV or OR	\$40/box
<b>Ground</b> to 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	\$170.50/box



**MAILING**

**SHIPPING**

Name	Name
Street	Company Name <span style="float: right;">Residential <input type="checkbox"/></span>
City, State, Zip Code	Street
Daytime Phone	City, State, Zip Code
e-mail:	Delivery Phone
I am over 21, Date of Birth:	Shipping Notes

New Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2023 Dry Rosé (Grenache, Zinfandel & Syrah)	\$26 / bottle		
2021 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay	\$44 / bottle		
	\$23 / half bottle		
2020 Sonoma County Pinot Noir	\$42 / bottle		
2022 Old & Mature Vines Zinfandel	\$44 / bottle		
	\$24 / half bottle		
	\$90 / magnum		
2022 Shale Terrace Zinfandel	\$44 / bottle		
2019 Huntsman Red Wine	\$44 / bottle		
2019 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon	\$72 / bottle		
	\$38 / half bottle		
	\$146 / magnum		
New Release Sampler (one each except Shale, 15% discount)	\$ 231 / 6 bottle pack		

**Subtotal**

Nepenthe III - 40% off Retail	Price	Quantity	Amount
2015 Russian River Pinot Noir	<del>Reg \$52</del> Sale \$31/ bottle		
2017 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay	<del>Reg \$52</del> Sale \$31/ bottle		
2016 Huntsman Red	<del>Reg \$42</del> Sale \$25/ bottle		

**Subtotal**

Discount on wine for total orders of 12 or more bottles (the sampler and Nepenthe will build towards the discount, though will not be further discounted)	-10%	
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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	%	
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Choose  Pick up at Winery    or     Shipping method and cost:

**Total**

Payment:  Visa / MasterCard     American Express     Check

Card #	Expires:	Security Code:
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Signature:	Date:
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