

Dynamic Tension

With a nod to Charles Atlas and Bruce Lee, I have been thinking a lot about the role of Dynamic Tension in wine and winemaking. My notion is that balance in wine is fundamentally built upon the two main opposing structural forces of ‘angles’ (acidity and tannin) and ‘rounds’ (glycerol, which is proportional to alcohol, and/or residual sugar, if the style relies upon it). Striving for balance means having these two opposing forces in equivalent prominence. And while ‘balance’ is not a new concept, ‘angles and rounds’ in wine is my own original idea of expressing it in a way that is easy to understand without jargon. I’ve looked this subject up in the published literature and am stunned to find that it appears not to have been previously elucidated in any similar simple manner. While it seems so self-evident to me, I suppose simplicity in communicating concepts isn’t always evident to those deep in the scientific world.

When a wine has dynamic tension, I think the angle-type components are so well intertwined within each other that they stay in lockstep from entry to finish, working together as an energetic unit to oppose and balance the rounds in the wine. When a young wine is taut with this dynamic tension, with refreshingly high levels of acidity and tannin, it can present itself as though it was a rubber band on the old balsa wood airplanes. With enough twists it would usually end up on the roof of that neighbor down the street that didn’t like kids. That same energy that carried the 25-cent aircraft into hostile territory is what makes that wine appear wound-up like that rubber band, but this time into friendly territory, carrying flavors through to a long, juicy finish. This is how dynamic tension in a wine can support continuity of flavor, from sip to swallow to savor to memory. What the dynamic tension can also confer is ability to age well with positive development.

Another aspect of dynamic tension occurs in the vineyard. The grapevine is pushing against gravity all the time, pulling water and nutrients from under the soil surface to its uppermost tissues, trying to climb up using whatever is available to support it toward raw, unfiltered sunlight (we can discuss the physiological effect of red to far red wavelength ratios has on growth and flavor development another time). The vine uses its tendrils to secure a grip on some existing structure like a tree in the wild or the trellis in a modern vineyard. Even untrellised vines, such as our 112-year-old Zinfandel vines planted by my grandfather in his early 20’s in 1912, reach out for something to hold onto, often finding another vine with which to intertwine and co-support. The dynamic tension these vines’ tissues are burdened with is the weight of their own biomass that sways in the breeze without the help of trees to support them, creating gnarled permanent wood that shows every moment of effort the vine took to seek nutrients with the need to support its own life from below the surface.

Traditionally, the better wines in Europe have come from more meager soils where the vines have to work hard and invest all they have into the fruit they are able to carry. From that history, vines have been selected to grow where they do not have it easy. And like the best vineyards, the people farming these plants have not traditionally 'had it easy.' When looking at the history of viticulture in the world, it is only recently that it has been considered a 'lucrative' endeavor in many places, and generally only for a select few at the top of the food chain of perception. The industry is currently getting a taste of that bitter old paradigm that this is not a printing press for money. It is a form of farming that at its best creates very special things that give pleasure and have a very long shelf life. We, like so many other small producers, have been struggling to replace lost wholesale distribution channels to get our wines to restaurants where people can discover what is truly special about them. Which in turn will hopefully then find them in a local store or come to us directly as you all have. I truly appreciate the support you all have shown us and hope we have earned it in the future as well as it is our life blood.

While reflecting upon dynamic tension this fall, I recall last year pondering the value of a lifetime of learning. Since then, I have developed my own action plan to try and provide an opportunity to engage those much younger than me to share some of the experiences I was fortunate to have decades ago with the goal of jumpstarting their lifetime of learning. I've found great satisfaction in sharing older bottles of iconic wines in my possession to inform another generation of what these things actually taste like. It is one thing to hear of a 'Legend.' It is another thing to behold it and decide for oneself if it is worthy or not of that status and how it compares to other wines without the pedigree.

As an example, last fall after an open house, I opened an iconic 1998 Bordeaux for the crew that helped out, including some younger folks. The wine was a 'thank you' gift from a person that I stored wine for when I had extra room. According to their smart phones, the wine was apparently worth about \$1000 at that time. Since it cost me nothing, I had nothing to lose, and my young associates had everything to gain. What was interesting to me is that this bottle of wine, well-aged and stored perfectly, was quite unremarkable, despite multiple 'perfect scores' from wine pundits. It took a while for the 'youngsters' to see for themselves that this particular emperor had no clothes. But they finally did, empowering them to 'call it as they see it' in the future. What a priceless investment in the future of the wine industry that was. I look forward to continuing this project.

Open House

Please plan on joining us **November 22, 23 and 24 from 10-5**. We'll have the new releases and some gems from the Library to share. And some excellent nibbles from Chef Peter. 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 for any wine order, we just need to schedule for a day that we're here. Just call (707) 823-8980 or [email](#) and we'll make sure one of us is here. The winery address is 4940 Ross Road, Sebastopol, 95472.

Futures

2023 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Futures

As a vintage, I would call this elegant and balanced with somewhat lower alcohol levels than average as flavors developed well at lower sugar contents. With the vintage's later start to growing vines and cooler overall temperatures, I anticipated higher malic acid levels than normal, so I knew that the grapes should taste more appley and tart than usual at harvest. Then, down the road, after malolactic fermentation (which converts malic to lactic acid, which is half as chemically 'strong') the resulting wine would maintain freshness and appropriate acidic 'angles'. Here is [an article](#) that discusses relative sensory perceptions of different organic wine acids separate from the chemical strength of each major organic acids found in wine and grapes.

On the nose, high toned, floral, rose-hips, aromas like bloomtime in the vineyard during late May/early June. What a fascinating echo of a sensory memory. In the mouth it is elegant and persistent, resonating with the flavors promised by the aroma: juicy, red beet and hibiscus, inner mouth perfume, slightly chewy at this early stage, it moves onto a long mouth-watering finish.

A product of cool harvest time conditions, this is a truly special rendition of Pinot Noir from this area. There's generosity, for sure, but there are plenty of amazing aromatics at play here and a beautiful structural tension, reinforced by appropriate acidity acting with supple tannins to balance and create just enough tension to keep our attention. Futures \$432 per case (full cases only, \$36/bottle). Estimated release price \$56. Offer available until December 31, 2024 or until the futures allocation sells out. Futures Release date November 2025, general retail release date November 2026. About 500 cases to be produced

2022 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Futures Release Notes

Extending the time in barrel on lees before bottling, just as with the 2020 and 2021 vintages, I have just recently bottled this wine after 24 months in barrel. As I said last year, I have learned that longer time in barrel is better, especially with such a structured young wine. So, I again delayed the bottling until the end of October which makes sense for the wine, despite adding to my workload and complicating logistics during this later part of the harvest season.

You may remember that 2022 was punctuated by a long and severe heat spell beginning on Labor Day. Fortunately, we harvested all the grapes for this (as well as our Zinfandel) before that weather event set in. So, while the wine is generous in the spirit of the season it is very much in our mouth-watering style without any trace of prune-y or cooked notes, which one might expect if the fruit had to hang through much of that while on the cusp of ripeness.

The color is remarkably dark, somewhat like the 2021 vintage. The nose is greeted with a dark fruit potpourri of black raspberry, sweet fresh beets, and a hint of blackberry. There's a nice counterpoint of freshly tilled loam to keep things interesting and balanced. I used a fair bit of new oak in this vintage as the fruit elements were quite pronounced. The right kind of oak is a balancing non-fruit element [another rung on the balance ladder beyond angles and rounds is fruit vs non-fruit] I can introduce, and when it is the right kinds of barrel, they don't show as new barrels. The palate is quite broad and rich that still maintains its course and proceeds in a beautiful linear fashion toward a long, mouth-watering finish. It has the stuffing to age a long time, yet I'm still amazed at how delicious it is at this incredibly early stage. Even right after bottling, serving this with dinner to the extended family finds folks reaching for a second

glass despite other options on the table. I had to go back to the stacks several times to complete these tasting notes. Only 286 cases produced. Released now to futures customers only, general retail release to follow November 2025.

New Releases

New Release Sampler Pack

We've really embraced the idea of bringing our Open House tasting to you with a special offering of a Sampler pack of one bottle of each of the following five New Release wines for the holidays at 15% discount and free ground shipping. Since many folks have asked to order a couple of these at the same time, we will offer a double pack for 20% discount. There's still room to add a bottle or two of something else to fill the 6 or 12 (or 15 pack) shippers we have. 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. *5 bottles, Special offer \$200, 10 bottles Special offer \$378*

2023 Dry Rosé of Grenache

This is the first time we have bottled a Grenache Rosé as a 100% varietal. Normally, it is about half of the blend in our dry Rosé, with the other half being Zinfandel and Syrah. In 2023, we had more of this than was ideal for the blend, yet it was truly balanced as its own entity - just a little different. I am razor-focused on the fit and finish of any Rosé we make and spend a lot of time trying different blends to see what combinations use everything to their best end as well as keeping continuity of style, energy and nuance of a particular bottling. In some vintages, there has been a little more Syrah component than needed, and I find a way to sculp out a little from the right barrels that will complete themselves perfectly with a few more months in barrel on lees while elevating the usual blended beauty. In 2023, it was a Grenache lot that had this honor of finding that spot.

Watermelon, maraschino cherry aromas rise initially if the wine is very cold. As it warms slightly, alpine strawberry (*Fragraria vesca*) perfumes emerge. Somewhat full-bodied for a truly dry (meaning no residual sugar) rosé, it should pair very well with holiday table fare. There is a graceful transition in the mouth with seamless continuity throughout and a very long finish.

I had shown a barrel sample to a visiting sommelier last July. She said it was the best wine she had tasted on her entire trip to CA and has reminded me she wants some for her wine list. Here is your chance to have some before she scoops it up. Only 68 cases produced \$26 *per bottle*.

2022 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay

During tasting visits by visitors to the winery, I regularly hear people tell me they don't like Chardonnay, but they like ours. When I inquire as to why, the 'buttery' adjective comes up all the time as a turn-off for the varietal. I see 'buttery' used as a generic descriptor for two different reasons. First, low acidity can make the wine slide around like an oily substance low on 'angles' and so seem 'buttery' as in flat and spineless. Secondly, **diacetyl** (which is the main compound responsible for the buttery flavor and aroma in wine) is a natural component of butter and can also be a product of malolactic fermentation. While both red and white wines can undergo malolactic fermentations, the 'buttery' characteristic is typically described more often in white wines. In very young reds, it presents more as a 'cheesy' descriptor because reds generally live in barrel on lees longer than whites, so the still-active enzymes from the dead

yeast on the bottom of the barrel can convert whatever small amounts of diacetyl that may be produced by the bacteria into other compounds that do not have that sensory signature or intensity. Keep this in mind for what follows.

Quick science section for those who will appreciate it: alcoholic fermentation is conducted by yeast (a single-celled fungus) that converts grape sugar to alcohol, CO₂, Glycerol and many other compounds. Malolactic fermentation is conducted by bacteria (a more simple life form) that scavenges carbon sources in the wine and converts Malic acid to Lactic acid plus CO₂ and a number of lesser compounds, most notably diacetyl which is a component of butter's flavor.

Despite our Chardonnay undergoing a long, slow malolactic fermentation on yeast lees and aging there for many, many more months, it is rarely described as 'buttery.' There are several reasons for this. First, the wine has sufficient mouth-watering acidity which gives a salivary response and a cleansing effect in the mouth avoiding the first factor in presenting as 'oily-buttery'. Secondly, whatever small level of diacetyl the resident bacteria we have produces during malolactic fermentation is converted to other interesting non-buttery signature compounds over the many months in barrel by the yeast enzymes. Additionally, the type of and level of new oak we have selected to support the fruit material is allowed to soak into the wine for many months before the malolactic bacteria get very active. This means the bacteria convert some of the initial, raw oak extractives into more subtle and interesting compounds, further feathering that component into the entire wine for a more seamless product. You may now see the appeal of a long, slow malolactic fermentation. The downside is that it takes up more floor space and barrels while slowing cash flow for the producer and making hired enologists at larger producers concerned about 'something going wrong' if it takes more than a few weeks to complete. This is an example of other forms of dynamic tension, between craft and cash flow, and between high form of craft and risk aversion.

Lemon-lime, brioche, petrichor and a slight floral note greet the nose. Flavors of Gravenstein apple tart, crust and all, some lemon posset with a mineral note on the finish. There is a good juxtaposition of acidity and richness (angles and rounds) with extraordinary texture and length of flavor persistence with some tension as it rolls along through all these facets. What is fascinating to me is despite about 23 months in barrel, it is very fresh and uplifting. The expired yeast on the bottom of the barrel are the answer due to their oxygen scavenging properties, but that is a discussion for yet another time. 150 cases produced *\$46 per bottle, \$24 per half bottle*

2021 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

2021 was a lovely vintage where we started with low-rainfall soil moisture, an early start and a drama-free end to the season. I was struck by how structured yet delicious this was when we offered it on futures two years ago. I am still impressed with its balance and allure about a year after bottling, years before it enters its long sweet spot.

This is remarkably similar to the 2022 vintage described earlier in this letter. And it is striking how there is a similar array of dark fruits and non-fruit elements yet there is a little more structural tension driving the train in 2021. It is a beautiful vintage with nerve and verve to age really well if you can keep your hands off the corkscrew. Freshly cut red beets from your garden, spicy rooibos tea are the initial, primary aromas. In the mouth there is an explosion of these flavors with the perfect balance of angles vs. rounds, fruit vs. non-fruits making for a very satisfying and hunger-inducing experience. It is made for food and will absolutely satisfy in this context from now until the cows' come home. 354 cases *\$54 /bottle, \$30/ half, \$112/ magnum*

2021 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir

I don't always make a Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir, but when I do, I want it to be as compelling from a hedonistic standpoint as any single-vineyard wines I bottle from the area. I had made a Sonoma Coast bottling for a friend's label for about a decade, using parts of Platt and High Slopes for their wine in the right proportions to achieve balance and channel the coastal vibe. In that spirit, I also regularly looked at my own production of these, exploring combinations and synergies. It's what I'm supposed to do, right? When it was obvious that the blend of what I had was more compelling than the components in 2020, there was no question what to do. We had the same situation in 2021. My job is to optimize each bottling. So, this is what I do without over-thinking it. It's quite simple, actually.

Nice, ripe red beets, hibiscus and hints of peony arise on the nose initially. Juicy acidity resonates among appropriate tannic framework that yields politely to moderate richness and texture befitting great coastal Pinot Noir. Then comes aromas of sandalwood, forest floor in Sonoma County right after a rain (but not where the bay trees flourish), madrone tree after being split for firewood, and sweet, leaf piles that have been turned a few times. Sounds all woody, but there is a good bit of fruit there - just not too much to get in the way of the coastal vibe. Flavors absolutely follow the aromas. What we see here is great structure and solidity.

I recall the early vintages of Flowers Vineyard Pinot Noir made by Steve Kistler in the 1990's and feel this echoes those memories of dense solidity and a form of dynamic tension not usually seen in the RRV at the time, which was quite exciting, different and a bit unnerving for those not leaning into change and learning. I worked with Hirsch Vineyard for a few years beginning in 1999, Fort Ross from 2000 to 2004, a vineyard from Annapolis far to the north from 2006 to 2014 and Platt from 2007 to 2021. So I have a clear idea of what the Sonoma Coast can give us, despite the large range of sites and situations it encompasses, adding to my experiences in the Russian River Valley since 1988. Again, this is a blend of both our High Slopes material and part of Platt, and is a second installment of how these sites can resonate well together. Again, this combination was first done under our label in 2020 with the beautiful and transparent 2020 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir (also available). 208 cases produced *\$56 per bottle*.

2019 Calypso Vineyard Syrah

I first met Otis Holt, owner/operator of Calypso vineyard in the early 2000's. He had been growing Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot for a highly regarded local winery that bottled a blended wine from his site. The winery sold and they truncated the program to focus only on burgundy varieties. This was about the time the Sideways movie denigrated Merlot in an ironic way that was lost on most of the population. Otis and I were introduced at this point yet I did not have the bandwidth to add on to our current Cabernet Sauvignon from the Scherrer vineyard. However, I had worked with Merlot and Syrah side by side for over a decade prior while at Dehlinger and was then taking a larger stand on Syrah. So we ended up collaborating on refining his site for Syrah in all its beautiful manifestations since then.

Otis is an intelligent and accomplished home winemaker who constantly integrates new information into his gestalt after thinking deeply about every facet he can imagine. We have enjoyed one and a half decades of collaboration on refining his site for this variety via clonal selection, rootstock, trellis and spacing decisions. A decade older than I, he had other projects to focus on and realized he needed to remove the 'commercial' portion so he could move on with more of his lifetime ambitions. Despite my selfish desire to continue, I agree with him.

He has kept some of the vineyard in production for his own use and there is a small chance in the future that he might decide to cut loose a barrel's worth for us someday. Regardless, I am grateful for the relationship, experiences and wines we created during our time working together. 2019 is our last vintage of this exciting collaborative run.

Beautiful, primary Syrah nose of sandalwood, savory/fruity nexus of panforte, fresh fig, fine Corinthian leather (I'm dating myself with TV commercials), fennel, amorphous dark fruits and just generally compelling mysterious non-fruit notes that make one's mouth water. It fills the mouth perfectly. This is everything a Syrah lover needs, regardless of stylistic sweet spot. It is not quite as hefty as a typical Aussie Shiraz and it is not an insipid Cote du Rhône in a cold, rainy year (I love the wines in general, by the way). It is more like an insanely over-achieving Crozes-hermitage or a very good Hermitage in a fine year. I say this as a lover of classic Northern Rhone wines in great years with a go-to crazy low price compared to the 'established estates.' Do a blind tasting and decide for yourself, at any age of the wines. 136 cases produced \$54 per bottle.

Library Releases

We have found that time is very kind to our wines. It's not just that they hang onto their fruit with time, but they actually *gain* many layers on top of that. Be on the lookout for the library releases which will go live on *our website* on Saturday November 16 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. There aren't many wineries that are willing to commit and invest into holding back wines for years to slowly bring them back to offer them for sale. Again, since positive development with age is so central to our style, it is important to illustrate it rather than simply talk about it.

Very Recent Releases

The 2020 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir discussed above is something that I have been grabbing for more than I should these past few months, given the many other choices I have. It's come together nicely in the past year and can make a nice comparison with the 2021 vintage just offered now. We still have some of the lovely 2023 Dry Rosé that we pretty much enjoy daily at home. The 2018 Scherrer Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon is continuing to shine well as it further settles into its life in bottle. 2017 Sasha Syrah is also showing really well all its refreshing layers revealed.

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.



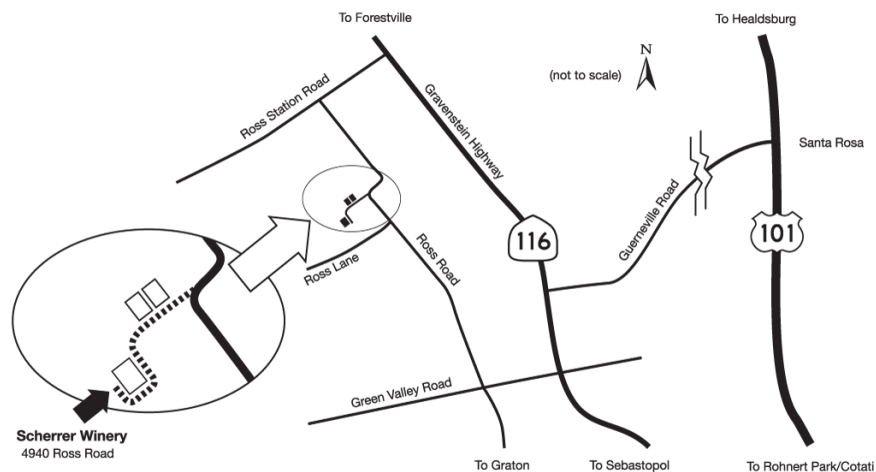
Shipping Information

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
Pick up is available at the Winery during events or by appointment.	NC
GLS Ground Delivery (recommended) to CA	\$27/box
GLS 2-Day to AZ, ID, NV, OR, WA and parts of NM	\$33/box
Ground to CA, NM, NV or OR	\$36/box
Ground to AZ, CO, ID, MT, WA or WY	\$48/box
Ground 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	\$60/box
FedEx 2-day Air to above states plus: HI higher	\$168/box
FedEx Overnight to any above state. HI higher	\$240/box

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.

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.



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
2023 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$432 / 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		Futures Total	

New Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2023 Dry Rose' of Grenache	\$26 / bottle		
2022 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay	\$46 / bottle		
	\$24 / half bottle		
2021 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$54 / bottle		
	\$30 / half bottle		
	\$112 / magnum		
2021 Sonoma Coast Pinot Noir	\$56 / bottle		
2019 Calypso Vineyard Syrah	\$54 / bottle		
New Release Sampler Single (one each above, 15% discount)	\$200 / 5 bottle pack		
New Release Sampler Double (two each above, 20% discount)	\$378 / 10 bottle pack		

Gift Ideas	Price	Quantity	Amount
Gift Certificate	Any amount		
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:	