

Balance and turbulence

Writing these newsletters to you three times a year temporarily diverts me from the day-to-day work I do in producing the wines and growing grapes. Sometimes it is difficult for me to find inspiration for a theme that resonates between us as humans and across lines of culture, business interests, generations, etc. Once a resonant theme announces itself, everything flows effortlessly from there. This current theme about balance and turbulence may appear somewhat abstruse in the connections it has to us all, so please bear with me. It's a thick bit.

Balance implies stasis, while turbulence implies a dynamic state. Both can coexist, depending on how large or small the system in question is. A gently simmering pot of rice may appear calm from the viewpoint of the cook, but from the perspective of a grain of rice near the bottom, there is great turbulence with bubbles rapidly growing, rising and stirring the hot water and grains of rice. Similarly, from the perspective of *one standing on the moon* looking back at the earth, it appears quite peaceful and balanced, while from the perspective of one standing on the beach during a hurricane or other upheaval, earth seems entirely the opposite of peaceful and balanced.

Grapevines attempt to achieve a balance of growth and producing fruit by reacting to their insular state of current local conditions. The vine is seeking a balance of these two conditions: on one hand, a very rich soil causes too much vegetative growth where the plant does not achieve a quality fruitful state, yet on the other hand, with too lean a soil, there is little energy to support a crop of fruit all the way through maturity of all tissues. Achieving a reasonable balance between the two extremes is important, which is why the highest quality wine grapes, given an appropriate temperature and rainfall regime, are best matched to lean, but not too lean soils.

The balance of light quantity and wavelengths is important too. In nature, *V. vinifera* grapevines evolved to climb trees in forested areas, reaching for direct sunlight. As the vine works its way upward through the tree canopy, the amount and wavelengths of the incoming light are different than what exists above the tree's canopy. In shaded conditions, the grapevine senses that there are leaves in the way of the sunshine and puts its energy toward upward growth out of the shade. Once in full sun, the vine puts its energy more toward creating fruit and enough leaves to support the system's energy needs. Through pruning and trellising grapevines, growers are effectively harnessing the vine's natural tendencies of making their seeds' vehicles (grape berries) more attractive to vectors like birds that can spread them to better locations. The same things that make grapes more attractive to birds are things winemakers value: deep color (white grapes are recent mutations that humans value more than birds), sweetness, tolerable bitterness, moderate acidity, etc. Essentially, over time 'round' things increase and 'angular' things in the berry lessen until the bird or winemaker picks the berry. The timing of picking has a huge impact on wine balance and style, which I have *discussed*

in the past Wine is the first state of grape juices on its way to becoming vinegar and eventually becoming atmospheric CO₂ again. As wine lovers, we can revel in the relatively calm wine stage of this sometimes turbulent transformation.

Striving for balance within turbulence can be on a personal, local, national or global level. It is a perpetual endeavor in so many facets of life for most of us: Budgets, trade flows between countries, work vs. leisure time, production vs. sales, food and wine components, etc. are all ways to measure these balances. However, this balance is constantly disrupted by turbulence created by larger forces, whether natural or manmade. Like most of you, I think we are probably all struggling to find balance during these turbulent times. For several decades I have had the luxury to be immersed in the work of balancing grapevines, wine components and the like and realize how insular a perspective it has been. Now there is a level of turbulence that calls for a less insular existence and trying to adapt to rapidly changing conditions.

Oh no! Turbulence and ‘tariffful’ ideas: Recycling the early thinking of President McKinley over a century ago (who changed his tune on the issue years later), large, wide-ranging tariffs are becoming an on-again-off-again reality, subjecting our highly interconnected world to yet more areas of turbulence. The interplay and resulting consequences are even more complex than they were in the late 19th century. Today, automobiles and other durable goods manufacturers often have components crossing national borders multiple times, potentially being subject to multiple tariff events. While mostly not crossing national borders during production, California wine often includes components that come from other countries on the way from vineyard to final bottled product. Since the European winegrape *V. vinifera* was imported to the US well over a century and a half ago, it is responsible for arguably the finest wines made domestically. The best traditional barrels that we and other high-aiming producers use mostly come from the EU, France in particular. There is a great affinity between this grape and that French oak tree, both growing up toward the sky upon in and resting its fermented juices within it. The majority of wine bottles currently available are made in China, France, Italy, Canada, Mexico, Chile and Germany, with less and less made domestically due to differences in local environmental regulations. The supply chain disruption that occurred with COVID saw wineries looking at new glass sources all the time. Then when bottles from China had new tariffs levied several years ago, other sources raised their prices as well, including domestic glass [and no, the prices didn’t come down once the tariffs were lifted]. Corks used in the US typically come from Portugal, Spain and Italy. To a large degree, capsules and screw caps come from other countries such as Spain and Canada. Much of the specialized vineyard and winery equipment also comes from the EU. So, the European-evolved *V. vinifera* is still rather tied to the continent from which it came. Since it’s not possible to pivot overnight to use all domestic components in US wine production (or not at all for French oak), you can see how tariffs can harm our industry.

Oh K! Most of the soils in California, the sites where the highest quality wine grapes grow, are relatively low in potassium (K). The parent rock that gives rise to the minerals in the soil is ‘just that way’ and long-term does not replenish potassium at a rate high enough to what the vines remove in the harvested fruit. For perspective, Alfalfa and many other food crops remove significantly more potassium and have much higher needs. Consequently, addition of potash (mined potassium salts) is crucial to keeping the agricultural land for all our food crops economically productive in most parts of our country. Sufficient potassium availability makes

plants more efficient at using whatever Nitrogen happens to be in the soil. That means farmers can apply far less Nitrogen fertilizer, a goal important to sustainable farmers – trying to keep added nitrate from leaching into underground aquifers or running off into streams where it can cause mischief with the ecosystem. Potassium is important for both the structural strength of the plant and its ability to deal with water stress and quality of fruits and vegetables produced. Like an usher at the theatre, potassium is also important for the movement of the massive amounts of sugar from the leaf to the fruit, which in turn drives flavor development in fruit. So, one can see why it is one of the three top macronutrients that plants use (Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium: NPK) and how important it is to have a reliable flow of this element to where it is needed in order to feed us and provide things we value.

Oh Canada! Canada, Russia, Ukraine, China and Belarus are the top world producers of agricultural potassium (potash). Because the US has limited deposits of potash (MN and MI appear to share a lightly tapped bit of the Canadian-centric deposit), about 90% of what is used in the US is imported (mostly from Canada). When the war in Ukraine began, one source of fertilizer I talked with about this had shifted their sourcing even more toward Canadian potash. A potential trade war with Canada would leave us with no current inexpensive or sufficient domestic options. Super high prices for potash would likely either squeeze the farmer more or cause them to forego replenishment of potassium in the soil and result in negative consequences to our country's agriculture.

So just as the McKinley Tariffs ended up hurting farmers in the late 19th century simply by shutting off export markets for farm products, there is every reason to expect the same this time around with additional challenges concerning soil fertility, equipment production and packaging components that I doubt were considered then or even now over a century later.

Oh say can you see (rain)! While some turbulence is manmade, we have plenty resulting from Nature. What was forecast as a La Nina winter, likely to be relatively dry, has turned out to be above average with rainfall so far about 150% of average in our location. While parts of our fall open houses were cancelled due to localized flooding, I still welcome the additional rain over drought. As you've heard me mention before, California historically receives its seasonal rainfall November through March with very wide swings between drought and deluge. For those that missed it, I'd suggest a refresher to [this link](#) which I posted in July 2021 showing Santa Rosa rainfall for each month beginning in 1902 through 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 or Healdsburg further to the north). The point I've tried to make before and here again is that high year-to-year variability is normal for sites in this area, a pattern that goes back as long as we have been able to measure and record these things. These wide swings in rainfall affect sites differently according to their soil type, aspect on slope, etc. and is a component of what is responsible for our variations in vintage personality. For those sites with well-drained soil, the variations are less important, especially as the rainfall occurs during the 'dormant' season when the plants are essentially quiescent. In response to that kind of turbulence, I think the best producers: 1). Have sites that dampen many of these variations, 2). Respond to the consequences of these variations to optimize fruit quality within the vintage 'vibe' at the vineyard level, and 3). Respond appropriately to the differences in grape material once in the winery. The aim is to celebrate the variations while respecting the

signature of sites (if applicable), regions and maintain a semblance of ‘house style’ and a sense of balance over different (and sometimes turbulent) vintages.

Oh, boy! Like a number of other small wineries, we have seen more distribution channels in a large number of states close off in favor of larger entities that ‘support marketing efforts’ (buying shelf space and sending personnel out to do the selling for the distributor). For example, our California distributor, who has been responsible for getting a significant proportion of our wines into restaurants that care about the characteristics of what they serve, decided to retire and close up last fall, leaving us with no time to pick up that slack during the all-inclusive harvest workload. We are still searching for a good fit with a distributor of like-minded people, which is not an easy task, especially with the turmoil and uncertainty we currently all face. People are just reluctant to take anything new on with all the uncertainty and turmoil. As a result, we rely even more upon your support, as do so many other small wineries that cannot force-feed the limited distribution channels that remain. We continue to appreciate that support, which is what gave us our start in the first place against the odds decades ago.

Open House – One weekend only

Hoping for turbulent free weather, we are happy to host our annual Spring Open House again this year. We will be open only one long weekend, **April 11, 12 and 13 from 10-5 each day**. As in the fall, we plan to 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 can arrange pickup by appointment, just call or send 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

2023 Scherrer Vineyard ‘Old & Mature Vines’ Zinfandel, Alexander Valley

This growing season started and ended later than usual. It was also an overall rather cool vintage. Acidity was perfectly bright but not excessive in the grapes and wonderful flavors occurred at slightly lower than typical sugar levels. Of course, we harvested when grapes tasted perfect for what we wanted and before the heavy rainfall that came even later. 1993, 1999, 2001 were highly heralded vintages that were also ‘late,’ while 2011 was a real sleeper that yielded amazing wines when harvested before any of the late September rains (lots of wines were this category). The best parts of these kinds of vintages are what many winemakers have asked for over decades.

What I try to accomplish in the turmoil of various types of growing seasons is to keep a stylistic vision of elegance, restraint and deliciousness for the vintages. The delicious 2023 vintage was

one of those that I absolutely embrace, typifying the best facets of elegance and restraint. Throw me back into that briar patch any time, br'er Fox...

What a joy to find a Zin with red raspberry, black cherry and hibiscus tea aromas. I find myself in a hurry to sip this as the aromas are so inviting. Very textural and mouthwatering, without being heavy at all, this epitomizes the elegance that this variety can show while still being recognizable as Zinfandel (to me, at least). The flavors follow the aromas quite closely, with a beautiful, long, cleansing and juicy finish. It reminds me of our 1992 vintage (still going strong, by the way) that my friend and San Francisco wine seller Tom Elliot described as Chambolle in Sonoma. This bottling is set up to perfectly showcase the lovely cool growing season we had in 2023. 820 cases produced. *\$44 per bottle, \$24 per half bottle and \$90 per magnum.*

2023 Scherrer Vineyard 'Shale Terrace' Zinfandel, Alexander Valley

While folks say our Old & Mature is a Pinot maker's Zin, I think the Shale Terrace is merely the Zin that truly identifies as Pinot Noir (only in California 😊). What I mean by that is, I don't believe these grapes could ever become a massive, dark-fruited milkshake of a wine even if we let it hang an extra month in an attempt to achieve that style. The material just doesn't go there. It's located next to the barn in a soil of fractured shale with very little clay, unlike the rest of the vineyard which is a moderately acidic gravelly clay loam. Because I'm on-site pretty much every day now, splitting my time between winery and vineyard and trapping gophers, I'm rooting around in soil not completely planted to vines. I've noticed that an area uphill of the shale terrace on some fallow land has what appears to be some kind of calcareous stones on the surface with even more being pushed up by the dwindling population of gophers. It's an unusual occurrence in our area (the calcareous parts, not the gophers) and an amazing contrast in soils over a very short distance. It's very close to one of the old springs that were developed when the house was built in 1853 whose water has very high mineral content to the point of nearly plugging the old pipes underground after only 100 years of use. This is something to explore in the future as I wonder if there is some of that material deep underground that the Shale Terrace vines' roots have penetrated that could explain its uniqueness.

Total stone fruit signature leaps to the forefront on the initial aromas, then it shows some rose hip and pink grapefruit as well. There's a bit of mysterious, savory non-fruit element that is difficult to nail down. With air there is more of a plum flesh sweetness on the nose. In the mouth, there is a reserved entry that begins to shed slightly toasted grains and stone fruit as it glides through the mouth. Clearly elegant and refined, this is a wholly unique expression of Zinfandel from a small part of our family's property. We have learned to hold back just enough of this to be able to offer some in our sampler packs this time (while supply lasts). 120 cases produced. *\$44 per bottle.*

2024 Dry Rosé, Sonoma County

This is a wine our extended family probably consumes more frequently than any of our other wines because we love it so. I often say I make this for the family and sell some because I make more than we can drink. The typical proportions of this consists of half Grenache, with the other half made up of Zinfandel and Syrah in some combination dependent upon vintage character. In 2024 the optimal proportion was about 54% Grenache, 23% Syrah and 23% Zinfandel. Each variety is harvested and vinified separately with the blend being made according to taste.

This vintage is quite similar to the past handful we have bottled. A little watermelon is evident from the first part of an over-chilled glass right from the refrigerator. Then, as the glass begins to warm, it channels aromas of rosé champagne, which is curious since there is no Pinot Noir at all in this mix. But there is also a complexity that comes along with the years that méthode champenoise brings to that fine product. Why does that end up in a still rosé from California that has only lived a few months? Perhaps the use of old barrels on lees? Hard to say... But the proper proportion of Grenache, Zinfandel and Syrah do create perfect harmony with angles in balance with rounds, different flavors and aromas giving complexity yet still providing a central theme and cogency of flavor tones. Upon further warming toward room temperature, we see more of the hibiscus perfume that the Zinfandel somehow brings without showing it on its own (the mysteries of blending). Then a little Santa Rosa Plum skin shows up. By that time the glass is about empty, the bright, mouth-watering acidity frames that image of a tart myrobalan plum [A rootstock for the prunes my grandfather grew where most of our vineyards are now. Sometimes the rootstock suckers would be allowed to grow and us kids picking prunes would eat these rogue plums.] What is left is a clean, crisp refreshed palate ready for another glass or another bite of food. 300 cases produced. *\$26 per bottle.*

2022 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay, Russian River Valley

Our Chardonnay style is what I would call middle-of-the-road, channeling very complex elements that one can find with this variety while still focusing on the core fruit and maintaining good acidity for a mouth-watering response. Despite the unusually long time in barrel, its appropriate new oak level resides inside the wine's layers and has proven to age gracefully for a surprisingly long time.

Subtle, pear aroma with a touch of orange blossom on the initial aroma grows to add a hint of lemon-lime. There's a touch of brioche that really comes up on the mouth. With good grip and initial presence, it gently rolls into a fairly viscous, yet mouth-watering finish. Due to mercurial, turbulent Springtime weather after budbreak and bloom, the crop level was rather small. Only 46 cases produced. *\$54 per bottle*

2021 Sonoma County Pinot Noir

While this is our entry-level priced bottling of Pinot Noir, it is not so because of an entry-level of deliciousness or entry-level amount of care or barrels given to it. Its origin is potentially from our entire scope of Pinot Noir sources, blended to optimize balance of all facets. Its goal is to be delicious while not necessarily illustrating a specific site or AVA.

Spicy, like mincemeat pie, blood orange, graham cracker and rose hip frequencies ride the carrier FM wave of Pinot Noir fruit. When it's a complex wine like this, it is like listening to a stereo signal, where there seems to be a field of smell that is not linear. Depending on where your nose is in the glass and the speed of inhaling, different facets appear. I think it's one thing that separates the ordinary from fine wine. On the mouth, savory, juicy, echoes of its aromatic complexity abound. This really channels old world Pinot Noir in a delicious way. 175 cases produced *\$44 per bottle.*

2019 Russian River Valley Syrah

I have been interested in drinking Syrah since the mid-1980's and then logically progressed into working with Syrah as a winemaker since 1992 and finally producing it under our label since 2002. It's a lovely variety that makes a complete wine without the aid of new oak. As I

have developed a relationship with this variety in our area, I've experimented with aging time to the point where this vintage was aged nearly 5 years in large format barrel without racking (transferring from the original barrel) before bottling.

Sassafras, soy, fig, cedar appear in the aromas. It has a gentle entry, very suave presence mid-palate with a long, nuanced finish. This is on the elegant side of the spectrum of our Russian River Valley bottlings yet without the red fruit 'pop' of our 'Sasha' bottlings. 80 cases produced. *\$42 per bottle*

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 at 15% discount for a one each of the 6 new wines or 20% off for 2 of each wine 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. Special offer ~~\$254~~ \$216 for 6 bottles or ~~\$508~~ \$406 for 12 bottles.

*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 again. If you'd like your wine sooner, we still receive special discounted pricing from FedEx on Priority overnight that we pass through to you.

Recent Releases

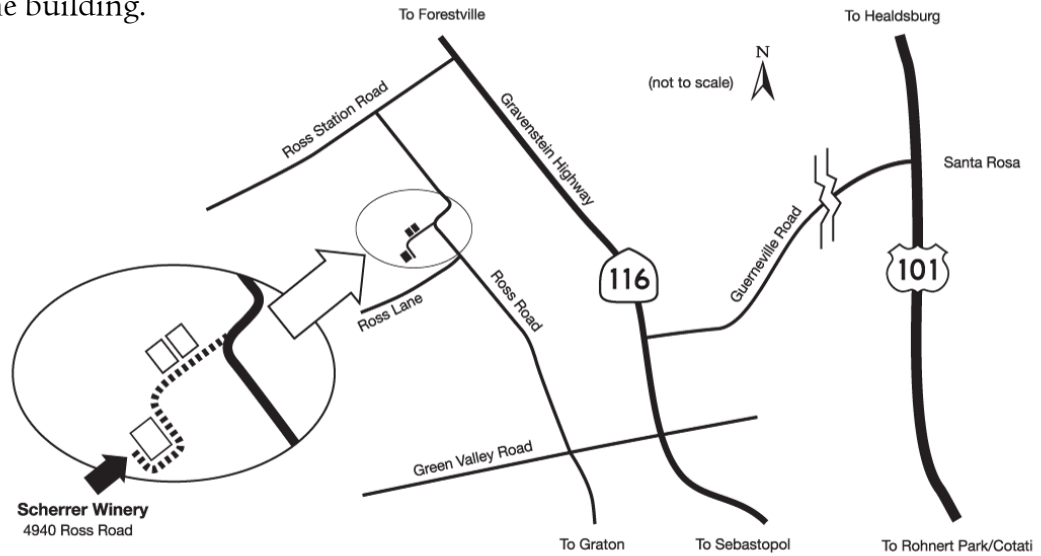
If anyone wants to see how our style of rosé develops, we still have some of the 2023 vintage (\$26) which is at peak drinking point and would make a nice comparison with the very recently bottled 2024. I always prefer the previous vintage rose due to the time it enjoys in bottle. The 2016 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir (\$52) has been winding up to a fantastic state over the past 18 months. Well, now it is hitting on all cylinders (for those who understand that old phrase, now that electric cars are more common). As we have referenced our Sasha Syrah bottling above, the 2016 vintage (\$40) has been in a perfect spot for quite some time and worth a look. Of course, the 2018 Old & Mature Zin (\$42) is also in a great spot that illustrates what we are trying to achieve with these vines. It's the Zin that makes Zin haters change their mind more often than not.

I certainly appreciate your continued support as we navigate these increasingly turbulent times. It has been instrumental to our history and is truly essential to our future. Thank you.



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.

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 AZ, CA, NM, NV or OR	\$40/box
Ground to CO, ID, MT, WA or WY	\$51/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	\$63/box
FedEx Priority Overnight to above states plus: HI higher	\$120/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	

New Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2024 Dry Rosé (Grenache, Zinfandel & Syrah)	\$26 / bottle		
2022 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay	\$54 / bottle		
2021 Sonoma County Pinot Noir	\$44 / bottle		
2023 Old & Mature Vines Zinfandel	\$44 / bottle		
	\$24 / half bottle		
	\$90 / magnum		
2023 Shale Terrace Zinfandel	\$44 / bottle		
2019 Russian River Valley Syrah	\$42 / bottle		
New Release Sampler Single <small>(one each above, 15% discount)</small>	\$ 216 / 6 bottle pack		
New Release Sampler Double <small>(two each above, 20% discount)</small>	\$ 406 / 12 bottle pack		

Subtotal

Other Current Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2023 Dry Rosé (Grenache, Zinfandel & Syrah)	\$26 / bottle		
2016 Russian River Pinot Noir	\$52/ bottle		
2016 Sasha Syrah	\$40/ bottle		
2018 Old & Mature Vines Zinfandel	\$42/ bottle		

Subtotal

Discount on wine for total orders of 12 or more bottles <small>(the sampler will build towards the discount, though will not be further discounted)</small>	-10%	
Sales Tax: Pick up 9% 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 Pick up at Winery or Shipping method and cost:

Total

Payment: Visa / MasterCard American Express Check

Card #	Expires:	Security Code:
Signature:		Date: