

Time: Ingredient or factor?

Time seems to be a notion that I bring up often in these communications. I often ponder whether time is an ingredient or a factor in respect to different facets of the whole grape growing/winemaking thing.

A few examples include:

1. Time the vine has been in the ground
2. Time the fruit is hanging on the vine
3. Time of skin contact (maceration) for reds
4. Time taken performing micro-fractionation of very light press wine
5. Time in barrel without racking for lees influence and other interactions
6. Time in bottle before initial commercial release
7. Time in bottle that the wine is in prime shape

Our wines definitely run on a different time frame, both in bottle as well in barrel. The reds also require extra time in tank on skins and in the press. Yes, in the press. For the last 25 years I have been performing a unique method of pressing that lasts many hours, taking small increments along the way to determine by blending trials exactly when to stop collecting it. Time is definitely a huge ingredient/factor in finding that exact spot.

Here's how it works: Put the fairly well drained skins in the press. Bring the pneumatic press bladder to a small pressure level (just enough I've found for the given variety). When it is done dripping, collect all the wine in the pan and turn the tiny pressure regulator up one more psi and wait until it stops dripping again (1-2 hours). Measure the volume recovered in the tank so far and estimate the volume in the press pan. Spin both samples down in a lab centrifuge to remove 'noise' provided by solids. Do a proportionate blend with what is in the pan and compare with what is already in the tank. If it is better with the press pan included, pump it into the tank and raise the pressure another 1 psi. Rinse and repeat. Whenever the tank is not improved by the next press pan, you're done. It can take all day. I have found that this is time well spent (which makes time seem more like currency than an ingredient or factor) because that smallest next fraction can make or break the balance of the wine.

Time is also an ingredient/factor in vine equilibrium with its environment giving wines from older vines more interesting characteristics than when they were younger. After a vine is established as far into the soil profile as its rootstock genetics predispose it to, it enters a balance of death and decay of roots vs their regeneration. Since the root system produces and sends hormonal signals to the areal parts of the plant where they interact and determine what processes will occur, older plants will drive the car more like mature adult humans that are not in a hurry or distracted. I've seen this with our Old vs Mature vines over the past 35 years. In the early 1990's the Mature vines were in their '20's vs Old vines in their '70's were quite

different. At that point the Mature vines gave much more forward fruit and ‘punch’ while the Old vines gave more nuance and subtlety. Now that they are in their ‘50’s vs 100’s they are more similar than different. Perhaps this is a place where we could agree time is a factor rather than an ingredient?

And while only touching on a few examples, as anyone of you know about me and my wines by now, whether ingredient or factor, I’ll use time for the wines’ sake.

Open House

Please plan on joining us **November 21, 22 and 23 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 coordinate a time. The winery address is 4940 Ross Road, Sebastopol, 95472.

Futures

2024 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Futures

The 2024 growing season here was about ideal, with no surprises in temperature or rainfall. The crop levels in the Russian River Valley were average and everything seemed to cooperate during the entire season. There’s no excuse for a winemaker being unhappy with anything from this vintage.

Tasted from barrel now at about 12 months in, there’s good RRV perfume, fresh plum, dark cherry cola, rose hips and hibiscus tea on the nose. Medium-full bodied, it lies evenly across the palate with a gentle-salivary response that begins midway through. There are more non-fruit elements on the mouth than by the nose, with beets and fresh loam dominant. It finishes clean and long with echoes of rose hips and hibiscus.

Futures \$432 per case (full cases only, \$36/bottle). Estimated release price \$56. Offer available until December 31, 2025 or until the futures allocation sells out. Futures Release date November 2026, general retail release date November 2027. About 350 cases to be produced

2023 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir Futures Release Notes

When transferring from barrel to bottling tank early this November after nearly 24 months in barrel I was struck with how this wine has filled out and become darker in color and more plump. It *really* liked that second year in barrel. Looking at how well all the smaller bottlings do with nearly an extra year beyond that, it makes me wonder if I shouldn’t leave future vintages of this bottling in barrel a bit longer as well and release in the spring. Anyway, I think that second year in barrel is time well spent (currency over ingredient/factor).

It's not easy delaying bottling until just before prime Fall shipping weather. A tight schedule makes any unforeseen delay more dire. This year, the bottling machine died when a transformer that controls the vacuum solenoid quit providing a 24 V control circuit. It took some time to locate a replacement that would fit inside the waterproof control box (of course).

It's not easy to thread that needle between finishing most of the new vintage's pressing and then preparing the facility for bottling an older vintage and then going back to finishing the new Cabernet Sauvignon pressing even when the equipment cooperates. However, tasting the wine that has enjoyed those extra months in barrel makes it all seem worthwhile.

Again, I was impressed with the depth of color the wine has gained over the past year. There's an attractive soaring aroma of peony, and grapevines in bloom that I rarely see in a finished wine. Channeling the cool 2023 vintage with its bright, highly mouth-watering acidity and good structure, this already lays evenly on the palate. It has a very long, graceful finish with amazing persistence. Just like the 2022 vintage I'm impressed at how delicious it is at this incredibly early stage. Once again, I'm truly struck by how this vintage has filled out its generous side with this past year in barrel. The simplest way to look at it is that the yeast gave back even more of what they took from the grapes during fermentation this second year in barrel. About 500 cases produced. Released now to futures customers only, general retail release to follow November 2026.

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 15% off \$213, 10 bottles Special offer 20% off \$402*

2023 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay

Despite our Chardonnay usually undergoing a long, slow indigenous malolactic fermentation and aging on yeast lees for many, many months, it is rarely described as 'buttery.' Interestingly, for the first time, this vintage did not undergo this transformation, possibly due to the chemistry of the wine due to the very cool vintage. It tastes great, with a bit more verve and cut than usual. It's a nice slight detour from our usual result.

Very focused, chiseled Chardonnay fruit with green apple at the fore. There's lemon-lime as well. There's also a bit of jasmine lurking as well and a tad of vanilla. On the mouth, it is quite juicy-almost like the rosé in attack. Despite two years on lees, there is a sense of leanness and crispness throughout. This was the style I had initially envisioned for this site with our first vintage of it in 1997. But I had decided to see if it would hold up to the full-on complexity treatment with the malolactic fermentation. It did then and has been quite successful ever since. This year, nature had other plans and handed us an opportunity to explore and learn. 125 cases produced *\$46 per bottle, \$24 per half bottle*

2022 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir

Very nice initial perfumes of hibiscus and rose (seems a common theme with our Pinot Noirs). There is also something that reminds me of freshly steamed red beets, with a hint of sandalwood on the mouth. There is good structure and verve. This was harvested before the

epic Labor Day heat spell of 2022 (as were our Zinfandels) so they avoided going over the top regarding ripeness or dehydration. I'm actually astonished at how similar the 2022 and 2023 Russian River Valley Pinots are right now, considering the vastly different growing seasons represented. But then I remember that we harvested 2022 early, before the massive heat, so their growing seasons were more alike than one might otherwise think. I'd say 2023 has a little brighter acidity, an additional perfume compared with 2022 as slightly plusher being the main differences. 280 cases produced \$56 per bottle, \$30 per half bottle, \$112 per magnum

2022 Sonoma County Pinot Noir

While for decades I have traditionally drawn from and included Pinot Noir from Sonoma Coast and Russian River Valley for this bottling, this is the first year when I had no Sonoma Coast fruit at all in house. The purpose of the Sonoma County Pinot is to be delicious and food friendly, without *necessarily* expressing an AVA such as Russian River or Sonoma Coast. Being entirely from the Russian River Valley this year due to the loss of Platt fruit, this really does channel more of that RRV character than ever before.

About 35 months in barrel have really filled these Sonoma County Pinot Noir bottlings out since the 2019 vintage when I began doing this extended time in barrel. I don't understand why more serious producers do not follow this longer aging regime. Though, while time seems free, the floor space to house the extra set(s) of barrel and deferred sales of the wine has a significant cost.

There is dark Cherry Cola, mouthwatering acidity and roundness throughout. A touch of cinnamon, with sweet red beets following on the long palate. On day 2, everything is perfectly integrated into a seamless unit. This punches well above its weight class. 140 cases produced \$45 *per bottle*.

2022 Gunsalus Vineyard Pinot Noir

This vineyard is set on the northwest-facing slope of a hill in the heart of the Green Valley AVA. At about 10 Acres, planted about a quarter century ago, there are 10 blocks of different clones on two different rootstocks that were selected to match the soil conditions. The block I have settled into is planted to Riparia gloire (*Vitis riparia*), an unusual rootstock for the area, but employed in other countries with great success. It is a wonderful match for this small patch of soil that is slightly more moist than other parts of the vineyard. With the small amount of firsthand experience growers had in our area with these rootstocks at the time, I think Pamela and Glen Gunsalus made excellent choices very early in their viticultural career. Since our first year working with this site in 2006, this is typically the first or second one we harvest in any given vintage.

Tasting on Day 1: Pretty floral notes of peony and jasmine, with mild rose hips and beet showing up on the palate as well. Nice acidity driven structure with good presence and a very clean and lively long graceful finish. Day 2: Welcome savory nuances arrive along with fresh leather, more red beets and an even longer finish echoing the previous day's expression. This seems like a wine with a long future.

In 20 years' experience with this site, I cannot think of a vintage I prefer. Could it be the 25'ish years of time that these vines have been in the ground, putting them into equilibrium with their environment? Could it be the time Glen and Pamela put into making sure everything is as they intend, working shoulder to shoulder throughout the year? 70 cases produced \$56 *per bottle*.

2021 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

We produce and bottle two Cabernet Sauvignons grown at our vineyard. Due to the soil differences and rootstock (the half of the plant that interfaces with the soil that is usually out of sight and mind) the same clone (probably clone UCD 7) shows different facets of its personality. For this area, the resulting wine has more red fruits herbal/cassis notes and relies a bit more on acidity than tannin for its structure than the Scherrer Vineyard bottling. They're both lovely and age incredibly well. They're just different expressions of the grape.

Since rootstock keeps coming up, this area is grafted to 140 Ruggeri, a *Vitis berlandieri* and *Vitis rupestris* cross. Despite its original purpose to be lime tolerant for many old world soils, it also does well on moderately acidic soils such as ours. Its vigor is appropriate for the soil fertility level and it translates soil to fruit in a favorable way. We put in a rootstock trial when these were planted in the early 1990's in order to better see what we might want to plant the next time. The rootstocks were: 3309C, 101-14 MGt, 44-53 M, 110R and 1103P, with the main planting being 140 Ru. When the vines were 10 and 11 years old, I vinified each rootstock row separately and was stunned at how profound these differences could be. For our vineyard, I am happy with the choice we made between the two rootstocks (140 Ru vs 1103 P) we were offered by the nursery when they couldn't deliver the St. George (*Vitis rupestris*) my dad originally ordered, and now better understand how the wines can be sculpted through use of various rootstocks.

Our winemaking style for this variety differs significantly from the norm with nearly 4 years in barrel without racking (typical is 18-24 months with multiple rackings). So, this extra time (essentially double) is an important ingredient/factor in the outcome. This style/method has been my slowly evolving, reasoned approach (ignoring cash-flow, of course) that is completely focused on making the best wine possible without compromise...because I think I can and should.

With a nice, spicy nose overlaid on cassis, red fruits and petrichor, this is a lovely representation of Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon. There's a nice pop of acidity that further supports the red fruits through the entire palate. 240 cases produced \$48 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 before the initial fruit fades years down the road. Be on the lookout for the library releases which will go live on *our website* on **Saturday November 15 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 (a little bit).

Very Recent Releases

There are a couple wines that are showing fantastic at the moment that I have recommended to those asking for 'dealers choice.' The 2016 Russian River Pinot (\$52) is nearly at the end of

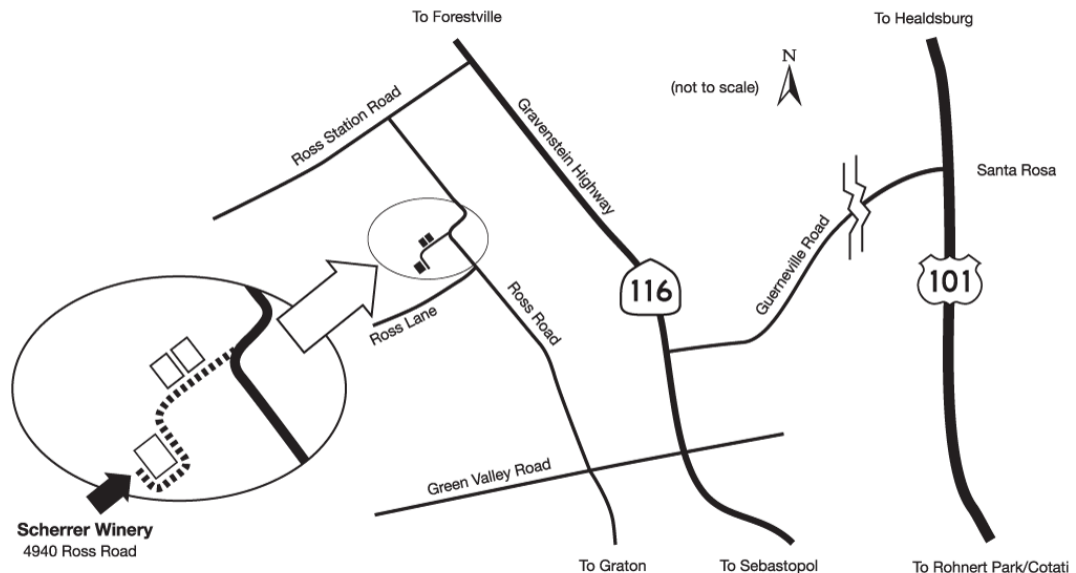
its run in restaurants and wine shops. It's been at a fantastic spot for several years now and is hard to resist. The 2018 Helfer Vineyard Chardonnay (\$52) is still at a very youthful point in its development, but really impresses those who believe California Chardonnay is only drinkable a few years after the vintage. Zinfandoodle 18.9 (\$24) has been a winner, especially at larger gatherings where wine can flow freely. It is serious wine at a very modest price.

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.

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, MI, MN, MO, NC, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OH, OK, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, VT or WI	\$63/box
FedEx 2-day Air to above states plus: HI higher	\$170.50/box
FedEx Summer Priority Overnight to any above state (HI higher)	\$120/box

MAILING

Name _____

Street _____

City, State,
Zip Code _____

Daytime
Phone _____

e-mail: _____

I am over 21. Date of Birth: _____

SHIPPING

Name _____

Company
Name _____

Street _____

City, State,
Zip Code _____

Delivery
Phone _____

Shipping
Notes _____

Residential ☐

Futures Wine - Released November 2026	Price (cases only)	Quantity	Amount
2024 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$432 / case		
Futures Subtotal			
Sales Tax: Pick up 9.25%			
Shipping: AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, 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:			
Deadline: December 31, 2025		Futures Total	

New Releases	Price	Quantity	Amount
2023 Scherrer Vineyard Chardonnay	\$46 / bottle		
	\$24 / half bottle		
2022 Russian River Valley Pinot Noir	\$56 / bottle		
	\$30 / half bottle		
	\$112 / magnum		
2022 Sonoma County Pinot Noir	\$45 / bottle		
2022 Gunsalus Vineyard Pinot Noir	\$56 / bottle		
2021 Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon	\$48 / bottle		
New Release Sampler Single (one each above, 15% discount)	\$213/ 5 bottle pack		
New Release Sampler Double (two each above, 20% discount)	\$402/ 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 9.25%			
Shipping: AZ, CA, CO, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MD, 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: