

LOXTON



**BOOMERANG CLUB NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2015**

SPRING WINE CLUB RELEASE

WINEMAKER'S SELECTION

- 2013 CHARDONNAY, PARMELEE-HILL VINEYARD (SONOMA VALLEY)**
- 2012 PIONEER CUVÉE (SONOMA VALLEY)**
- 2008 SYRAH, CUVÉE ELLEN, LIBRARY RELEASE (SONOMA COUNTY)**
- 2011 SYRAH, CUVÉE ELLEN (SONOMA COUNTY)**
- 2011 SYRAH, ROSSI RANCH (SONOMA VALLEY)**
- 2011 CABERNET-SHIRAZ, GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE (SONOMA VALLEY)**

OPTIONS FOR CUSTOM ORDERS

- 2014 SONOMA WHITE (SONOMA COUNTY)**
- 2014 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH (SONOMA VALLEY)**
- SONOMA REDS - LOT 9 (SONOMA COUNTY)**
- 2012 PINOT NOIR, GRIFFIN'S LAIR (SONOMA COAST)**
- 2013 LATE HARVEST ZINFANDEL (SONOMA COUNTY)**



Spring 2015

Dear **Club Member**,

I hope you like the new format of the newsletter as the change will enable me to fully convey the story of each wine and illustrate what makes it unique. We will be adding functionality to the email newsletter as well, keeping it simple, but you will be able to get more information on the wines as needed.

I feel that we have a very strong line-up of wines for this year's Spring release. The wines are described in the following pages, but I'm particularly excited to release the first "Pioneer Cuvee" which is a Zinfandel blend in the tradition of the old field blends that were planted here in the Valley over 100 years ago. I am also very enthusiastic about these last releases of the 2011 wines and many critics are starting to agree that it was a much better year than first thought.

2014 was a really good year for the winery. The Fall Harvest Fair saw recognition with gold medals for Syrah (Best of Class) and Port, and we learned of a very nice recommendation in Qantas magazine. Perhaps the most unusual was a wonderful write up in Physics Today in a continuing series regarding successful career changes for physicists! The harvest was particularly good and early tastings of the wines suggest a third consecutive year of outstanding quality. Our new vines of Syrah and Viognier grew really quickly although next month we will cut them back to a few inches tall and start again in order to develop a strong vine framework. The continuing drought is a concern although December rains have helped. We have made some changes in farming practices with the use of organic composts and the vineyard has not looked better.

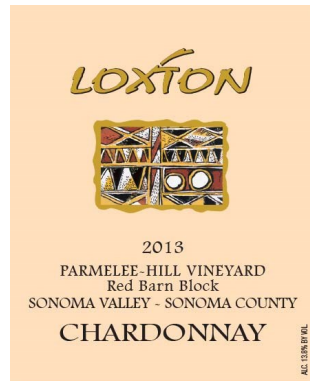
This year we will work for certification of our sustainable vineyard practices with the Sonoma County Grap growers Association. Night vision cameras have been used to learn more about wildlife on the property and we have videos of bobcats, foxes, coyotes, raccoons and skunks that we would like to share. We have also continued the landscaping projects in the picnic areas and the front of the property. All in all, I think it is a great time to visit us, not just for the new wines but to possibly join us on one of our "walkabout tours" or to see our "taste in the vineyard" program that we will start in the Spring. I hope to see some of you here!

As always, you can choose the default selection of 6 bottles (no action required), or you can modify your order by adding or substituting from the newsletter or the website. You may find it easiest to do this on-line. Please note the deadline for changing orders of March 13th. If any information has changed with respect to shipping or credit card numbers please let us know, or update online.

Cheers,

Chris Loxton

2013 CHARDONNAY - PARMELEE-HILL VINEYARD



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Chardonnay

pH: 3.39

Alcohol: 13.8%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 117 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered July 3, 2014

Release Price: \$28.00

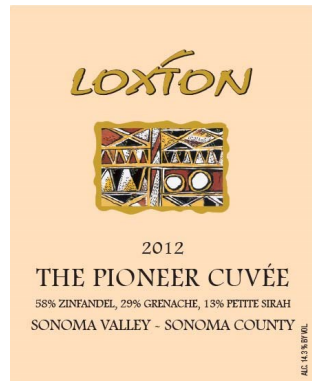
My Chardonnay rows of the Parmelee-Hill vineyard look down at an old red barn that is just a stones throw to the Durell vineyard and to Sonoma Cutrer's Les Pierres vineyard. These are famous vineyards and the well drained soils and proximity to the cool San Francisco Bay make the area perfect for Chardonnay. I don't want oak flavors to intrude on the flavor of these grapes so the wine is fermented in barrels where some of the oak flavor has been leached out with previous use. As shown in the picture, one of the barrels was bought way back in 2006 (top left of the barrel), and so for this 8th use, there is no oak left at all. All of the barrels are blended together at bottling and the final wine has just a hint of oak.

The barrel pictured was also used for a portion of the Chardonnay where no commercial yeast was added (uninoculated) and the juice underwent spontaneous fermentation. While potentially more risky than when I add yeast, I've been doing this for 18 years with my red wines and I've always felt that the wines were more interesting and texturally richer. The second fermentation (malo-lactic) was blocked to keep crispness and to avoid some of the buttery notes that are associated with this process. The result is perhaps my most rich Parmelee-Hill Chardonnay, so much so that I checked the wine on two separate occasions to make sure it wasn't sweet (it has no measurable sugars!).



Aromas and flavors of lemons and wheat thins, this wine has a huge middle palate richness leading to a clean finish that makes it equally good with food or sipping on the deck. Perhaps grilled lemon chicken for a lovely summer meal. Drink now to 2018.

2012 PIONEER CUVÉE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 58% Zinfandel, 29% Grenache,
13% Petit Sirah

pH: 3.81

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 191 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered

Release Price: \$30.00

I am thrilled to release this wine, the first of my homage to the pioneers who planted the old vineyards of Sonoma Valley and Sonoma County. These old vineyards were what we now call “field blends”, comprised of many different grape varieties that were picked and fermented together. Petite sirah gave tannin and structure, Grenache gave acid, others gave color and aromatics and Zinfandel made it all taste good. When I first moved to this property in 2002 I woke up each morning looking out over one of the most famous of these field blends, the Pagani Ranch that was planted in the 1880’s. These vines were, and still are, awe inspiring and I’ve wanted to make a wine like that since that first morning.

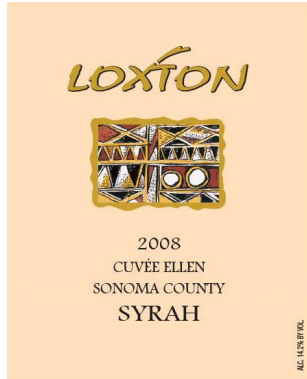
The concern is that the various varieties ripen at separate times, so I’ve taken a different approach by making the individual wines and then blending based upon tasting trials. The Zinfandel comes from here on the Estate, the Grenache from the Rossi Ranch in Glen Ellen and the Petite sirah from the Kick Ranch. I made the blend after aging the components for 13 months, then returned it to the mostly well used French oak for another 3 months before bottling.



My tasting notes since last Fall make me think of Southern Rhone wines but with Zin fruit. Good tannin structure balances cherry fruit for a complex and harmonious wine that is equally good with ribs or a serious Saturday night dinner. Make sure to toast these forward thinking pioneers. Should age very well, drink now to 2020.

2008 SYRAH - CUVÉE ELLEN

LIBRARY RELEASE



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 100% Syrah; 54% Archer Vineyard, 20% Kick Ranch, 16% Parmelee-Hill, 10% from here at the winery

pH: 3.60

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 316 cases

Bottled unfined and lightly filtered, April 6, 2010

Re-Release Price: \$32.00

A good part of my job as winemaker is tasting young wines. Often spritzy and cloudy, all primary fruit and unresolved tannins, I have to look past all this and imagine what the wine will be like after barrel aging and then bottle age before release. What I have found is that a wine that is balanced seems to be enjoyable when it is young, but seems to stay that way for an extended period with aging, so I've always strived to make balanced wines. With age they might mellow some and perhaps gain more complexity and interest, becoming even better. I suppose I'd like to age much the same, perhaps round out a few edges and gain "complexity", but I digress.

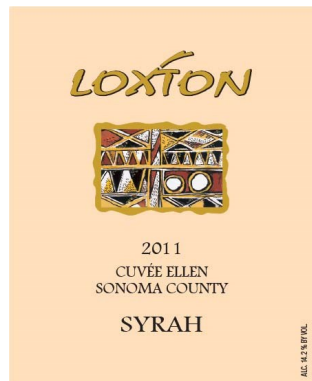
I've been to a few wineries that hold back wines so that customers can buy a wine that has aged into this complexity (Far Niente, Navarro amongst many) and I have admired this foresight. It's a hard thing to do really, as it means holding on to inventory instead of making money. I started to do this some years



ago, holding the wine in ideal conditions at the warehouse so that I can offer a wine that has been aged until I think it is at its best.

For my second "library wine", I kept some stocks of the 2008 Syrah, Cuvée Ellen. The "Ellen" wines, named after my grandmother, have been very consistent since the inaugural 2007 release. Always elegant, round and balanced, they have been excellent restaurant wines as they can pair with most foods. The 2008 harvest had a blast of heat in early September and grapes ripened quickly which resulted in wines showing some black fruit and licorice of fully ripened Syrah in addition to the normal cherry flavors. Age has added some leather, violet and coffee notes that add interest and while at its peak, this wine should age under its screwcap for another few years. Perfect with pork, lamb and earthy meals.

2011 SYRAH - CUVÉE ELLEN



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 100% Syrah; 62% Parmelee-Hill Vineyard,
23% Kick Ranch, 15% Griffin's Lair

pH: 3.74

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 255 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered, March 8, 2013

Release Price: \$28.00

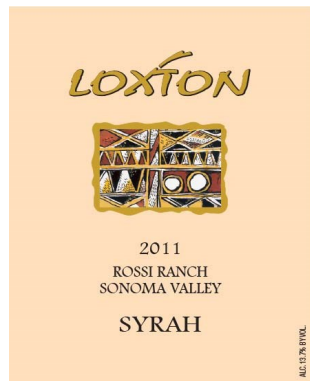
Tasting through the different Syrah wines 14 months after making them I was struck by the exotic aromas and sweet blackberry fruit of the Parmelee-Hill wine. It was very attractive but I kept wanting more complexity in order for me to keep coming back to it. I decided that it would make a great base wine for the Cuvée Ellen Syrah. In blending the Ellen Syrah, I am always trying to retain elegance, yet have intensity of flavor. I want a wine that showcases the roundness and mid palate of Syrah with some of the characteristic spice and cherry notes.

The low yields in 2011 meant that I didn't have enough for the Griffin's Lair wine to be bottled by itself and it had excellent acid and a spicy, smoky note that seemed another great component. Finally, the addition of Kick Ranch fruit added depth and intensity. In total, the wine represents 3 different vineyards, 5 different Syrah clones, all aged in French oak (25% new).



The "Ellen" is a wine that can be enjoyed with a wide variety of meals as it is medium bodied and softer than the Rossi Syrah. Decanting helps bring out a bit more fruit, but this wine is about harmony, balance and freshness with a long and lingering finish. Near its peak now, it should remain so for the next 3-4 years.

2011 SYRAH - ROSSI RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.67

Alcohol: 13.7%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 149 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, March 8, 2013

Release Price: \$30.00

It usually takes a few years to get to know a vineyard and after that it seems to get easier to make the wine. In the case of the Rossi Ranch we seem to have hit the ground running and I've really liked the wines right from the first one made in 2009. Perhaps it is because much of the ground work, quite literally, was done properly in the first place with the help of my friend Greg Adams who was the vineyard consultant during the planting phase. Each individual soil type and block was identified and set up so that it could be farmed individually. My sections in Blocks 4 and 5 were established on red soils that are well drained and with low vigor. They are sheltered from the afternoon winds by facing south west towards another hillside and this gives plenty of heat for ripening, even in a cool year like 2011.

We have small vines with small intense berries and the fruit sees lots of sunshine which gives us great tannin structure. With yields less than 2 tons per acre we got great concentration in the wine and the challenge with Rossi fruit is to not extract too much and make the wine too big.

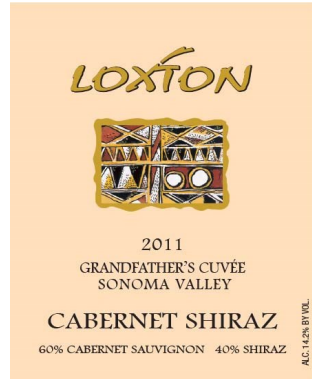
When I blended the wines from these



blocks after 5 months in barrel it was opaque in color and nature, chewy and grippy, but showing signs of excellence. 17 months aging in French oak (30% new) has mellowed the tannins and added a subtle vanilla note. This is a Syrah built for aging or to have with richer foods. Thick in texture, showing good acidity and notes of violets and cocoa coated raspberries, this can easily stand up to a good steak. Quite complex and with a nice lingering finish. I expect it to reach its peak in a few years and to remain there until 2021 or so.

2011 CABERNET SHIRAZ

GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 60% Cabernet, 40% Syrah (Shiraz)

pH: 3.80

Alcohol: 14.1%

Closure: Cork finish

Production: 220 cases

Bottled unfined and lightly filtered, July 3, 2013

Release Price: \$32.00

My grandfather's grapes were sold to the local winery and some went into a Cabernet Shiraz blend and he was mentioned on the label as the grapegrower. I still have a bottle left from 1974 and 1975 and we were all so proud of the wine and there was probably no better ambassador for the winery than my grandfather. It is a great blend where the Syrah (called Shiraz in Australia) is used to soften the tannins of the Cabernet and to give the wine a better richness in the middle palate. This wine is blended in the same manner, hence my "Grandfather's Cuvée". Cabernet comes from the McGraw vineyard here in Glen Ellen, and for the Syrah I primarily used the 2011 Cuvée Ellen Syrah. It seems fitting that the best wine I could make for the Grandfather's Cuvée, was when I used Syrah named after my grandmother! Cabernet does best in warmer years and with 2011 being a cool year, I have used the highest percentage of Syrah than in any year since the first one made in 2005. This particular wine is 60% Cabernet Sauvignon and 40% Syrah. Aged for 20 months in French oak (28% new) and then another 20 months in bottle before release. Labels were delivered after bottling and had to be applied by hand here at the winery. Hand made and hand labeled!



I really like the Cabernet Shiraz wines and in my retrospective tastings done last year the blend showed particularly well both as a younger wine but especially with some bottle age. The 2005 and 2006 wines are aging beautifully. At present this wine has lovely Cabernet herbal notes (hey, my grandfather's name was Herb) and then the Syrah starts to come through with cherry notes. The palate is smooth and rich and then finishes with some oak and grape tannins that will make it a lovely match with a steak and will allow it to mature nicely in the cellar. This wine, I think, will be at its best now and in the next 5 years.

2014 SONOMA WHITE

**Sonoma County • 100% Chardonnay • pH: 3.35 • Alc: 13.4% • 56 cases • Cork finish
Bottled following fining and filtration, March 16, 2015 • Release Price:\$16**

The Sonoma white is the counterpoint to the Sonoma red program. It is Chardonnay that has been fermented in old oak barrels so that there is no oak character and the malo-lactic fermentation has been blocked. It is a clean fresh white wine to have during the summer months.

2014 ROSÉ

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah, Estate • pH: 3.41 · Alc: 13.6% • 270 cases • Screwcap
Bottled lightly fined and filtered, March 16, 2015 • Release Price:\$18**

Every year when I stand on a ladder shoveling grapes into the press to make the Rosé I swear that it will be the last year to make it. Of course, in the Spring when I taste the wine with a nice chicken salad, or with grilled salmon or pork, I realize that this year's version won't be the last. There is just something about dry and crisp Rosé that makes it the perfect wine for Spring and Summer; it is no wonder these wines have become so popular in the last 5 years. To make the wine I use Syrah grown right here around the winery, but picked earlier than for red wine to retain a lightness and crispness necessary for the genre. Most of the grapes go immediately into the press and the juice is put into previously used barrels for fermentation the same day as they are picked. We ferment as cold as possible to retain fruit, then age for 6 months in barrel to build complexity (I'm trying to make a serious Rosé here) before bottling. Crisp and dry (as usual, there is no residual sugar), it shows notes of red grapefruit and citrus. Bring on the warm weather!

SONOMA REDS - LOT 9

**Sonoma County • 67% Zinfandel, 19% Syrah, 6% Cabernet Sauvignon, 3% Petit Sirah,
3% Pinot Noir, 2% Grenache • pH: 3.71 • Alc: 14.2% • 269 cases • Screwcap
Bottled unfined and lightly filtered, September 2, 2014 • Release Price:\$17**

The concept for the Sonoma Red was a multi-vintage and multi-varietal blend that would be lovely to drink in the middle of the week, would work with most foods and would not break the bank. The different components have all been grown and processed to make my top wines, but for various reasons are left unbottled. In the case of the Lot 9, I decided that 2013 was to be the last Zinfandel from Buck Hill vineyard. Although I'm able to cherry pick the best hillside fruit, I just don't get enough to justify bottling it separately so I used it as the base for the red blend. I added 2 barrels of Zinfandel from the lower swale of the Stonetree vineyard while the remainder were smaller lots left over after bottling from my vineyard designated programs.

Lot 9 is softer and rounder than the very successful Lot 8, with a bigger finish that makes the wine warm and harmonious. Perfect for summer BBQ or on a cold evening.

2013 LATE HARVEST ZINFANDEL

**Sonoma County • 100% Zinfandel; Estate 50%, Stonetree Vineyard 30%, Rossi Ranch 20%
pH: 3.35 • Alc: 16.2% Sugar 7.3% • 88 cases • Cork Finish · 500mL
Bottled unfined and lightly filtered, September 2, 2014 • Release Price:\$28**

Zinfandel is a grape that very quickly turns to raisins and it is quite normal to have some percentage of raisins on otherwise perfect bunches. This makes it an excellent variety for a dessert style wine. To reduce the raisin flavors and higher alcohols that result from including these grapes in my regular Zinfandel wine, I reject this fruit and it goes into the late harvest Zinfandel program. In addition, I kept out sections of the Estate vineyard and rockiest soils of the hillside Stonetree vineyard to get to very high sugars for this late harvest wine. Grapes from these areas have high natural acids and tannins that help balance the sweetness. I need the high sugars as eventually enough alcohol is made in fermentation that the yeast die, leaving the wine sweet. This isn't a very controlled process, so making late harvest Zinfandel can be risky.

This is a wine to have with bittersweet chocolate after dinner. It should be at its best for the next few years and should be consumed within a week of opening.