

LOXTON



BOOMERANG CLUB NEWSLETTER

FALL 2019

FALL WINE CLUB RELEASE

WINEMAKER'S SELECTION

2017 CHARDONNAY, HAWK HILL VINEYARD (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY)

2017 PINOT NOIR, GRIFFIN'S LAIR (PETALUMA GAP)

2016 ZINFANDEL, SONOMA HILLSIDE VINEYARDS (SONOMA COUNTY)

2015 SYRAH, ROSSI RANCH (SONOMA VALLEY)

2012 SYRAH, ROSSI RANCH, CELLAR RELEASE (SONOMA VALLEY)

2015 CABERNET SHIRAZ, GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE (SONOMA VALLEY)

OPTIONS FOR CUSTOM ORDERS

SONOMA REDS - LOT 12 (SONOMA COUNTY)

2014 SYRAH, RESERVE CUVÉE ELLEN (SONOMA VALLEY)

2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, RANDOM RIDGE VINEYARD (MT. VEEDER, NAPA VALLEY)

2015 PORT (SONOMA VALLEY)



Our picking crew, Barrett, Malaco and Chris, celebrate the first big pick of 2019

Fall 2019

Dear Club Member,

If men are from Mars, and women from Venus, then grapes must be from Pluto or somewhere else. How else can it be that every year when grapes are ready, I'm still emotionally a week or more away from being prepared. I've never been able to get my timing right even when the winery is ready to go. So this year, with its incredible winter and spring rainfall, I was confident that it would be a late harvest and I'd be prepared. After all, the vine energy goes into growth and not the fruit in these conditions, right? My plan of bottling, then vacation, then harvest have all gone out the window. I write this knowing that the next morning I start my first pick at 7am with the Estate Viognier. I don't know whether to celebrate with bubbles or turn to Port for comfort.

It occurred to me a few months ago as I was hauling 50 pounds of glass "sand" out into the vineyard to fill gopher holes that doing the right thing takes a lot more effort. Don't get me wrong, I love my "Glass to Sand" machine that diverts about 100 pounds of glass a week from potentially ending up in landfill, but a 5 gallon bucket full of such sand isn't easy to lug around. Of course, the same thought comes to mind when I hoe weeds instead of using more weed killer, or shovel grapes rather than using some type of pump. It might be tempting to think "It doesn't matter" if only I didn't believe that it did. There is a lovely saying attributed to Ghandi that says "Whatever you do doesn't make a difference but its so important that you do it".

This is an attitude I have when I make the wines. Maybe each decision doesn't make a difference by itself, but the sum of many of them will. As a small business owner I've also recognized there is a bigger picture in how I operate. I feel a responsibility not just to think about my stewardship of the land while I'm here, but also to the people that help me do what I do and the community around us. This was brought sharply into focus during our fires a few years ago. Without a local fire department, our delivery people, our markets, we can't do what we need to do. If my staff don't have access to health care and the ability to live in the area, then the model isn't sustainable. These are issues that the wine industry is facing in an area where the costs of living have been rising very quickly. The first part of any solution comes from recognizing just who it is that helps make a business successful. I saw this vividly displayed when I had the pleasure of being a guest at the "Thank You" event that Shafer winery in Napa puts on every year for their difference makers. Everyone, from vineyard workers and vendors to the UPS driver were invited and it was a recognition that they were all essential to the winery's success.

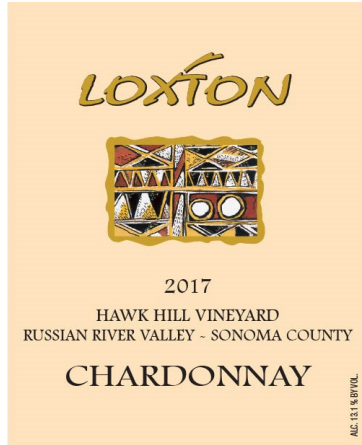
I have a good feeling about the 2019 harvest. Lots of winter rains mean that we have adequate water supplies. There have only been a few heat events during the Summer, and the last month has been perfect for slow ripening and development of flavor. Farming costs have been high due to our rains but it will be all worthwhile if wine quality is great. Mostly, though, I know that whatever may happen I have the right staff and the right vineyards and growers around me to handle whatever happens and that's a great feeling!

Cheers,



Chris Loxton

2017 CHARDONNAY - HAWK HILL VINEYARD



Appellation: Russian River Valley

Blend: 100% Chardonnay

pH: 3.35

Alcohol: 13.1%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 239 cases

Bottled unfined & lightly filtered July 23, 2018

Release Price: \$32.00

Chardonnay and Pinot noir have been grown in Burgundy for perhaps 2000 years. The best sites with better soils and climate have shown consistently better wines and these sites have become recognized formally in a classification of Grand Crus, followed by premier Crus and beneath that the Village specific areas. Interestingly, ownership and winemakers have changed, so it is the site that is important. While California's vineyards don't have that long history, we are already seeing certain areas being recognized. Perhaps our best vineyards have not even yet been planted! I would like to think that as this history is being written, the Freestone area and Hawk Hill vineyard will get much attention.

Part of the reason is the climate; cool and moderate weather is ideal for Chardonnay and Pinot noir. Another aspect is the amazing Goldridge soil found throughout the area. It looks and acts a little like beach sand and dries out quickly after rain. This controls vine vigor more easily than in wet soils.

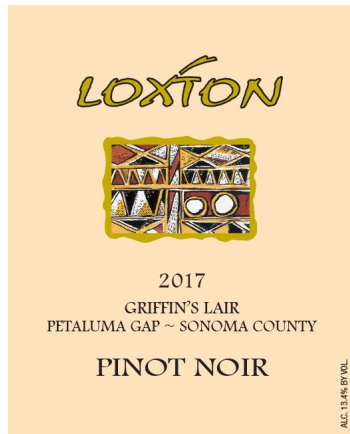
The challenges in the area are increased mold and mildew pressure from the cool and foggy conditions and lots of ravenous bird life. There is one more piece of the puzzle though and that is a dedicated owner willing to do the hard and expensive work to produce the best. I've worked with 2 owners of Hawk Hill in my time and when the Michalczyk's sold in 2013 they made sure that new owners, the Yarak's, had the same vision to continue and extend their legacy.

This is my 17th Chardonnay from Hawk Hill. They have all been a variation around a theme of allowing the site to show with the richness and crispness that one can get from coastal Chardonnay. It really shines with food and this is one of my favorite vintages. I love this style of Chardonnay which is surprising as there was a time when I just didn't drink California Chardonnays! The wine is lovely now and should remain so for up to another 5 years if you want to put some away. These Hawk Hill wines have shown the ability to develop more richness with time in the bottle and is why I hold them for at least a year in bottle before release.



As Chardonnay ferments in barrel we use a water lock; a one way valve to let gas escape but without letting air in

2017 PINOT NOIR - GRIFFIN'S LAIR



Appellation: Petaluma Gap

Blend: 100% Pinot Noir (Pommard clone)

pH: 3.90

Alcohol: 13.3%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 158 cases

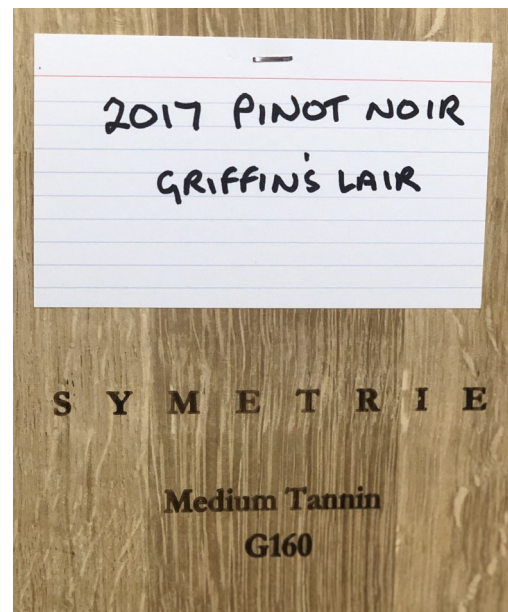
Bottled unfinned & lightly filtered July 23, 2018

Release Price: \$35.00

This is my final Pinot noir from Griffin's Lair, at least for some time. I have very much enjoyed the association with this vineyard since the first one in 2011. In early 2018, however, I started thinking that I might concentrate my efforts more on the Estate grown Grenache. When the Griffin's called to tell me that they were retiring and had sold the property it was the final push to change direction.

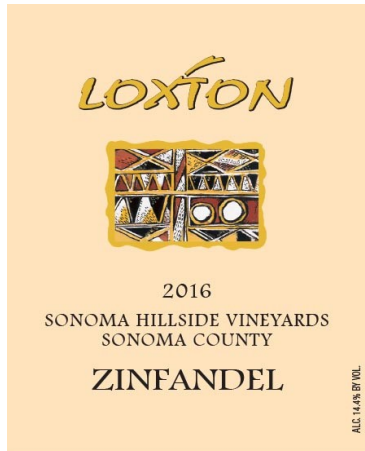
It wasn't an easy decision as I've been very happy with the wines I've made. When I made my first Pinot noir in 2005 (from Hawk Hill vineyard) it was really to try and learn something as a winemaker. Pinot has a reputation for being so hard to make and I thought that working with it might make me a better winemaker. The first 6 wines were all from the Russian River Valley area and when I lost access to that fruit I moved over to Griffin's Lair in the Petaluma Gap appellation. I found that some of the things I learned about Pinot were very much site specific. While more toasty barrels worked well to tame the overt fruitiness of Russian River fruit, it accentuated the more earthy notes from the Petaluma Gap. Additionally, while some clones of Pinot noir add lots of floral notes, I found that in Petaluma Gap it was maybe better if I concentrated more on richness and power. With this in mind, the 2017 wine is made from only the one clone of Pinot know as "Pommard" which is known for its color and density whereas earlier vintages were multiple clones. With just the one harvest per year, you can see that it takes time to really understand a site.

I think this wine captures the essence of Petaluma Gap Pinot. It is a lighter more elegant style yet with lots of middle palate sweetness. This makes it a great match with salmon, although I've also had the wine with pasta dishes that have some pancetta. Drink now or hold for 3-4 years. I'm pleased that while this might be the last, it also reflects 7 vintages of learning and the attention to detail and excellence of the Griffins and their farming practices.



The new Vicard Gen 7 barrel for my Pinot noir is toasted at a low wood temperature of 160 Celsius, leading to no smoky flavors .

2016 ZINFANDEL - SONOMA HILLSIDE VINEYARDS



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 100% Zinfandel

(50% Estate. 38% Stonetree, 12% Rossi Ranch)

pH: 3.87

Alcohol: 14.4%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 149 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered August 29, 2017

Release Price: \$30.00

When I worked at Wellington Vineyards their oldest vines were Zinfandel that were planted in the 1890's, and we made just 2-4 barrels of a fabulous wine (I still have 1 bottle of the '95 which was my first year working there). While it is largely unknown in other countries, Zinfandel dominated the California wine industry and Sonoma County has many wonderful old vineyards that are more than 100 years old. Peter Wellington speculated that the reason for its success might be related to its biological stability, given that the industry didn't have the sanitation and stainless steel that we have now. Zinfandel tends to have high acid, probably because the bunches always have a few unripe berries and their high acid and low pH inhibits most bacteria. The other issue with Zinfandel is that the same bunch will always have some raisins. This means high sugar and thus high alcohol and alcohol is a great preservative. He might be right of course, although I thought the reason might be that the grapes and wine taste really good!

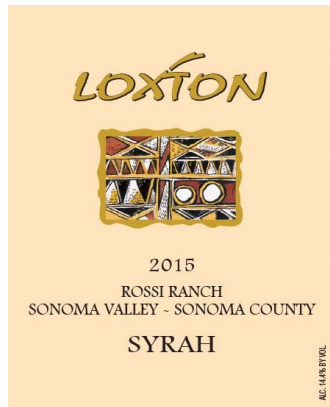


Stonetree Vineyard perhaps has the best views; looking out over the Mayacamas and Mount St Helena.

The trick with making Zinfandel is not pick too early where the unripe berries would make the wine tart and astringent, but not too late where the raisins would make the wine hot and alcoholic. Its kind of like the Goldilocks of varieties. In the heat of the California harvest season, this can mean a picking window of just a few days so the ability to react fast if there is a heat wave is required.

Fortunately, the base wine for this blend is the Estate Zinfandel and we pick this block with my staff, so timing isn't an issue. The Stonetree vineyard in the Mayacamas is also a staff pick and is just 20 minutes from the winery. As the fruit from the Stonetree vineyard was lost in the heatwave of 2017, this wine is the last with fruit from George Hellyer's fabulous vineyard that I've been getting since 1999. A small amount of Rossi Ranch completed the blend. It is very similar in style to the '15 Hillside Vineyards Zinfandel released in the Spring, which might be expected as the fruit sources are so similar. Drink now with hearty dishes or age for up to another 5 years. A fitting tribute to George and his vineyard!

2015 SYRAH - ROSSI RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.57

Alcohol: 14.4%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 186 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered July 9, 2017

Release Price: \$32.00

At first it might seem a little odd that I do so little lab analysis of my grapes and wines. Especially given that I was head of an analytical laboratory at the University of Illinois. The thing is, having the numbers on all sorts of metrics is mostly useful when things go wrong and I always hope to avoid things going wrong. After all, I often say that I don't sell wine because the pH is perfect! Some things need to be known of course. The wine's alcohol content determines my tax liability and we need to have enough of the preservative which is sulfite, and the right amount of that is pH dependent. These three things are the extent of my analysis of wine for most circumstances. For grapes we measure the pH and the sugar content of the juice and I do this by collecting about 100-200 berries at random in the vineyard to get a representative sample of that block, or clone, or soil type. I also have to think about the weather, scheduling, the availability of a picking crew and vine health.

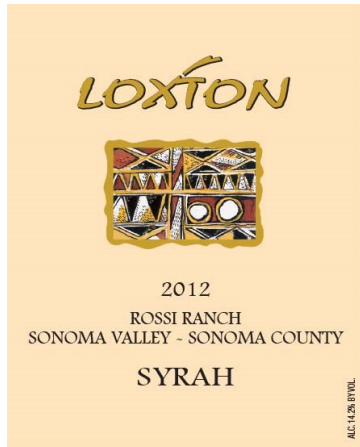


My lab is rather basic (please excuse the science joke)

The biggest thing, however, is what I find while eating grapes on my walk. I think about flavors and look at seed maturation, and chew on the grape skins and think about astringency. If grape skins are astringent this will quickly be extracted into our red wine leading to harshness or bitterness. I planted a persimmon tree in the picnic area and often say that if you don't know what astringency is, then you should take a bite out of an orange, but hard, persimmon. I love persimmons but had to learn the hard way that some are only edible when they get soft and the astringency disappears. Bananas have this as well and green bananas are very astringent.

This discussion is relevant for Syrah from the Rossi Ranch. Fruit from that vineyard tends to have lots of tannins which can be astringent (think tea bag in water too long) and also high acidity. These two things together can lead to harsh wines unless the right picking decision is made. The positive aspect is when you get it right and the tannins are rounded and softer then the wines have excellent texture and age wonderfully. This is why it's often the wine I choose to hold back to become my cellar selection and why it's the last of the vineyard designated Syrah wines to be released. This '15 version was my favorite in the multi-vintage Rossi Ranch tasting we did this last Summer and I expect it to have a great cellar life. It has the fruit to balance the soft tannins and would be perfect with hearty meals.

2012 SYRAH - ROSSI RANCH, CELLAR RELEASE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.69

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 232 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered March 7, 2014

Re-Release Price: \$35.00

I enjoy tasting older wines. The youthful exuberance of fruitiness usually gives way to complexity with leather and other secondary flavors and the acid and tannin tames down and integrates into the wine. The problem is having the patience and the right place to keep the wine for later enjoyment. Knowing that soon I'll be tasting newly fermenting grape juice instead of wine, last week I pulled out a 2001 Peter Lehmann reserve Riesling from Australia and it was superb! It was old enough to legally go to a pub in Australia and had a richness and weight that belied its lower alcohol. Sadly it was my last bottle. Even more fun is to find a bottle from the birth year of a staff member when we have a staff dinner. When my assistant Jeff left in 2011 I managed to find an '82 Margeaux from his birth year for his dinner and when Rachael left I opened an '85 Graham's Port from Portugal (just don't tell that I mentioned her birth year!). The wines were great, but made more special by the association with the year that was special to them.

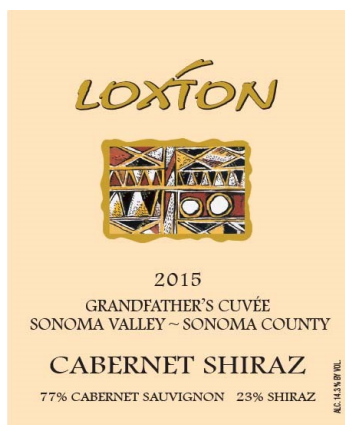
I keep a moderate cellar of my own Loxton wines and others from around the world, especially from places that I have been. Tasting these takes me back to the place where they were made, much like smells can take you back to some moment in the past. Years ago I also decided to keep back sufficient quantities to offer a well aged wine to the wine club. Before you write sending in your birth year, I don't have the space to keep wine for too long! But even 3-4 years can make a difference and this year's re-release is the 2012 Rossi Ranch Syrah.

This Summer we hosted a tasting of multiple years of Rossi Ranch Syrah from 2011 to the new 2015. I was very pleased some thought the 2012 to be their favorite. It is entering that developed phase, lightening just a little in color, still retaining cherry fruit flavors but starting to show some leather and some brown sugar flavors that might reflect the first year of our drought. This wine has probably reached its peak drinking window, and should remain there for another 5 years or more.



So many wines, such little time! The key to a good cellar is knowing what is there.

2015 CABERNET SHIRAZ - GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 77% Cabernet Sauvignon, 23% Shiraz

pH: 3.70

Alcohol: 14.3%

Closure: Cork Finish

Production: 257 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered July 19, 2017

Release Price: \$35.00

While I was hoeing weeds in the Syrah block in front of the winery I came across an old tennis ball. I immediately thought of Jake, the McGraw's chocolate lab. There were two things that Jake loved; tennis balls and getting patted. He seemed to go everywhere with a tennis ball but often dropped them when he got distracted. It was funny to watch him trying to deal with 2 tennis balls at once, because if 1 ball was great, then 2 must even be better but it was tricky to hold both. I used to find these balls all over the McGraw vineyard and I guess he dropped one here when they were visiting the winery. The other thing that made me laugh was that he learned if he butted his head into your groin area you would immediately bend over and pat him. He is sorely missed.

It made me think about vineyard dogs. At Rossi Ranch they bought a beautiful Italian truffle dog after using a few acres of land to try and grow truffles. I'm hoping it works, they would be perfect with the Rossi Syrah! The Griffin's had a number of dogs, Australian heelers, and they seemed like great vineyard dogs, full of energy to chase rabbits and birds, even though they made huge amounts of noise whenever they detected a winemaker doing grape sampling. The Michalczyk's at Hawk Hill had a couple of Yorkies, very pretty but mostly inside dogs. Of course I get some flack from my family in Australia about our short legged poodle; the consensus being that he's just not appropriate for a winery. Maybe they are right as he seems like Velcro and gets covered with detritus every time he goes into the vineyard. But he really makes me laugh and that's important in the stress of dealing with harvest.



While he might not look a typical winery dog, Coober's interest in fruit quality is commendable

The McGraw vineyard Cabernet is, of course, the basis for the Cabernet Shiraz blend, a tribute to my grandfather. The Shiraz (Syrah) comes from the estate vineyard. What ties the two vineyards together, aside from tennis balls, is the complementary nature of the wines. The roundness and sweetness of Syrah balances the structure and herbal fruit notes of Cabernet. The wine is drinking well now and will for another 5 years. It was originally included in the Spring shipment as we did not make a vineyard designate McGraw Cabernet in 2015. I think Jake might have approved!

SONOMA REDS LOT 12

Sonoma County • 42% Cabernet sauvignon, 40% Syrah, 15% Zinfandel, 3% Grenache • pH: 3.75 • Alc: 14.1% • 140 cases • Screwcap • Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, August 21, 2018 • Release Price: \$19

The heat wave over Labor day in 2017 caused some vine stress in the McGraw cabernet and I kept the top few rows separate just in case flavors were effected. It turned out that the wine was fine but by then I had settled on my Cabernet needs and it forms the basis of the Reds Lot 12. Selections of Syrah from the Estate and Rossi Ranch complement the Cabernet and then Zinfandel adds more fruit. I think it is the most serious wine of the Sonoma Reds series and one of the best. The components are all from my best vineyards, hand picked and hand sorted and with the same care and attention as all my wines. This is a great wine to have while my vineyard designate wines wait in the cellar for a special occasion. Available to wine club only and special 25% case discount applies.

2014 SYRAH, RESERVE CUVÉE ELLEN

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah (50% Estate, 50% Rossi Ranch) • pH: 3.49 • Alc: 14.3%
146 cases • Screwcap • Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, July 11, 2016 • Release Price: \$40**

Labeling a wine as “Reserve” should mean something and for me it’s the best of the best. Even more so when it is a tribute to my grandmother Ellen, so the Cuvée Ellen is the best wine I can make from Syrah grown here in Glen Ellen. This wine truly fits that wish and is a wine that can be enjoyed now or can be kept for up to 10 years in good cellaring conditions. It is a barrel selection of the best lots, with three from here on the Estate and three from Rossi Ranch, chosen for its intensity, elegance and structure. I have enjoyed the 2002, 2005 and 2006 Reserve Syrah wines in the past few months and they have demonstrated how well the Syrahs from the Glen Ellen area can age. Although released 12 months ago, small quantities remain as we pour this wine only for our “Reserve” tastings.

2015 CABERNET SAUVIGNON, RANDOM RIDGE

**Mt. Veeder, Napa Valley • 100% Cabernet Sauvignon • pH: 3.67 • Alc: 14.4% • 99 cases produced
Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, July 9th, 2017 • Release Price:\$45**

When I started as Assistant at Wellington Vineyards I helped make wine for Bill Hawley, grape grower on Mount Veeder and California Wine Connoisseur magazine “Surfer Dude of the Year”. The wheel has come full circle and starting in 2015 I began to make his wines again, giving me access to a small amount of his fantastic fruit for my own use. This is mountain grown Napa Cabernet, a wine that will age wonderfully, full of the brushy notes of Mount Veeder but made in my style of less alcohol and less oak than seems to be in vogue. It was a wonderful year to make my first Napa Cabernet and I hope it will age as well as the 1995 version we opened at Bill’s place last year.

2015 PORT

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah, Estate • pH: 3.70 • Alc: 18.2% Sugar 9.3% • 297 cases
Cork Finish • 500mL • Bottled unfinned and unfiltered, August 29, 2016 • Release Price: \$30**

Port is a wonderful way to finish a meal during the winter. It’s a time for heavier foods and the richness and sweetness of a Port seems to help with the colder weather. Some dessert wines can seem too sweet but the good ones should start sweet but finish clean. These are wines to enjoy in smaller quantities and as the sugar and alcohol are good preservatives it keeps for 3-4 weeks once opened. These wines also age well in the cellar although they tend to deposit some sediment which requires careful pouring! Try this with chocolate desserts or with a sharp cheese as this will balance the sweetness.

**Fall Release Party
November 3rd, 2-5 pm**

Join us to celebrate harvest while you sample the new releases alongside some delicious local fare! Catch up with Chris and get the inside scoop on the 2019 vintage. We will bring back the Fuel Truck whose gourmet grilled sandwiches are not only indulgent and delicious, they also happen to pair perfectly with a glass of wine and a beautiful view.



Keeping vegetation in our winter creek stops erosion, slows down the water allowing it to recharge the aquifer and is a highway for animals

Please RSVP to winery@loxtonwines.com or 707-935-7221 by October 28th
Members: No Charge, Guests: \$10

| SHIPPING RATES | | | | | | | |
|---|---------|----------------|-----------|-----------------|----------------------|---|-----------|
| Ground (5-7 Business Days) | | | | | | | 2 DAY AIR |
| # of Bottles | CA,NV | AZ,ID NM,OR WA | CO,MT, WY | KS,ND NE,OK, SD | AR,IA,IL,LA MN,MO,TX | AL,CT,DC,DE,FL,GA,IN KY,MA,MD,ME,MI,MS NC,NJ,NH,NY,OH,PA,RI SC,TN,VA,VT,WI,WV | AK,HI |
| 6 | 21 | 23 | 33 | 36 | 40 | 43 | 77 |
| 7 | 23 | 25 | 37 | 42 | 46 | 51 | 84 |
| 8 | 25 | 27 | 39 | 43 | 48 | 53 | 91 |
| 9 | 26 | 29 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 102 |
| 12* | 29 | 33 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 120 |
| 18 | 38 | 45 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 85 | 200 |
| 2+ cases | 25 each | 27 each | 35 each | 40 each | 45 each | 50 each | 115 each |
| <p align="center">*Special pricing now applied to purchases of 12+ bottles Additional charge will apply if address is incorrect or package is undeliverable resulting in redirection or return</p> | | | | | | | |