

**LOXTON**



**BOOMERANG CLUB NEWSLETTER**

**SPRING 2017**

**SPRING WINE CLUB RELEASE**

**WINEMAKER'S SELECTION**

**2014 GSP, ESTATE (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2013 ZINFANDEL, STONETREE VINEYARD (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2013 SYRAH, ESTATE (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2013 SYRAH, ROSSI RANCH (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2010 SYRAH, GRIFFIN'S LAIR (SONOMA COAST)**

**2013 CABERNET SHIRAZ, GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**OPTIONS FOR CUSTOM ORDERS**

**2016 SENCILLO (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2016 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**SONOMA REDS - LOT 10 (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2014 PINOT NOIR, GRIFFIN'S LAIR (SONOMA COAST)**

**2014 PORT (SONOMA VALLEY)**



Chris and Bob Loxton harvesting Chardonnay February 2017 at the Loxton Vineyard,

Spring 2017

Dear Club Member,

This is the first time in 5 years where we haven't started the year thinking about drought conditions. There is a saying that when it rains, it pours, and that might be describing our start to the year here in CA. While we have welcomed the rain, I'm developing webbed feet and it is now starting to interfere with vineyard operations as it has been so hard for the crews to get out and do work like pruning. I've never had success changing the weather though, so it's just a matter of being able to deal with it! Bad weather during the dormant season doesn't mean much, but with some of my hillside vineyards what I have seen in the past is that the lower sections can become water logged leading to a slow start to the growing season and bigger berries that are plumped up with water. In 2010 and 2011 I sometimes had to pick these lower sections later and kept the wines separate just in case they weren't of equal quality.

A particularly exciting development for me is that half of the Spring release wines contain fruit from here on the Estate. This is a result of decisions made in 2013 to graft some vines to Grenache and Petite sirah and in 2014 to replant an acre of dying vines to Viognier and a different clone of Syrah. I couldn't be happier with the first Estate GSP and it is a great follow-up to last year's release. Then we have the '13 Stonetree Zinfandel, a true and unique mountain grown Zinfandel. Two '13 Syrahs follow, from the Estate and from Rossi Ranch and they both follow the trend of outstanding wines from this vintage which has proven to be one of the great years for California wines. The library wine from Griffin's Lair validates my decision to hold this wine back for additional bottle age and it's drinking beautifully. Finally we have Grandfather's Cuvée, another wonderful wine from the 2013 harvest. Our optional wines are a new Summer white, a blend that contains the first fruit from our young Viognier plantings, the excellent new Rosé just in time for warmer weather, a Sonoma Red and gold medal winning Port. As always, you can also choose any of our previous releases as available on our website.

Be aware that I have decided to hold the prices for some of these wines at last years' levels (Rose, Sonoma Reds, Chardonnay and Sencillo) during the club release period, but they will be increased at the time of general release to the public.

Additional information will be available on these wines on our website at [loxtonwines.com](http://loxtonwines.com) and I should also have extra material from what is turning out to be my annual "dad will retire" trip Down Under where I managed to catch a part of his harvest at the family vineyard.

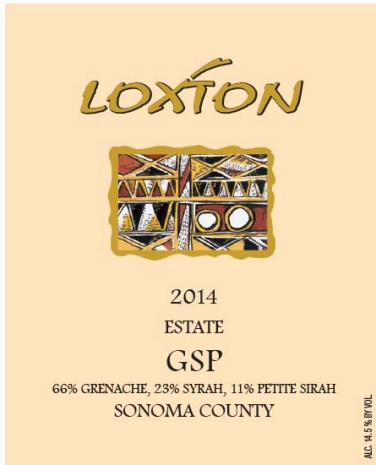
Finally, I had the good fortune to be asked to give a seminar at Arizona State University to the School of Earth and Space Exploration on "Science and the Art of Winemaking". The trip has inspired me to investigate how I might reach out to club members with events in other states.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chris".

Chris Loxton

## 2014 GSP - ESTATE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 66% Grenache, 23% Syrah, 11% Petit sirah

pH: 3.65

Alcohol: 14.5%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 205 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered March 23, 2016

Release Price: \$30.00

I sometimes tell people that I'm inspired by tradition but not bound by it. My grandfather grew Grenache and Syrah and I really like the wines from the Southern Rhône Valley in France. Traditionally, their Grenache blends were aged in large oak tanks called Foudres and for my first GSP in 2013 I decided to buy one of these tanks. The one I have is the first of a new type that won a design award in 2016 and it is the center of attention in the room where I do my "Reserve Tastings". I like it so much that I just bought a second one for a Syrah program that you will see in future years. In the Rhône these blends are usually Grenache, Syrah and Mourvedre, with up to 11 additional varieties allowed. In Australia the so called GSM blends are very popular, but here I've used Petite sirah instead of Mourvedre.

Although the 2013 version used some purchased fruit, this 2014 version is all estate grown. In 2013 we successfully grafted some of the Syrah vines to Grenache and Petite sirah for this program and even though we had to keep yields low in 2014 to re-establish our vines, there was enough wine to fill our Foudre. The individual wines were kept separate for the first 6 months, then blended to the Foudre for an additional year of aging. The blending is a bit of a science/guesswork/mystical process where we want the sum to be more than the addition of the parts. The Grenache component brings lovely cherry fruit and aromatics while Syrah provides roundness and length on the palate. Petite sirah gives backbone to the wine as it is known for color and tannins. Aging is a slower process in these bigger tanks and oak pick-up is minimal, but much like the traditional wines from the southern Rhone, the wine is about the grapes and the skill of the blender and not about oak.



The only thing better than a Foudre, is 2 Foudres!

This wine was one of the stars of the staff tasting and while wonderful now, I would expect it to continue to age very well for the next 5-7 years. Being lighter than the Syrah wines, I think it would be perfect with pork or Southern Rhône inspired foods like cassoulets. Isn't it interesting that wines and foods of a region seem to go so well together, perhaps perfected over many centuries.

# 2013 ZINFANDEL - STONETREE VINEYARD



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 99% Zinfandel, with a few vines of Petite sirah, Gamay and Riesling

pH: 3.65

Alcohol: 14.5%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 198 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered Sept 1, 2014

Release Price: \$25.00

The Stonetree vineyard is included in a newly defined area known as the Fountaingrove district. This new American Viticultural Area, which also encompasses Kick Ranch which I also use, was designated in March 2015 after this wine was bottled so it just has the Sonoma County designation. While these areas are still part of Sonoma County, which we must also designate on the label, there is a good reason for such differentiation. Vineyards in these sub-appellations usually share similar characteristics such as climate and soil and the wines reflect this with similar flavor profiles.

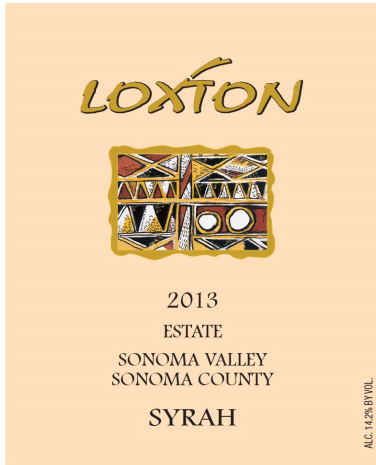
The vineyard is located in the uppermost region of this new AVA, very near the Petrified Forest outside Calistoga. To get to the vineyard I drive past this private park but in 17 years I've never dropped in to see it until this last summer. It turns out I should have gone there earlier as its really something to see these massive trees and to think a little bit more on how the geography of the vineyard came about and how that can influence the wines of the region.



The steep slopes of the Stonetree Vineyard

This is a true mountain grown wine and it shows with its purity of fruit and good acidity and tannins. These are characters we see in mountain grown Cabernet sauvignons in Napa Valley as well and it is a result of limited water resources in thin mountain soils where we see smaller vines, smaller berries and this means deep colors and strong wines. This Zinfandel is no exception and we have lovely raspberry fruit together with a peppery note that I see every year from this vineyard. I've worked with George Hellyer since 1999 and there is a remarkable consistency in style, never the fruity and soft wine we might get in the Valley, but rather the more austere but clearly defined wine that is best with some age and with food. I would recommend it with ribs or grilled fare over the summer and anticipate that it will age for another 5-8 years.

## 2013 SYRAH - ESTATE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.65

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 246 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered July 13, 2015

Release Price: \$35.00

I moved here to the property in 2002 but it wasn't until mid 2012 that I took over leasing and managing the vineyard (with help from Rafael Oseguera and his management company). As I normally commute to the winery on foot, that's a lot of trips back and forth over the years. Nothing beats walking the rows and looking at what the vines and weeds are telling us. (If you visit the area on a weekend, I strongly encourage you to take one of my walkabout tours as it's a great learning experience.) My father likes to tell me that his father and grandfather walked every inch of his property, mostly behind a horse. Looking at his boots, all cracked and worn tells me just how much walking he's done. So it was a funny feeling to look at my own boots recently to discover that they seem to have turned into his. What's he wearing?

Over the years I've identified 10 areas, just in the Syrah plantings, that are possible separate entities. There are various soil, clone and rootstock combinations where I may need to irrigate or harvest separately. It would be far simpler and less expensive, of course, to treat everything as one 5 acre Syrah vineyard and hope that on average it might all work. As I often say though, green and black bananas don't average

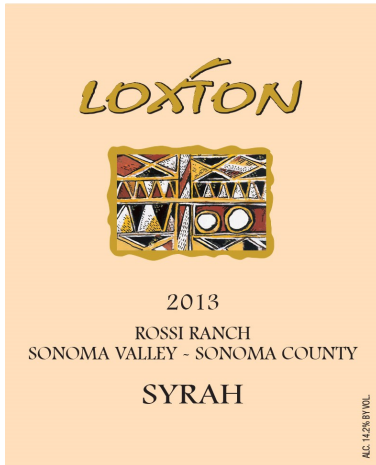


These boots have seen some vineyard miles!

out to taste like 2 yellow ones and I'm not aiming at average! At a minimum I might make 4 passes through the vineyard over the course of 3 or more weeks to pick for Rose, Syrah and Port, but usually I break it down even further.

This 2013 Estate Syrah uses what I feel is the best fruit from 4 of the areas, all with small berries and intense fruit. Hand picked in the cool of the morning, hand sorted and fermented in traditional open top vats without adding yeast. The wine was aged for 21 months in French oak barrels (25% new) and then in bottle for 20 months before release. It was another standout in our staff tasting, elegant and yet intense and I would expect this '13 wine to improve for another 5-10 years.

## 2013 SYRAH - ROSSI RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.73

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 200 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered July 13, 2015

Release Price: \$30.00

When I make my wines I like to think about respecting the site, making a wine that is true to its soil, the weather and how it is farmed (its "Terroir"). Although it might be hard to quantify, and maybe hard to explain, I also like to think about its context and vineyard history. The Rossi Ranch was originally planted in 1910 and it is fascinating to think of the previous winemakers walking these same blocks, looking at some of these same vines, each wondering how to deal with the challenges of the year. Thinking of that spurs me to make sure I've made the right call. The history for Syrah on the property is much more recent but the echoes of the past remain as it's the same soil, just new vines.

If I were to give a lesson on the meaning of "Terroir" I might present the 2013 Estate and Rossi Ranch Syrahs. The vineyards are less than a mile apart, the wines are made the same way (with no added yeast and fermentation in open top tanks) and aging is in French oak barrels. But that is where the similarities end. The Rossi Ranch has many different soils and it's a fabulous visual to look at the overhead Google image of the vineyard with its patchwork of different colors. These images are so striking that it is little wonder that the use of drones for imaging will change the lives of winemakers and vineyard managers. Of course it doesn't replace actually walking through the vineyard, but it can point us to particular areas that we might want to check out.

For this wine, I'm using the Alban clone of Syrah grown on the red soils. These soils are very limiting and the vines and berries are smaller and more exposed to the sun. The resulting wine is darker, bigger and with decidedly more structure and tannin. It's a big brawny style of Syrah that will be at its best with equally brawny meals. I imagine that it will age wonderfully and I'm going to put aside a portion of the harvest in my own cellar just to see. It won't be a gamble, as the screwcap allows the wine to age gracefully as I've already seen with my first Rossi Syrah from '09.



Evaluating the small vines & fruit at Rossi

# 2010 SYRAH - GRIFFIN'S LAIR

## LIBRARY RELEASE



Appellation: Sonoma Coast

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.71

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 197 cases; 92 cases available

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, April 6, 2012

Re-Release Price: \$35.00

This is my 4<sup>th</sup> so called “Library Release” wine. The Griffin’s Lair Syrah is one of 4 I bottled in 2010 (the others were from Rossi here in Glen Ellen, Archer in Russian River and Kick in Santa Rosa). It was just my second year working with the vineyard but it immediately became one of my favored sites as the fruit seems to develop color and flavor at lower sugars than normal for California while retaining acid and tannin that are necessary for wine to age gracefully. An extreme heat wave in late August did no damage at Griffin’s Lair due to the cooling influence of the San Francisco Bay, although the alcohol is a little higher than it would have been otherwise. I liked the wine (a lot!) at release 3 years ago, but felt like it would also benefit with further bottle age.

The idea of holding back a reserve of wine for later re-release started with the '07 Ellen Syrah. Winemakers might think about the right time to release the wine, waiting for tannins to soften and secondary flavors to develop complexity, but holding inventory is not good business. Consequently, many of today’s wines are made to show well earlier but I’ve always thought it best to not hurry nature. I hold wines in barrel and then in bottle until I think they are ready with the expectation that the wines will also then be able to age in the cellar if so desired. As a benefit for club members my “library” wine is stored under ideal conditions before re-release.

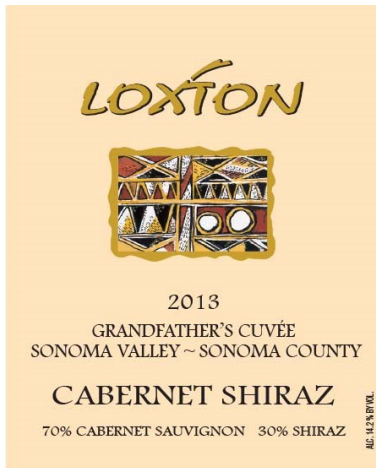


A classic Syrah and Lamb dinner

Although it’s been a few years since I last tasted this wine (so many wines, so little time!) my notes reveal that with aging there are some cedar and hints of leather developing around the core of black cherry fruit. It’s a softer elegant Syrah with great depth of flavor and lots of fruit. I think its best now and for another 2-4 years and it will work with most foods although I found it a great match with lamb chops. When I had an Australian winemaker visit a few months ago, this was the wine I sent him home with as an example of what I am doing.

# 2013 CABERNET SHIRAZ

## GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 70% Cabernet, 30% Syrah (Shiraz)

pH: 3.71

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Cork finish

Production: 246 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, July 13, 2015

Release Price: \$35.00

Blending Cabernet Sauvignon and Syrah has an interesting history. On my recent visit to Australia I went to Tabilk winery in Victoria and they believe they were the first in Australia to blend the two varieties together, doing so in 1957 and '58. There is evidence that Syrah from Hermitage in the northern Rhône was often blended with Bordeaux wines in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries to bolster the color and structure of claret. In cooler years Cabernet sauvignon can have difficulty ripening and as the Syrah requires less heat to ripen, it will have better color and more alcohol to help out the Cabernet. "The Lafitte of 1795, which was made up with Hermitage, was the best-liked wine of any of that year," wrote Bordeaux wine merchant Nathaniel Johnson in the early 1800s. Elsewhere in Bordeaux, Chateau Palmer has records of their wine having some Hermitage on a number of occasions and more recently in 2014 Chateau La Lagune has worked with the Jaboulet winery of Hermitage to make a 50/50 blend in 2010 called "Evidence".



McGraw Vineyard, Sonoma Valley

The reason for the blend is the Syrah fills out the palate of the otherwise lean Cabernet Sauvignon, although this is done traditionally in Bordeaux using Merlot. With the absence of Merlot in Australia in the past, it quickly became the rule to use the more readily available Shiraz. I've been making this blend since 2005, with the amount of Syrah being in the range 20-40%. The Syrah has usually been from here around the winery and the Cabernet Sauvignon has always come from the McGraw vineyard (the McGraw Cabernet was included in last Fall's shipment). This version has a fabulous dark color and leads with aromas of cassis and some vanilla. While having the elegance to make it a great food pairing now, there is enough structure hidden under the fruit to allow the wine to hold and improve in the cellar for another 10 years. The 2005 version is drinking wonderfully and I think this wine is ultimately better than that '05 due to our better understanding of the vineyard.



## **2016 SENCILLO, VIOGNIER-CHARDONNAY**

**Sonoma County • 58% Viognier, 42% Chardonnay • pH: 3.42 • Alc: 13.8% • 75 cases • Screwcap  
Bottled lightly fined and filtered, March 27, 2017 • Release Price:\$18**

In 2011 I made a white wine from Chardonnay that I called “Sencillo” (simple in Spanish) and it was simply that. Just Chardonnay fruit; no winemaking artifice, so no new oak barrels, no added yeast, no malo-lactic fermentation and no aging on yeast lees to build richness. This is the style of white wine that I prefer in Summer when I’m eating lighter meals. It’s essential to have good fruit though, as any defects cannot be covered up with the afore mentioned techniques. I’ve resurrected the label for this wine, but used our first Estate Viognier for its aromatics and fruit characters and supplemented with Chardonnay to give extra roundness and weight. It’s a lovely Summer white, crisp and clean with no residual sugar, that can be enjoyed on the deck or with chicken and salads.

## **2016 ROSÉ, VIN GRIS OF SYRAH**

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah, Estate • pH: 3.35 • Alc: 13.6% • 180 cases • Screwcap  
Bottled lightly fined and filtered, March 27, 2017 • Release Price:\$18**

This year’s Rosé is mostly fruit from older vines in front of the parking lot where we have wet clay soils, with the remainder being the first crop from our new vines. Although these two vineyard blocks are just 100 feet apart I found that the older vines have given the usual pink grapefruit notes while the younger vines were a little riper giving more strawberry notes and richer texture. The blend seems to be giving us the best of both, as it is crisp and clean (no residual sugar) yet with a surprising depth of flavor. If you liked last year’s version which sold out in 8 weeks, you’ll like this one even more. While many have jumped on the Rosé bandwagon, I have continued to use the best vineyard practices and best winery methods to make a serious Rosé, if there is such a thing. Its not just for Summer, but I doubt that there will be unopened bottles by Thanksgiving and that’s a pity!

## **SONOMA REDS - LOT 10**

**Sonoma County • 50% Syrah, 39% Zinfandel, 5% Cabernet Sauvignon, remainder Grenache,  
Pinot Noir, and Petite Sirah • pH: 3.62 • Alc: 14.2% • 162 cases • Screwcap  
Bottled unfined and lightly filtered, August 28, 2016 • Release Price:\$17**

Somehow we find ourselves already up to the 10<sup>th</sup> version of the popular Sonoma Red. The concept has always been the same; use some of the barrels left over after blending my top wines as the basis for a good everyday wine. I relax the rules for vintage and variety to make the best wine I can, and therefore each bottling is different. This version is one of the most serious red wines of the lineup and I really should look at a more fitting name for the blend to reflect how good I think it is. “Kangarouge” just isn’t right, so in the meantime its Lot 10 of the Reds. Buy it by the case for the better price and I guarantee that it will continue to improve for the next 3 years or more and provide a great mid week wine while you hold that special occasion wine for the right moment!

## **2014 PORT**

**Sonoma Valley • 100% Syrah, Estate • pH: 3.60 • Alc: 18.2% Sugar 9.3% • 305 cases  
Cork Finish • 500mL • Bottled unfined and unfiltered, August 31, 2015 • Release Price:\$28**

Every Port I’ve made has been a medal winner at the Harvest Fair, starting with a Gold and Best Port for the 2002 and now nicely bookended with a gold for this 2014. When I did the retrospective tasting of 10 years of Ports, it was interesting to see that even though they have won a lot of gold medals, the wines do truly reflect the year just as table wines do, with some being bigger and richer and some being more elegant in style. This version, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the drought is decidedly in the bigger and richer style with lots of fruit making it seem just a little sweeter (even though it is a very small difference from the ’13). A lovely wine to end the meal together with chocolate, or by itself. This wine can age comfortably for 10-15 years if desired.

# Spring Release Party

April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2-5 pm

Take in the beauty of springtime in Sonoma! The flowers are in bloom, the vines are awake and the wines are flowing; kick back and enjoy what we think is one of the best views in Sonoma County. We'll have all the new releases open and a local caterer will provide bites to enjoy along with the wine and the picnic area will be available.



Chris paying homage to Shiraz vines planted in 1892 at Wendouree vineyard in Clare, South Australia

Please RSVP to [winery@loxtonwines.com](mailto:winery@loxtonwines.com) or 707-935-7221 by March 27<sup>th</sup>

Members: No Charge, Guests: \$10

SHIPPING RATES							
Ground (5-7 Business Days)							2 DAY AIR
# of Bottles	CA,NV	AZ,NM	CO,ID MT OR,WA,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	45	51	57	62	128
18	38	45	78	87	97	105	205
24	47	57	90	102	114	124	256
3+ cases	25 each	27 each	42 each	48 each	54 each	59 each	125 each

Additional charge will apply if address is incorrect or package is undeliverable resulting in redirection or return