

**LOXTON**



## **BOOMERANG CLUB NEWSLETTER**

**FALL 2018**

### **FALL WINE CLUB RELEASE**

#### **WINEMAKER'S SELECTION**

**2016 CHARDONNAY, HAWK HILL VINEYARD (RUSSIAN RIVER VALLEY)**

**2016 PINOT NOIR, GRIFFIN'S LAIR (PETALUMA GAP)**

**2014 ZINFANDEL, SONOMA HILLSIDE VINEYARDS (SONOMA COUNTY)**

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

**2014 SYRAH, ROSSI RANCH (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2014 CABERNET SHIRAZ, GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE (SONOMA VALLEY)**

#### **OPTIONS FOR CUSTOM ORDERS**

**SONOMA REDS (SONOMA COUNTY)**

**2015 SYRAH (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2014 SYRAH, RESERVE CUVÉE ELLEN (SONOMA VALLEY)**

**2015 PORT (SONOMA VALLEY)**



The entire Loxton staff out for the Rosé pick, nothing promotes team building like hand picking 3 tons of grapes early in the morning.

Fall 2018

Dear Club Member,

I'm writing this newsletter in the first week of September and what a difference a year makes! Harvest in 2017 started with a blast of extreme heat that lasted 10 days and everyone was scrambling to find pickers and get fruit in. This year we have had perfect weather, very mild and this allows us to wait for just the right flavors in our grapes. Of course it means this year's intern, Christiaan Nigrini from South Africa and a friend of Dirk's from last year, is doing busy work, cleaning and polishing and hurrying up to wait for harvest. There are positive signs for the community with new houses going up along Dunbar Road to replace those lost in last year's devastating fires. Sonoma Strong has been shown to be not just a bumper sticker but an attitude that has helped the community band together.

It has also been heartwarming to see nature coming back as well as some of you will have seen through our Facebook posts. Perhaps the most thrilling has been the video of the mountain lion just 30 yards from the winery. One night last week we captured videos of a fox, an opossum, a bob-cat and a skunk, all within two hours as they passed through the property. These sightings re-affirm to me that our commitment to farm sustainably is good for us and our wildlife. Part of our program is to decrease our environmental footprint and the bottle crushing unit that we mentioned in Spring has worked out very well. We divert about 100 pounds of tasting room glass bottles a week from potentially going into landfill and the "sand" is used in landscaping and as a mulch to stop weeds and conserve soil moisture.

I have been asked if there will be any residual effects of last year's fires on our vines and all the research is telling us this is not a concern unless the vines were burned. In fact I have extremely high hopes for the 2018 harvest as Malaco and I have spent a lot of time in the vineyard this year tending the vines due to the slow start to harvest and as we know from cooking, better ingredients lead to better results.

The Fall releases are in the following pages and I think it is a diverse and strong group of wines ready for the Holiday season and for winter. The 2016 Chardonnay from Hawk Hill is my 16th from this vineyard and the experience shows in the wine. The Zinfandel is mostly from the nearby Meeks vineyard and is a classic Sonoma Zinfandel from an excellent year. The 2015 harvest was so small I decided to hold back some of the 2014's for re-release, after evaluating the wines I chose the '14 Estate Syrah and Cabernet Shiraz to demonstrate how good the 2014 harvest was. The last of the 2014 wines to be released are the excellent cellar worthy Rossi Ranch Syrah and as an optional wine, the Reserve Ellen Syrah. This "Reserve" wine is my take on the best Syrah I can make from here in Glen Ellen and this one is a blend of fruit from the Estate and Rossi Ranches. Now that we have offered the wines for that special meal, we also have some additional optional wines, the "mid-week" Sonoma Red to buy by the case for any occasion, and a new 2015 Syrah Port to end the meal. Of course you can substitute or add any of the wines on the current tasting list as well and we have highlighted a wine from Spring, the 2015 Sonoma Valley Syrah, that is showing particularly well.

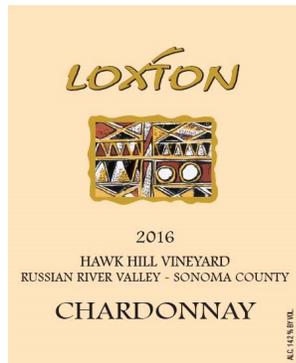
To help out with the holidays, I've decided to again offer the discounted case price for shipping as I did in Spring.

Cheers,



Chris Loxton

## 2016 CHARDONNAY - HAWK HILL VINEYARD



Appellation: Russian River Valley

Blend: 100% Chardonnay

pH: 3.37

Alcohol: 13.8%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 147 cases

Bottled lightly fined & lightly filtered July 9, 2017

Release Price: \$30.00

It has been very interesting to follow the style changes in Chardonnay in the years since I've been in the winemaking business. In 1990, just as I was interviewing at UC Davis for their graduate studies program, I visited Australia and went out to the coast with my grandfather to catch Blue Swimmer crab. The wine we chose to have with the crab lunch the next day was a warm area Chardonnay from the local region that had been getting gold medals at all the major wine competitions across Australia. It was a revelation, all peaches and cream, soft and buttery and I had not seen a wine like it, but it was fun! That new world style was spreading around the world at the time and was taken to extremes as some couldn't get oaky and buttery enough, or so it seemed. Along the way I lost touch, drinking more red wines and lighter whites that seemed more food friendly.

Years later in 2001 I made the first Chardonnay for my own brand and it was more in keeping with the wines I was drinking prior to '90, but still trying to use some of the best elements from what we had learned in the intervening time. An appropriate amount of oak and some richness, but all held together with enough acidity to keep it food friendly. This style had the ability to age in the cellar and continues to build richness if so desired. The wine sold very well, but it might have been because it was rather different to many of the wines being made at the time. Today that clean style is very much in vogue, but you can't just take any grapes and pick early to keep crisp acidity as unripe grapes don't have the flavor. It requires leaving grapes out on the vine for enough flavor before getting too high in sugar (and hence alcohol) while keeping acidity and this means getting grapes from a special place in a cool area.

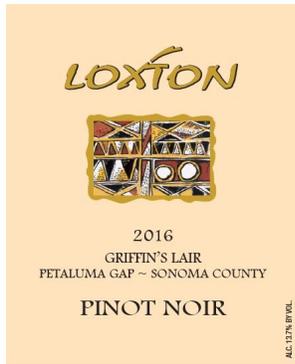
Hawk Hill vineyard, just in from the Sonoma Coast at Freestone, is such a place and I have been fortunate to be getting those grapes since 2001. New ownership of the vineyard a few years ago has meant the injection of new ideas (but keeping most as no fixing required when its not broken!) and the Yarak's have begun some new plantings that look very interesting!

This 2016 version reminds me a lot of the 2013, one of my favorite Hawk Hill Chardonnays and one really tasting fabulously at the moment. In fact, I've had a hard time deciding my favorite of the '10, 13 and '16 that I've recently opened.



Perfectly paired with a crab cake

## 2016 PINOT NOIR - GRIFFIN'S LAIR



Appellation: Petaluma Gap, Sonoma County  
Blend: 100% Pinot Noir (50% Pommard clone, 50% Clone 115)  
pH: 3.83  
Alcohol: 13.8%  
Closure: Screwcap  
Production: 147 cases  
Bottled unfined & lightly filtered August 29, 2017  
Release Price: \$35.00

While this is my 6th Pinot release from Griffin's Lair, it is the first to have the "Petaluma Gap" AVA (American Viticultural Area) designation. The 2017 declaration acknowledges that area wines show similarities, probably related to the soils and the strong winds from the Pacific sweeping this area. I saw this first hand last year when 11 wineries donated 3 gallons each of their Petaluma Gap Pinot for an auction lot to raise money for charity. When all 11 wineries got together to assess components and make the final blend there was a common thread showing through them all. In addition to the normal cherry flavors of Pinot noir, these wines were more elegant, more complex and with a more earthy and tobacco leaf note than other appellations (it was fascinating and also rewarding when the lot attracted very spirited bidding).

We discovered we also shared a problem with the region's voracious birds eating the precious Pinot grapes. Approaching Griffin's Lair vineyard along Lakeville Highway, you see almost every vineyard has protective netting to stop the bird damage but it is cumbersome and very expensive. So, someone is making money, even if it's not the grape grower! Jim and Joan Griffin made headlines in 2017 by switching to an experimental system that uses flashes of laser light to scare the birds after detecting them with motion sensors. I have to admit being a bit concerned I'd have to wear special goggles to sample the vineyard (I didn't) and it seemed to work quite well.

My Pinot noir from this vineyard seems to have settled into its style. The first 2 years were extreme, the cold year of 2011 being a lighter more elegant wine and then the extreme heat of 2012 leading to the biggest, ripest and wildest wine. Since then it has been remarkably consistent. This wine is right in that style, some cherry, some forest floor of classic Pinot, good structure and excellent fruit sweetness. I think it has a little more structure and fruit than the '15 version and is wonderful to drink now and for the next 3-4 years. Try this in a bigger bowl glass—you will be surprised by how much better it shows in the more classic Burgundy tasting glass!



A special barrel head was commissioned using the logos from each of the wineries that donated wine

## 2014 ZINFANDEL - SONOMA HILLSIDE VINEYARDS



Appellation: Sonoma County

Blend: 100% Zinfandel (60% Meeks, 40% Stonetree)

pH: 3.79

Alcohol: 14.3%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 243 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered August 29, 2015

Release Price: \$28.00

The Glen Ellen area has proven to be a magical place for growing Zinfandel, one of several here in Sonoma County. When I first moved to the area in 1995 to work at Wellington Vineyards I put on a tasting of local Zinfandels as one of a series our winemaker's group had arranged. I had assembled wines from the area's famous vineyards, many over 100 years old, and Pagani, Old Hill, Rossi, Kunde and Wellington's Estate were all represented. The wines were distinctly different from the Russian River and Napa selections we had seen in previous tastings. They all showed great color, good acidity and tannin and bright flavors crying out for hearty meals and promised good things with time in the cellar.

One of Wellington's best Zinfandels was the Meeks Hilltop bottling. I first met George Meeks in 1995 when I started at Wellington and I kept up the relationship since his vineyard is the neighbor to the McGraw vineyard where I

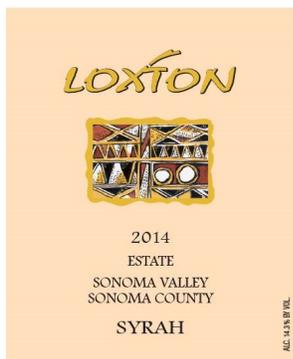
buy Cabernet sauvignon. In 2014 George approached me to see if I was interested in fruit from that block as Peter Wellington had retired and the fruit was available. It wasn't a difficult decision - his hillside vineyard is the uphill neighbor to Pagani and Rossi ranch is just a 5-10 minute walk away, so it is on prime Zinfandel terroir!

The Meeks grapes are the base for this Hillside Zinfandel with the remainder coming from the Stonetree Vineyard in the Mayacamus mountains. I had initially considered bottling the two wines separately, but with such a small crop from Stonetree due to drought, I tried blending them together and found the result better than either of the parts. The structure and intensity of the Stonetree wine complemented the pepper and raspberry notes of the Meeks and this hillside grown wine speaks to Zinfandel from Sonoma County - lots of ripe fruit and the perfect fit to ribs and all things grilled. More elegant and less tannic than might be expected, it has lovely fruit and balance and so is a wine tasting very well now and should stay that way for another 2-3 years if stored correctly.



From our driveway we look out over Pagani Ranch to both Meeks and McGraw Vineyards

## 2014 SYRAH - ESTATE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.54

Alcohol: 14.3%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 283 cases

Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered July 10, 2016

Release Price: \$35.00

Some things on a label are regulated and some are not. The word “Estate” has a carefully defined meaning; most importantly that the grapes are grown on the land owned or leased by the winery, the wine is fermented on-site and bottled on-site. Other words like “old vine” and “Reserve” are not regulated and can take on any meaning the winemaker (or marketing department) want. I use both words and have used the designation “Reserve” a limited number of times in cases where I think certain barrels from selected areas of a vineyard are so special they show off the best I can make.

I am a big fan of the word “Estate” though and while it doesn’t guarantee quality, it means the winery has total control and this *may* mean quality if the winery so chooses. As the grower I can restrict irrigation hoping to get smaller more concentrated berries and also drop fruit on the ground during the growing season in order to concentrate the vine’s energy into fewer bunches. The goal is the best wine, not the most wine. When I ask a grower to do this to my rows of fruit (and I do!) it can lead to conflict because grapes are sold by the ton and they are selling less fruit. By having a family history of selling grapes and now making wine, I’ve been able to live both sides of the equation and make every effort to ensure a win-win situation. This is why I favor long term arrangements so both parties can plan for the future.

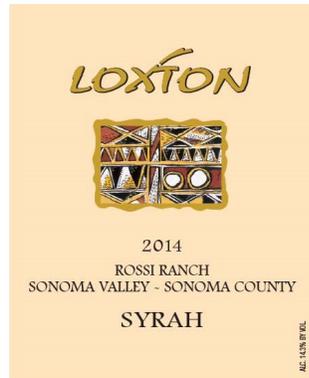


Clusters of Estate Syrah that have been dropped to focus the vines energy on fewer bunches

I keep having to remind myself of these issues when I walk the rows of the Estate vineyard and see fruit on the ground. Don’t look at what is on the ground – look at what is still left up on the vine! It might be easier if I didn’t walk the vineyard with my pruning shears in case I see something I don’t like.

This 2014 Estate Syrah released this year has continued to improve with wonderful cherry fruit coming out while the oak has continued to integrate back into the wine. Well suited to any winter dish it should continue to improve for another 3-5 years and then hold for 5 more years after (the 2004 from this vineyard is drinking superbly in ‘18).

## 2014 SYRAH - ROSSI RANCH



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 100% Syrah

pH: 3.50

Alcohol: 14.2%

Closure: Screwcap

Production: 199 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered July 10, 2016

Release Price: \$30.00

When Rossi Ranch was restored in 2006 and part of it replanted to Syrah it was a huge gamble. Although famous for Zinfandel, a section of south facing red soils were selected as potential Syrah blocks to be planted with well proven clones. I suppose if anyone had thought: a) would a winemaker want the fruit b) could they get the price per ton to make it work? and c) what if Sideways II comes out trashing Syrah?, then nothing would have been planted. When Greg Adams a good friend and vineyard consultant on this project, asked me to come out and see the site in 2009 I jumped at the chance to be involved.

To me it was the right place, the right people and the right attitude. While it is never certain how the wine will turn out, 20+ years of experience has shown me all three things are needed to make great wine. My instincts have proven to be correct and the Rossi Ranch Syrah is quite special. It is the biggest and most demanding of my Syrah wines and

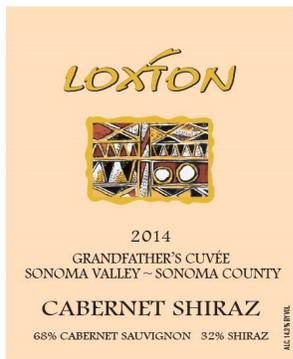


As the biggest Syrah, the Rossi Ranch gets the longest barrel aging to allow more time for the wine to mellow

consequently is the last to be released as it needs more time to mellow. Looking back, this should not have been a surprise as all wines I've tasted from Rossi Ranch going back to the late 80's have been big wines. It seems a place puts its stamp on a wine just as much as the grape variety does. In many ways that's what makes wine special to me, I enjoy wines that speak to me about a place.

For those of you that like to cellar wines, this is a wine to buy in quantity! At the moment it checks all the boxes; fruit, oak and tannin all there and balanced. I particularly like how it evolves over the course of the meal, showing primary fruit then violets and some leather. Extra time will allow all these elements to integrate into the whole and it is probably the best cellar candidate I've made. Drink now and for another 10-15 years.

## 2014 CABERNET SHIRAZ - GRANDFATHER'S CUVÉE



Appellation: Sonoma Valley

Blend: 68% Cabernet Sauvignon, 32% Shiraz

pH: 3.60

Alcohol: 14.3%

Closure: Cork Finish

Production: 221 cases

Bottled unfiltered and lightly filtered July 10, 2016

Release Price: \$35.00

The Lubiana winery in the small town where my family lived used my grandfather's Cabernet sauvignon for their Cabernet Shiraz blend in 1974 and 1975. At that time it was an iconic Australian blend developed to solve a problem where some Cabernet wines were a little too lean and thin in the middle palate (a "donut wine" with a hole in the middle) and Shiraz (Syrah) helped to fill it out. The winemakers of Bordeaux solve the problem by blending with Merlot and Cabernet franc, sometimes also Malbec and Petite Verdot, but in their absence the Australians used their abundant Shiraz. It worked very well indeed and these wines from the '70's inspired my first foray into winemaking with the infamous "Loxton-Swanbury" cabernet Shiraz of 1977, a collaboration between my father and his best friend Harley Swanbury who grew Shiraz, but that is a story for another day!

I learned something else too, and that was how important it is to recognize the grower for their hard work and for growing outstanding grapes. It's a lesson very valuable for what I do today. My father and grandfather were so pleased and proud of these wines and for their recognition and they were very careful to make sure only the best fruit went to the Lubiana winery. It truly was a win-win situation for all.

Although my first Cabernet sauvignon wines were 100% Cabernet, it wasn't long before the memory of those early wines inspired my first "Grandfather's Cuvée" in 2005. The blend is very important to me because of the family connection and also because of just how good these wines can be. So much so that when we had a very small harvest in 2015 due to extended drought I decided there wasn't enough Cabernet for a varietal wine and all would be used for the Cabernet Shiraz blend to be released next Spring. Knowing there would be no vineyard designate Cabernet, I decided to hold back the 2014 Cabernet Shiraz to offer in its place. It shows the classic structure and flavors of the McGraw vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon with the roundness that comes from the addition of Estate grown Syrah. It is a wine to enjoy with traditional meat dishes and will reward aging for another 5-8 years.



"Grapes grown by HT Loxton" The fine print on this label naming my Grandfather as the grower inspired my Cabernet Shiraz

## **SONOMA REDS**

**Sonoma County • 98% Zinfandel • pH: 3.75 • Alc: 14.2% • 140 cases • Screwcap  
Bottled unfinned and lightly filtered, August 29, 2015 • Release Price: \$18**

The Sonoma Reds wines have always been barrel selections of wines made with the same care and attention of my top wines, but ones that have offered a little lighter and softer style that's ready to drink. They are truly "mid week" wines, meaning you don't have to make an elaborate meal to enjoy them, and the reasonable price means you can buy enough so you don't have to open that special bottle which is being kept for a special meal. This particular version is a selection of Zinfandel from the Meeks vineyard that offers plenty of ripe fruit flavors without being too big and tannic. To drink now and over the next few years.

## **2015 SYRAH**

**Sonoma Valley • 92% Syrah (83% Estate, 6% Rossi ranch, 3% Griffin's Lair), 8% Petite sirah (Estate)  
pH: 3.66 • Alc: 14.2% • 172 cases • Screwcap  
Bottled lightly fined and filtered, July 10, 2017 • Release Price: \$25**

This was the first of my 2015 Syrah wines released in the Spring offerings and is the featured wine from current releases you may choose as an option. It has continued to improve since release and I've been picking this wine again and again when showing friends an example of what I'm making. The Estate grapes were a selection to highlight the red fruit characters of Syrah and the addition of some Petite Sirah added the structure to bring everything together. It has complexity, balance, intensity and flavor without being too heavy and is a great match with most foods and really shows why Syrah is a great choice at the dinner table.

## **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**

Labelling 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 3 from here on the Estate and 3 from Rossi Ranch, chosen for its intensity, elegance and structure. I feel this is the best Reserve Syrah I've made. To drink now or age for another 8-10 years in the cellar.

## **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**

My Ports have won many gold medals, but this is the first one not entered on a wine competition. The local competition has stopped awarding grower recognition plaques and I have always wanted one of these to give to my loyal growers, so have stopped entering the competition! It is very much in the same mold as previous years though, perhaps just a little sweeter and richer than the '14 version although that sweetness is balance by cleansing tannin and acidity. A wine to end the meal with or keep out the chill of winter. It is good for up to 3 weeks once opened and can age in the cellar for up to 10 years.

**Fall Release Party  
November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2-5 pm**

Join us to celebrate harvest while you sample all the new releases alongside some delicious local fare! Catch up with Chris and get the inside scoop on the 2018 vintage. We will be bringing back the popular Tri-Tip Trolley who became local heroes during last year's fires. With the help of amazing volunteers, owners Andrew and Susie used their two mobile kitchens to feed over 5,000 first responders in Glen Ellen and Santa Rosa.



Chris with the new Glass Crusher! This machine has helped us divert over 100lbs of glass a week from landfill by turning bottles back into sand that is being used for landscaping projects.

<b>SHIPPING RATES</b>							
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
<b>*Special pricing now applied to purchases of 12+ bottles</b>							
Additional charge will apply if address is incorrect or package is undeliverable resulting in redirection or return							

Please RSVP to [winery@loxtonwines.com](mailto:winery@loxtonwines.com) or 707-935-7221 by October 28<sup>th</sup>  
Members: No Charge, Guests: \$10